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EXAMINING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
GRADE 12 LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF FOUR SCHOOLS IN
THE OSHIKOTO REGION OF NAMIBIA

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree

Of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

At

THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

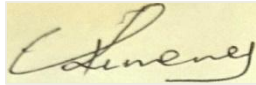
By

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DECLARATION

I, Tobias Imene, declare that Examining factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language: A study of four schools in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged in text as well as by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'T. Imene'.

Tobias Imene

Date: 15 June 2018

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Jacobina Ismael, and my wife, Hileni limene and our children, Oye – Ekwatho, Kalapungame, Tulela, Halolye, and the entire extended family for their patience and understanding during the course of my studies. I also dedicate this work to grandparents, Namatanga and limene yaKathindi, and indeed to my late father, Nikodemus Uulenga limene who taught me the value of hard work and encouraged me to be the best I can be. His words of encouragement remain fresh in my memory.

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My sincere thanks go to my family for all the inconveniences endured during the course of the study. They missed the love and the presence of a father in the home during the time I engaged in this study.

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May God bless all!!

ABSTRACT

This study examined factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The theoretical framework that underpinned and guided the present study was the Systems Theory of von Bertalanffy (1930), supplemented and complemented by the School Context Model of Bascia (2014). These helped me to understand how the school context shapes core processes of teaching and learning. The study sample consisted of four principals, eight parents, eight teachers and thirty two learners who were purposively sampled from four selected secondary schools. The study was anchored in the pragmatic paradigm and it adopted the mixed methods research approach. Data collection instruments consisted of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Major findings were that, both Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers and learners lack English Language proficiency. This was due to lack of exposure to the English Language. The study also noted lack of learning materials in both school and the home. Major recommendations were that schools (principals) should expose both teachers and learners to English Language by coming up with policies that make it mandatory for teachers and learners to use English while at school. Teachers should also actively involve learners in their learning by using methods such as debates and drama. The study also recommended that the Ministry of Education, schools and parents work together to provide adequate reading materials for learners. For future research, the study recommended an in-depth qualitative study to test the findings of the present study.

Key words: Academic performance, External classroom factors, Factors, Inputs, Internal classroom factors, Outputs, Poor academic performance.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU:	African Union
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
DNEA:	Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment
EFA:	Education For All
ELPP:	English Language Proficiency Programme
EMIS:	Education Management Information System
ETSIP:	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
FDGs:	Focus Group Discussions
GRN:	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HIGCSE:	Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education
HIV:	Human Immune Virus
IGCSE:	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IUM:	International University of Management
JSC:	Junior Secondary Certificate

MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MIB:	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NAMCOL:	Namibia College of Open Learning
NAMPA:	Namibia Press Agency
NANSO:	Namibia National Students Organization
NANTU:	Namibia National Teachers Union
NCES:	National Center for Education Statistics
NIED:	National Institute for Educational Development
NPC:	National Planning Commission
NSSCH:	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher
NSSCO:	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Polytech:	Polytechnic of Namibia
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SDF:	School Development Fund
SG:	State Grant

TUN: Teachers' Union of Namibia

TV: Television

UN: United Nations

UNAM: University of Namibia

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF: United Nations Children Fund

UPE: Universal Primary Education

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 Introduction

Over the past 5 years, the academic performance of Grade 12 learners has been consistently low overall in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia (MoE, 2011). Consistent poor quality of education in general is evident in the high repetition and failure rate at both primary and secondary schools (MoE, 2011).

While it is understood that all school subjects are of paramount importance to the socio-economic development of any society, it was not the intention of the researcher to identify and understand factors that influence the academic performance of all school subjects. The researcher focused on English Language (L 2) which is a subject and the medium of instruction, as well as a core and pre-requisite subject for admission to institutions of higher learning (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). A minimum of 25 points for entry into institutions of higher learning has been set, which should include English Language (L 2) at level E or better at NSSCO (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). In all public schools in Namibia, English is offered both as a medium of instruction and as a compulsory subject in compliance with Article 3 of the Namibian Constitution which stipulates that the official language in Namibian schools shall be English. This means examinations are taken in English.

The Oshikoto Region of Namibia failed to provide quality education to the Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) to acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to realize academic success (MoE, 2015). Poor quality academic performance of the Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region is a great concern as it may directly or indirectly pose a threat to the development of Namibia and the world at large.

Based on the magnitude of poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) in secondary schools in the Oshikoto region of Namibia, it is imperative to specifically identify and examine causal factors empirically. It is this context that provides the primary motivation for this study. In other words, a study of this nature is necessary to be carried out in order to be able to recommend solutions to the problem in order to improve results.

Poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) derails the socio-economic development of the country (Namibia) as envisioned by Namibia Vision 2030 Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development. The Namibia Vision 2030 Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development calls for the transformation of Namibia into a knowledge-based society by the year 2030. In this respect, it is nationally agreed upon that the transformation process of turning Namibia into a knowledge-based society can only be achieved through the provision of quality education and the attainment of quality educational outcomes (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004).

For Namibia to achieve its Vision 2030, poor quality learning outcomes require focused interventions to rapidly and drastically improve the academic achievement of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the country. It was found important, therefore, that

an examination be carried out to identify and examine some of the factors that are closely associated with or linked to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia, in order to recommend appropriate strategies to improve the pass rate.

This study identified factors which influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. It was important to conduct such a study to identify and understand how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, because over the past five years, the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) has not improved (2010-2015). The failure rate of the Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region is close to 30 %, which is considered very high (MoE, 2015). The quality of the output of secondary education is disturbing at both regional and national levels as the total number of Grade 12 graduates who qualify for entry into University remained very low at 29.8 % in the 2015 academic year (MoE, 2016).

Comparing English Language (L 2) results with other subjects, for example, Biology, Mathematics, Geography, Physical Science and Accounting, the results remain unsatisfactory. For 2014 academic year, nationally, many learners were not graded in the subjects such as Mathematics (26.7%), Biology (26.3 %), Geography (25.7 %), and Accounting (25.6 %). In the 2016 academic year, the trend did not improve as the high percentage of Grade 12 learners were ungraded in the subjects like Mathematics (20.7

%), Biology (13.7 %), Geography (12.8 %) and Physical Science (10.4 %) in the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSC-O) national examinations (MoE, 2016).

1.2 Background to the study

There is a world-wide agreement that education is a critical factor to the socio – economic development of any country (UNICEF, 2014). It is for this reason that the United Nations (1948) declared the Universal Human Rights with Article 26 guaranteeing the right to education (UNESCO, 2016). In the year 2000, one hundred and sixty-four countries attended the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, where participants re-affirmed the vision of the World Declaration on Education for All, adopted ten years earlier in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO, 2000). Education is a fundamental human right, a critical factor to sustainable development, peace and stability within and among countries. Participants signed the Dakar Framework for Action to provide universal primary education to all children; boys and girls equally, in order to ensure that all children around the globe acquire basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to enable them understand their environments better.

Learners' academic performance is vital for the socio-economic development of society (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). The social and economic development of any country is directly linked to student academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Maybe the academic performance of learners determines their quality and the extent to which they can become great leaders and provide for the manpower requirements of the nation to drive its socio-economic development.

In the 21st century, the era of globalization and technological expansion, education is considered as a first step for every human activity. It plays a vital role in the development of human capital and is linked to an individual's well-being and opportunities for better living (Battle & Lewis, 2002). Therefore, it is a key role player which serves as a catalyst for the attainment of a country's vision (MoE, 2011).

Education is life, because it ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to increase their productivity and improve their quality of life. It is considered a basic need that supports the fulfilment of other basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, and security; which helps in the improvement of quality of life (Lleras-Muney, 2005). Owing to its positive effects on earnings and on housing, water, sanitation, utilization of health facilities, empowerment of women in taking well-informed decisions related to fertility, family welfare and family health; education has been regarded as an instrument for poverty reduction (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004).

Empirical evidence shows that education plays a significant role in influencing an individual's economic and social circumstances, with formal schooling playing an important role in the enhancement of economic growth (Lindahl, 2005). By increasing literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, education increases individual productivity and earnings. It is believed that productivity leads to new sources of earnings which enhance the economic growth of a country (UNICEF, 2014). The quality of learners' academic performance therefore, remains top priority for educators, because it is meant to make a difference in terms of sustainable socio-economic development locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It is a principal means for increasing the

productive capabilities of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions (Koskei, Tonui & Simiyu, 2015).

Education is a critical factor which plays a significant role in influencing the economic and social development of a country (Engin-Demir, 2009). It is for this reason that governments around the globe committed themselves to the provision of basic education to ensure their citizens gain literacy and numeracy. It is generally believed that literacy is a critical factor which contributes to socio-economic and sustainable development for future generations (UNDP, 2016). However, there are challenges that hamper the achievement of good quality learning outcomes.

Studies have been carried out to identify and examine causal factors of poor academic performance in a number of countries around the globe (Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013). Most of these studies focus on the interaction of family (home)-related factors, teacher-related factors, school-related factors and learner-related factors (Diaz, 2003; Mlambo, 2011; Fakude, 2012). Findings of these studies point to hard work and discipline, previous schooling, parents' education, family income, and self-motivation as factors that influence the academic performance of learners in schools (Harb & Shaarawi, 2006). However, it is noted that the combination of factors that influence academic performance varies from one academic environment to another, from one set of group of learners to the next set of group of learners and indeed, from one cultural setting to another (Mlambo, 2011). Hence, the present study, being conducted in a different environment and culture and with different learners, may bring new insights to the problem under investigation.

In Trinidad and Tobago, Mlambo (2011) examined factors that affect students' academic performance in the West Indies. The findings revealed that factors such as poor school attendance and lack of commitment were responsible for learners' poor academic performance. Declining class attendance in schools around the world eventually leads to high failure rate among learners and the throughput of education system is reduced (Mlambo, 2011; Fakude, 2012).

In Pakistan, Mushtaq and Khan (2012) carried out a study to explore the important factors that affect the academic performance of the students. The findings revealed two categories of factors (internal and external) which can have either positive or negative effects on the academic performance of learners. The internal factors include students' competency in English, class schedules, class size, class environment, learning facilities and the teacher's role in the class. For example, large class size and unconducive classroom environment have negative effect on learners' academic performance. On the other hand, external factors include extra-curricular activities, family problems, work and financial issues. It was established that both categories of factors were at play.

Similarly, Amitava, Manojit, Seswata and Braja-Gopal (2010) conducted a study on factors that affect students' academic performance in Pakistan. The study revealed a number of socio-economic factors such as students' attendance in the class, family income, mother and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence of trained teachers in schools, sex of the students, and distance of schools; as factors that affected students' academic performance in Pakistan show implications to current study. For

example, high teacher learner and lack of specialist teachers in schools may influence negatively academic performance of learners.

Some studies (e.g. Chambers & Schreiber, 2004; McCoy, 2005) identify gender, ethnicity and father's occupation as significant contributors to students' academic achievement. Above and beyond these, other demographic factors that influence the academic performance of learners are still prevalent at the individual level (Capraro, Capraro & Wiggins, 2000). Studies (e.g. Ma, 2001; Mitchell & Collman, 2001; Jeynes, 2002) reveal that parental education and family socio-economic status positively influence the quality of academic performance of learners. Studies revealed that students with high level of socio-economic status perform better than the middle class students and the middle class students perform better than the students with low level of socio-economic status (Garzon, 2006; Kahlenberg, 2006; Kirkup, 2008). It was also found that low socio-economic status of parents hinders individuals from gaining access to sources and resources of learning (Duke, 2000; Eamon, 2005). Low socio-economic status adversely affects the academic performance of learners, dragging them down to a lower level (Trusty, 2000). It is also observed that the economically disadvantaged parents are less able to afford the cost of education of their children at higher level, and consequently the children do not work at their fullest potential (Rouse & Barrow, 2006).

Krashen (2005) found that learners whose parents are educated perform better in school than their counterparts whose parents are less educated. Educated parents have the

capacity to communicate with their children regarding school work, activities and information being taught at school.

Mushtaq and Khan (2012) agree with Hijazi and Naqvi (2006) on the view that the academic performance of a learner depends on a number of factors such as socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors. Most studies (e.g. Mlambo, 2011; Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013) have shown similar factors around the globe, which influence the academic performance of learners. However, differences are noticeable in the way such factors may influence the academic performance of learners. A particular factor may have positive learning outcomes in a particular school, while in another school it may affect the learning outcomes in a negative way.

It is evident that poor academic performance of learners in schools is a worldwide concern, and Africa is not exempt (Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013). Bolu-Steve and Sanni (2013) identify multiple factors that affect educational outcomes of learners in Nigeria. Family factors have been identified as among the most critical factors that have either positive or negative influence on the education of the child. Parental level of education and parental involvement in the education of their children has been seen as affecting learners' academic performance (Shililifa, 2006; Erlendsdottir, 2010). In terms of parental level of education Shililifa (2006) argues that educated parents can assist their children in doing homework and can also provide supplementary teaching aids, while illiterate parents cannot assist their children in doing homework. Scholars (e.g. Shaimemanya et

al. 2008) argued that despite successful and appropriate planning of parental involvement in low socio-economic status areas, in practice, this meets with resistance and lack of parental support. This reflects that parental level of education has a negative or positive impact on the learners' educational and occupational aspirations. This is also confirmed by scholars Mancebon and Mar-Molinero, (2000); Ma, (2001); Chevalier and Lanot, (2002); Schiller, Khmelkov and Wang, (2002) who stressed the significance of parental level of education and parental involvement in the education of their children. Literature (e.g. Fantuzzo & Tighe, 2000; Veenstra & Kuyper, 2004) points the importance of parental involvement in improving the quality of learners' academic performance and also points out how parental involvement in education of learners facilitates access to progression within education.

On the contrary, an unstable family may contribute to moral decay among learners which may lead to poor academic performance of learners. Scholars (e.g. Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013) argue that a child brought up in an unstable and economically-disadvantaged family background is more likely to perform poorly because he or she lacks some basic needs such as food, clothing and proper shelter. However, Malecki and Demaray (2006) concluded that students from low socio-economic background could perform well in their studies if their parents were involved with their schooling.

In the Republic of South Africa, Fakude (2012) carried out a study to examine the effects of parental involvement on academic outcomes of their children. Findings revealed that

parental involvement was the most significant factor that affected learners' academic outcomes positively. Learners benefit academically when there is a close relationship between parents and the school.

Sub-Saharan African countries such as Namibia, South Africa and Lesotho have factors in common that influence the academic performance of learners in any school grade (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008). Different factors like demographic, political, cultural conditions and education provision have been credited with impacting on academic performance (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008; Mlambo, 2011).

Before Namibia gained its independence in 1990, there was no compulsory education in the country (Amukugo, 2002). Many children in the rural areas either started schooling much later than age seven, the Namibian schooling entry age, or did not enroll in school at all. The consequence was that, at independence, there was a high rate of illiteracy in Namibia, especially in the northern part of the country where most indigenous Namibians live (Amukugo, 2002). In Namibia, education is one of the government's top priorities, because it is considered one of the key factors for the country's development (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004). It is important for Namibia that its Grade 12 learners do well in their academic performance.

Thus, the Government of the Republic of Namibia annually allocates the largest portion of the national budget to education (MoE, 2015). The budget for education has escalated from around N\$600 million in the first year of independence to a whopping N\$ 5 billion in 2010 and to N\$ 13 billion in 2015 (MoE, 2015). In 2016 academic year, N\$ 3 749 926 000

was allocated to secondary education for the purpose of operational activities such as salaries, in-service training of teachers, provision of learning support materials, textbooks, and other teaching materials, as well as additions or improvements to teaching infrastructure (MoE, 2016). This shows that the Ministry of Education (2016) made efforts in the provision of teaching and learning materials to improve quality education at secondary level.

However, despite such huge capital investments, learning outcomes have not improved as the large number of the Namibian learners has failed Grade 12 examinations and consequently ended up roaming the streets (MoE, 2010; MoE, 2011). Statistics show poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners (MoE, 2015) below fifty percent in English Language (L 2). In 2010 only 28.41 % qualified for entrance to institutions of higher learning such as University of Namibia (UNAM), Polytechnic of Namibia (Polytech) and the International University of Management (IUM). In 2015 at national level only 29.8 % qualified for entrance to University, while close to 30 %, being ungraded in English Language (L 2) (MoE, 2016). In the 2016 academic year, the trend remained the same with a high percentage of Grade 12 learners, close to 30 %, being ungraded in English Language (L 2) in the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSC-O) National examinations (MoE, 2016).

In the Oshikoto Region, a total of 2,146 Grade 12 full time learners entered the October / November 2014 NSSC-O level examinations. Only 686 learners obtained pass rates of A-D symbols (32 %) in English Language (L 2), out of 2,146 learners. A total number of

1460 (68%) out of 2,146 obtained E-U symbols in English Language (L 2); which means they could not satisfy the requirements of the National examinations in English Language (L 2). Consequently, they lead a hopeless life as it is difficult for an underperformed and failed person to get a well-paying job, as both government and private sector need trained people who have passed English Language at Grade 12 as a pre-condition. It is noted that with the emergence of a 'knowledge economy', there is little room for unskilled labour (Sargeant & Cowin, 2011). Literature shows that the unskilled work that is available is subject to casualization, and is not well paid (Sargeant & Cowin, 2011).

This shows that poor academic performance, especially of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), poses a challenge to the development of countries, especially developing countries such as Namibia (NPC, 2013; UNICEF, 2014; Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2015). The low academic achievement requires focused interventions to drastically improve academic performance (MoE, 2016), as significant bottlenecks in terms of learning outcomes are still evident in secondary education (UNICEF, 2014; MoE, 2015).

Despite the fact that the Government of the Republic of Namibia has made education accessible to all, the poor academic performance in Namibian schools is very high at secondary education level (MoE, 2015). Poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Namibian secondary schools has been a major concern for stakeholders in education over the past five years (MoE, 2015). Schools, especially senior secondary schools, have shown poor academic performance in English

Language (L 2) in both National Examinations, namely; the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSC-O) and Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Higher Level (NSSC-H). There is little change in the Grade 12 national results (MoE, 2010). In fact, it looks as if the Grade 12 examination results at national level have in the past three or four years stagnated or even become poorer. It was for this reason that in the 2010 academic year, various stakeholders, including regional directors of education, inspectors of education, advisory teachers, principals of secondary schools, Grade 12 teachers, Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU), Teachers Union of Namibia (TUN), Managers of Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), and Namibia National Students Organization (NANSO) in all fourteen regions of Namibia, were pressurized to improve the academic performance of the Grade 12 learners in the NSSCO and NSSCH examinations (MoE, 2010). The Ministry of Education required secondary schools to develop and implement an action plan to make the year 2010 the year in which all educational regions performed better in the NSSCO and NSSCH examinations (MoE, 2010).

Despite this arrangement, no significant improvement was made in English Language (L 2) and in general secondary education attainment level, as the total number of Grade 12 graduates who qualified for entry into University remained below 30 % nationally in the 2015 academic year (MoE, 2016).

Similarly, the Polytechnic of Namibia, Opposition Parties, Teachers' Union of Namibia (TUN), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), students' organizations and business

personalities have called for education methods to be revamped to accommodate and align with the local environment and market needs (New Era; 2007 March, 09). Public pressure on regional directors of education, inspectors of education, school principals and teachers to improve academic performance has led to schools coming up with various performance improvement strategies. Contrary, a great concern exists as some of the strategies employed by some regions and schools to improve their academic performance did yield anticipated results. Consequently, some regions in Namibia consistently continue to perform well in the Grade 12 examinations, while others perform worse than before (MoE, 2016).

The following tables (Table 1 & Table 2) show the percentage of Grade 12 learners who qualified for admission to institutions of higher learning for the past three years (2014-2016) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia, and the percentage of learners who did not qualify for admission (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016).

Table 1-1: Oshikoto Regional Performance (MoE, 2016)

Academic year	Intake	N=Qualified	% Pass rate	N=Unqualified	%Failure rate
2014	2209	774	35.03	1435	64.96

2015	2253	742	32.93	1511	67.07
2016	2409	847	35.15	1562	64.84

Table 1-2: Performance of learners in English Language (L 2) in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (MoE, 2016)

Academic year	Subject	Intake	Obtained A-D symbols	%Pass rate	Obtained E-U symbols	%Failure rate
2014	English L2	2146	686	32	1460	68
2015	English L2	2175	509	23.4	1666	76.6
2016	English L2	2163	417	19.3	1746	80.7

Such poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) presents a threat to the present and future development of Namibia. Statistical evidence shows that learning outcomes in Namibian secondary education are not satisfactory (MoE, 2016). There is a national concern among stakeholders in Namibia about the low academic achievement of secondary school learners. The former Minister of Education, Nangolo Mbumba, had this to say: “We are not producing citizens who are capable of making Namibia a knowledge-based economy as it is expected of us, as per Vision 2030” (MoE, 2007, p.5.). Mbumba's statement echoes those by South African educationists (Legotlo, Maaga & Sebengo, 2002) who note that the low internal efficiency of the education system implies more wastage and increase in the cost of education. This means that the social cost of secondary education increases without necessarily increasing the social benefits. The consequence of not producing well educated citizens leads to social wastage of billions of dollars of the nation (Legotlo et al., 2002). The public and the government also affirm that their huge investments in education are not yielding the desired results (Tweya, Personal Communication, September 02, 2009). According to Tweya (2009), parents and government believe that secondary education is the most important thing that the vast majority of youth will receive for the foreseeable future, and it must provide the foundation for lifelong learning. It is believed that good quality general education (Pre-Grade -12) builds the foundation skills required to increase the number of school leavers who can enter higher education institutions in the country (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004).

The poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) is a direct non-compliance with Article 3 of the Namibian Constitution. Therefore, this study aimed to examine and identify factors that influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The study aimed to identify and examine how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia with the ultimate aim of recommending solutions to the problem to improve results.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Owing to the consistently low educational attainment in Namibian education in general and specifically in English Language (L 2) as discussed, there is a need for academic inquiry. Despite this continued poor performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), to the present researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia to examine and identify factors that influence the poor academic performance of these learners in this subject. It is therefore, hoped that knowledge of the determinants of the poor academic performance in this subject would be a starting point to suggest strategies to improve results. The present study has, therefore, been undertaken to understand what is happening in English Language (L 2).

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

What factors influence the academic performance of grade 12 learners in English language (L 2) in the Oshikoto region?

1.4.2 Sub research questions

- How do school-based factors influence the academic performance of grade 12 learners in English language (L 2) in the Oshikoto region?
- Identify home-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region?
- Examine teacher-related factors that influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region?
- How do learner-related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region?
- How can the challenges encountered in English Language (L 2) be mitigated in order to improve the performance of learners in this subject?

1.5 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are to identify and examine:

- factors which influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.
- how school-based factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.
- home- related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.
- teacher-related factors that influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.
- how learner-related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.
- strategies that can be effected in order to mitigate the challenges encountered in English Language (L 2) in order to improve learners' performance in these subjects.

1.6 The purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to identify and examine factors which influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region. The study examined how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence Grade 12 learners'

academic performance in English Language (L 2) in National examinations in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study could be beneficial to the principals, parents, learners as well as to future researchers in establishing factors contributing to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The findings and recommendations of this study may inform principals on the recommended strategies to mitigate the effect of factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The findings may also be useful to English Language (L 2) teachers who intend to promote academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Principals and parents may know the factors that influence and contribute to the poor academic performance among Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) and hence, take remedial action. The findings could help parents to identify and address home-related factors that negatively influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The findings may also enable learners to know the factors that lead to the poor academic performance amongst them. Knowing the factors that influence poor academic performance among Grade 12 learners may empower them to be vigilant and proactive in their studies to avoid poor academic performance. The research findings may also serve as future reference for other researchers and add to the existing body of literature in the area.

1.8 Delimitations

This study identified and examined how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) only. Given the fact that Namibia consists of fourteen regions, the researcher selected Oshikoto Region based on pass rates. It was impossible and, indeed, not necessary to examine and identify factors that influence academic performance in all fourteen regions of Namibia. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) stressed that the researcher's own purpose determines which settings and groups will be the most interesting and yield the most insights. The researcher chose whom to study, where and why. This study was limited to four secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region based on their English Language (L 2) pass rate.

1.9 Definitions of terms

The followings key terms are defined in the context of this study.

Internal classroom factors: Internal classroom factors are defined as those that the learner brings with him or her to a particular learning situation. They include attitudes, aptitudes, perceptions, and motivation. Attitudes can be defined as a particular way in which a person responds to people and events (Swan & Fisch, 2010). In education there are various stakeholders including learners themselves, their teachers, parents and school communities at large. To ensure good results when it comes to learners' academic performance, these stakeholders were expected to work together. The positive attitudes of all stakeholders are important and are believed to influence learners' academic

performance (Makuwa, 2004). Generally, it is accepted that internal factors may have positive or negative impact on the learners' learning outcomes. In the context of this study, for example, a learner with good attitudes towards his or her learning process is likely to perform better than the one with bad attitudes towards his or her learning. Attitudes work hand in hand with motivation. People's attitude and beliefs have great impact on directing and maintaining one's motivation (Nwihim (2007). For Legotlo et al., (2002) learners' poor academic performance can be influenced by amongst others poor motivation. Learners who are poorly motivated to do their school work are likely to perform poorly. Poor motivation of learners leads to poor commitment to their learning, consequently, learners end up performing poorly in national examinations. Contrarily, well-motivated learner commits him or herself to the school works and at the end excels in examinations (Nampala, 2013). In the present study, the term is used as explained above.

External classroom factors: External factors are defined as those factors that characterize a particular learning situation. In the context of this study, external factors include the resources, physical facilities, socio-economic conditions of learners, parental involvement in the education of their children, school culture and attitudes of teachers toward teaching and learning. Generally, these factors are closely related in influencing learners' learning outcomes. Availability of resources and physical facilities motivate learners to perform better than their counterparts who lack resources and physical facilities. Learners with access to more educational and non-educational resources are more likely to perform better than their counterparts that are less resourced (Arends et al., 2001).

Closely associated with the attitudes of learners and teachers toward learning and teaching is the influence of the school culture on learners' performance (Lethoko, Heystek & Maree, 2002). Learners' educational outcome and academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school they attend. Quality parental involvement in the education of their children and keeping lines of communication open with teachers and principals are important factors in determining the performance of the learners (Mushaandja, 2002; Singh et al. (2004). In the present study, the term is used as defined above.

Academic performance: It is defined as the extent to which a learner, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. For example, the completion of educational degree represents academic achievement. For Fakude (2012) academic performance is measured through tests and examinations conducted in every subject at end of every semester/ term. In this investigation, academic performance refers to the level at which Grade 12 learners perform in their subjects in the final national examinations (MoE, 2010). Grade 12 learners were expected to understand all basic competencies (MoE, 2006).

Poor academic performance: Poor academic performance is defined as failing to meet the average academic performance in test or examination scores as determined by the authority (Oparanya, Kisiangani & Okiiya, 2015). It refers to failure to meet the specified basic syllabus competencies (MoE, 2006). The Examination Board constructs examination questions at the end of each school term, which cover specified parts of the syllabus. By failing to meet the specified basic competencies or the requirements of the set examinations, learners obtain poor academic results.

Factor: A factor can be defined as the circumstance or event which can influence results (Waite & Hawker, 2009). In this study, as discussed earlier, factor refers to attitude, motivation, poverty, family, socio-economic status, school culture, environment, resource and instructional-learning materials, physical facilities, water crisis in school, power failure in school, strike, flood, death in family. A factor is any event that can positively or negatively influence the academic performance of learners. For example, a death which occurs in a family during the time of examinations may negatively affect affected learner's

academic performance. As discussed, learners' academic performance are affected and influenced by multiple factors.

Inputs: In language learning input is the language data which the learner is exposed to. It is commonly acknowledged that for second language acquisition to take place there must be two prerequisites, they are second language available to the learners and a set of internal mechanism to account for how L 2 data were processed (Nickols, 2007). Towards the issue of input there are greatly three views namely behaviorist, mentalist and interactionist view, each holding a different emphasis in explaining L 2 acquisition. A behaviorist view treats language learning as environmentally determined, control from outside by the stimuli learners are exposed to and the reinforcement they receive. In contrast, mentalist views/theories emphasize the importance of learner's 'black box'. They maintain that learner's brains are equipped to learn language and all that is needed is minimal exposure to input in order to trigger acquisition (Nickols, 2007). Interactionist theories acknowledge the importance of both input and internal language processing, emphasizing the joint contribution of linguistic environment and the learners' internal mechanism in interaction activities. In this study, input is used as defined above.

Outputs: For Hayajneh (2007) output is the language a learner produces. Output plays a part in L 2 acquisition. Output was viewed as a way of producing what had previously been learned and the idea that output could be part of the learning mechanism. Output might stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing

needed for accurate production. Output, thus would seem to have a potentially significant role in the development of syntax and morphology.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter provided the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and research objectives guiding the study. The chapter also presented the significance of the study, the delimitations of the study and definitions of terms used in the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the study.

1.11 Organization of the study

The study is organized and structured into five chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction- This chapter provided the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives and significance of the study. Delimitations and the definitions of terms were also described in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review- This chapter reviewed related literature. Specifically, it looked at the theoretical and conceptual framework. Relevant studies based on the research questions were reviewed to establish what is already known or not known about the questions raised in this study by the researcher. It also looked at empirical studies to see the gap in knowledge that the present study would fill.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology- This chapter presented the research methodology that was used in the study. The chapter highlighted the main research methodological components, which are the research paradigm, research design, the research approach, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, credibility and trustworthiness of research data / validity and reliability of questionnaires, data collection procedures and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis/ discussion- This chapter presented the data collected and analyzed/ discussed them.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations- This chapter summarized the whole study, drew conclusions and made recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the reviewed literature related to this study. Specifically, it looks at the theoretical and conceptual frameworks informing the study. Relevant literature based on the research questions is reviewed to establish what is already known or not known about the questions raised in this study. Empirical studies are also examined to see the gap in knowledge that the present study intends to fill.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study was guided and underpinned by the Systems Theory developed by von Bertalanffy (1930). The Systems theory provides an analytical framework for viewing an organization in general. It recognizes interdependence of personnel, impact of environment on organizational structure (e.g. a school and its function), effect of outside stakeholders on the organization, and how changes can impact the organization. The Systems Theory postulates that an organized enterprise does not exist in a vacuum; it is dependent on its environment in which it is established and situated (Hayajneh, 2007). Hayajneh (2007) says that the inputs from the environment are received by the organization, and then the organization transforms them into outputs. In accordance with the Systems Theory which is an input - output model, a school, is dependent on its environment in which it is established (Hayajneh, 2007; Nickols, 2007).

The Systems Theory has been used as a framework to examine how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region. As an input-output model, the theory helps one to understand that learners' results are influenced by what is put into the system; both human and material inputs. The Input-Process-Output Model asserts that a system transforms inputs into outputs (Nickols, 2007). A system is composed of interacting parts that operate together to achieve set goals. It is intended to absorb inputs, process them in some ways and then produce outputs.

Organizations are increasingly described as absorbers, processors and generators of anticipated outcomes and the organizational system is envisioned as being made up of several interdependent factors (Bascia, 2014). The Systems Theory says that a change in any factor within the organization has an impact on all other organizational or subsystem components (Bascia, 2014). Thus, the inputs, the processors and the generators should function well in order to achieve the desired outcome (Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014). The Systems Theory of Input-Output is relevant to this study which sought to examine and establish factors that influence Grade 12 learners' performance in English Language (L 2) in four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region.

For Hayajneh (2007), the Systems Theory can be used to clearly and concisely understand the organizational structures, input, processes, outcomes and their interaction within the environment. Bascia (2014) concurs with Nickols (2007) who argues

that all systems in the organization must work in harmony in order to achieve the overall organizational goals. From the input-output perspective, one can assume that learners with high admission points (for example, 37 to 42 points in Namibia), high social economic background and good school background will perform well if the school facilities and the teachers and the management of the school are good in terms of team-work towards the attainment of their set goals. This theory requires understanding among all stakeholders involved in the system. It requires the effort of all parties involved and collective effort so that all people in the school have an idea of what they are trying to achieve.

Table 3 below illustrates the relevance of the Systems theory to this study.

Table 2-1: The Input-Process-Output Model

Input	Process	Output
Learners Principals Teachers Parents / community	Teaching and learning	Academic performance

Money		
Information		
Materials		

Source: Nickols, 2007.

In this study, the Systems Theory is supported and complemented by the School Context Model (Bascia, 2014). Both the Systems Theory and the School Context Model help to understand how the school context shapes core processes of teaching and learning. The concept of school context characterizes schools as dynamic systems that influence a broad range of dimensions of student learning, including affective, behavioral as well as academic domains (Deakin-Crick, Green, Barr, Shafr & Peng, 2013; Gu & Johansson, 2013).

The School Context Model (Bascia, 2014) in supporting and complementing the Systems Theory Model, emphasizes ‘sub-systems’ of learners, teachers and leaders who directly or indirectly influence learning outcomes (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999; Deakin-Crick et al., 2013). In terms of the School Context Model or framework, classrooms as settings for learning and teaching, are “nested” within teacher communities, which are nested within schools, which are nested in the wider community (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999).

The Model suggests that what occurs beyond the classroom influences and is influenced by what occurs within the classroom. Both the Systems Theory Model and the School Context Model suggest that learners' surroundings, including their home, school, church, neighborhood, culture and government have an influence on the teaching and learning outcomes (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999; Deakin-Crick et al., 2013). The Systems Model includes any immediate relationships or organizations learners may interact with. The way these groups or organizations interact with learners will have an effect on how learners perform. The more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and environments are, the better learners will be able to perform academically (Nickols, 2007).

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) concurs with Talbert and Laughlin (1999) that the classroom itself is the locus of regular and sustained interactions among students and teachers around the curriculum. Although learning for example online and open-distance learning can take place outside the classroom, it is generally believed that once the classroom is placed at the heart of students' opportunities to learn, the quality of teachers' instructional practices become of paramount importance (Bascia, 2014).

The Systems Model and School Context Model focuses at the organisational performance within an interactive system of nested influences between the learners and their environment. Such kind of interactive system is referred to as a cycle of events and is characterized by the input-process-output formulation, by transactions with the environment, and by the exchange of outputs for new inputs in order to close and re-initiate the cycle of events that defines the system (Nickols, 2007). Literature (e.g. Nickols,

2007) indicates that to render effectively and efficiently its services to learners and all stakeholders it is generally acknowledged that a school should have means of exchanging money and engage in transactions with other organisations for more teaching and learning instructional materials, equipments, facilities and for required human resources.

At a general level, in the context of this study, the school is considered as a processor, while at the more specific level, human beings (e.g. teachers, learners, non-teaching staff etc.) are viewed and considered as the processors and the process itself consists of one or more steps (interactions) in a task or procedure, which lead to the resultant outputs (Nickols, 2007). In the context of this study, academic outcomes of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) are viewed as a product of interactions of players in the environment.

The significance of the School Context Model to this study is seen in its interdependence, interconnectedness within the school, and between the school and its environment (Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014). The school as an organization is characterized by a set of elements in interrelations. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education (2005) advocates the links between school and community, and between school clusters and other stakeholders, to improve teaching and learning practices by sharing expertise and resources among teaching staff, and to improve and facilitate general administration of school and utilise resources from several schools.

Both the Systems Theory Model and the School Context Model provide an analytical framework for viewing an organization, such as a school, and giving it a general

description and detailed explanation (Hayajneh, 2007; Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014). They recognize the interdependence of personnel (teaching and non-teaching staff) within the school, the impact of the environment on a school structure and its function, and the impacts outside stakeholders have on the school progress. The survival of the school is believed to be dependent on, and influenced by, super systems for example the church, business, development, politics and technology in the environment.

The Systems Theory and the School Context Model focus on the environment and how changes in the environment can impact school affairs (Hayajneh, 2007). Therefore, both the Systems Theory Model and the School Context Model seek to explain the synergy and interdependence of a school , home and other institutions like neighborhood, church, state etc.(Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014). They broaden our theoretical lenses on school behavior and help us to view the complexity of school systems in a holistic view. They are theories emphasizing that actions and outcomes at the collective level emerge from the actions and interactions of the individuals that make up the collective (Bascia, 2014).

The Figure below illustrates the School Context Model.

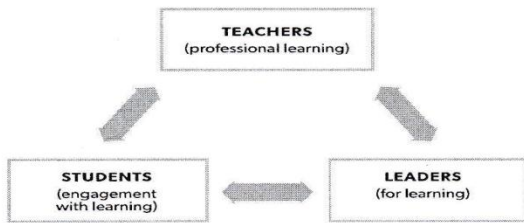


Figure 2-1: How school context shapes core processes of teaching and learning

Source: Adapted from Deakin et al., 2013.

The figure emphasizes the interdependence between the school and the environment in which it exists and functions. It is assumed that academic performance of learners is influenced by institutional structural factors (internal and external). In the context of this study, which examined how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), the School Context Model was deemed appropriate, because it emphasizes the interdependence between various stakeholders in education. Such interdependence has its influence on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.

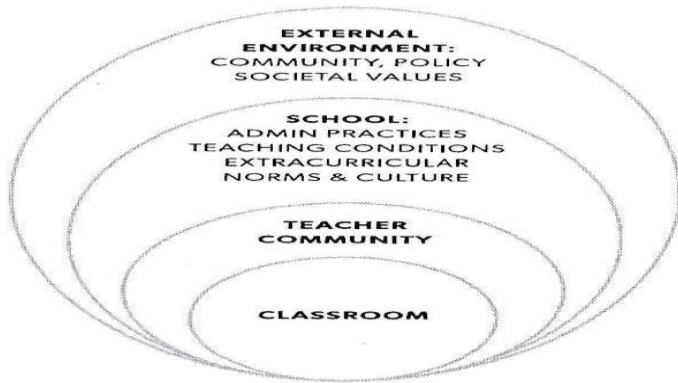


Figure 2-2: Learning and teaching settings that contribute to improved student outcomes

Source: Adapted from Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999.

The School Context Model was used to simplify the interdependence of the school with other stakeholders in the environment. Players (structural institutions) in the environment have an internal and external influence on the learning outcomes of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

2.3 Literature based on research questions

Legotlo et al. (2002) are of the opinion that there are many factors which can influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). This section reviews related literature based on the research questions guiding this study. The section focuses at empirical studies to see gaps in knowledge this study could fill. The section seeks to examine how stakeholders see the influence of different factors such as school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). As discussed, the academic

performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region has been persistently poor (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011; UNICEF, 2016).

2.3.1 School-based factors

2.3.1.1 School environment

An environment is a living, changing and dynamic system which conditions how people feel, think and behave and it affects the quality of their lives (Nkandi, 2015). The environment either works for or against people as they conduct their lives (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). For Orlu (2013) the school environment includes school location, school facilities and school climate that have an impact on the learning outcomes of learners.

Nampala (2013) argues that if learners experience the English Language (L 2) classroom as a caring and supportive place, where there is a sense of belonging, ownership and where everybody is valued and respected, learners tend to participate more fully in the learning process. Similarly, UNICEF (2007) points out that academic achievement of learners are not only influenced by the availability of the necessary teaching aids and resources, but also by the degree to which they are engaged as actors in the education process and their willingness to learn. A supportive school environment can be seen in terms of conducive physical facilities like classrooms, adequate desks, and adequate and relevant textbooks and other relevant instructional materials that have a direct positive impact on performance of learners. In developing countries such as Namibia, where

teachers might be inadequately trained, the textbook is an indispensable resource (MoE, 2008). Scholars (e.g. Onyara, 2013; Biama, 2014) observe how often textbooks determine what learners learn and decide what they should be taught. Textbooks are frequently the only reading materials learners have access to and examinations are often, to a considerable extent, based on an ability to reproduce what is found in textbooks. Juma (2011) links academic performance in examinations to a state of teaching and learning resources in schools. He notes that students from poor backgrounds perform poorly in the examinations, because the poor are often in areas where schools are seriously deprived of vital facilities. Biama (2014) observes that the use of textbooks raises academic standards and increases efficiency of a school system.

Similarly, Mwangi (2013) established that schools with sufficient physical facilities and instructional materials perform better than those not well equipped. Mwangi (2013) further concludes that lack of physical resources and instructional materials is strongly correlated with learners' poor academic achievement.

The quality and adequacy of resources such as physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning materials have a positive direct bearing on the quality of academic outcomes, as they determine how effectively the curriculum is implemented (UNICEF, 2007). It is generally believed that quality learning outcomes cannot be achieved if the resources and facilities are not available or in sufficient quantity and of good quality (Amitava et al., 2010; Farooq et al., 2011; Mlambo, 2011; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

It is for this reason that the Namibian Government initiated the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) to make teaching and learning materials available in Namibian secondary schools in order to improve learning outcomes of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) (MoE, 2007). Additionally, studies (e.g. UNICEF, 2004; UNICEF, 2007) identify inadequate financial resources as one of the key constraints to the attainment of quality learning outcomes.

Asikhia (2010) notes that well prepared adequate learning materials determine the amount of learning that can be placed in a learning setting. He further notes that learning materials of good quality can motivate interest, maintain concentration of learners and make learning more meaningful. In this respect, it is argued that instructional materials such as textbooks, visual and audio materials do not only enhance English communication (speaking skills) between teachers and learners, but also facilitate learner-centred learning through discovery (Fuller, 2007; Mwangi, 2013). They motivate and encourage participation of learners in the learning process of English Language (L 2) and help to clarify concepts and meaning of texts.

Contrarily, schools with abundant resources may not always utilize them efficiently in raising the learners' level of performance, while those with limited resources would utilize whatever they have efficiently to raise the learners' level of performance (Mwangi, 2013).

Shortly after independence (1990), Namibia perceived the need to have a new language policy for schools in order to promote the use of mother tongue alongside English, in schools and colleges of education (MoE, 2008). A unified national language policy

document called Language Policy for schools was formulated and implemented in 1992 (MoE, 2008).

The implementation of the Language Policy for schools in Namibia forms the basis of the Namibian school education system, which is a 12 year system, ranging from grades 1-4 (Junior Primary), grades 5-7 (Senior Primary) and grades 8-12 (grades 8-10 Junior Secondary and grades 11-12 Senior Secondary) education (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011).

The Language Policy for schools was implemented without putting all necessary mechanisms in place like trained English teachers, textbooks, other teaching materials and physical facilities such as libraries, laboratories, which might have a negative influence on academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language in the Oshikoto Region (Tötemeyer, 2010). Therefore, literature reveals that the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in Namibian schools is a major cause of poor academic performance which the Namibian Government has over-looked (MoE, 2008). In Namibia, after independence, teachers were required to teach through the medium of English, but because many of them were not fluent in English, many learners suffered (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). Alexander (2000) was of the view that low English Language proficiency of teachers is an issue which might have influenced low academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2).

Hijazi and Naqvi (2006) have shown the importance of communication (speaking) skills and competence in English towards academic achievement. The Grade 12 learners

sometimes fail English Language (L 2) in a school because there are no specialist teachers for English Language (L 2). Lack of specialist indigenous teachers was highlighted by Tötemeyer (2010) who pointed out that Afrikaans, English and German groups in Namibia taught from Grades 1-12 by specialist teachers in their mother tongue. Consequently, they tend to perform well and achieve better results at Grade 12 and after secondary education compared to the indigenous Namibian learners.

It has also been noted that the Namibian Language Policy was implemented without all the required resources in place, as English teachers were not even trained hence they could not express themselves in English (Tötemeyer, 2010). Additionally, schools outside urban areas used Home Language instead of English Language (L 2) in their Grades 5-7 classes (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011).

Evidently, English Language as an issue comes out as a major problem which negatively influences the academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2) in Namibian schools (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). Research findings (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011) indicate that about 83 percent of learners prefer to use their Home Language for learning purpose and about 87 percent of learners wish to address their teachers in their Home Language. Learners have these preferences, not because they do not understand the importance of English for their future, but because they struggle to understand their teachers and find it difficult to express themselves in English (Urban trust of Namibia, 2011). The Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) found out that the lack of a clear language

policy that is translated into action is a critical factor in poor educational results in Namibian schools.

There are many challenges in the implementation process of the Namibian Language Policy, one of which is lack of English proficiency and low level of literacy (linguistic) among both teachers and learners. The Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) found out that Namibia performs poorly in literacy (linguistic), compared to other countries in East and Southern Africa. Such poor performance in literacy in Namibian schools has mainly been attributed to linguistic challenges related to the implementation of the Language Policy for schools (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011).

School environment plays a major role in influencing academic performance of learners. The more the school environment is conducive the better the academic performance of learners can be. Players (human and material resources) in the environment are all critical to the quality of learning outcomes. This implies that learners' academic results in English Language (L 2) are influenced by what is put into the system, both human and material inputs (Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014). This shows that the achievement of quality education in English Language (L 2) requires collective and concerted effort of various stakeholders in order to realize and attain desirable learning outcomes.

Motanya (2011) observes that the poor learning environment in developing countries has been singled out as one of the major factors that lead to poor academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2). This is due to increased enrolment without further expansion of facilities which leads to over-stretching of resources which in turn affects the

effectiveness of the teaching and learning process; resulting in poor academic performance of students in English Language (L 2) (Motanya, 2011). Studies (e.g. Chimombe, 2011) on the effect of school environment on academic performance, attest to the fact that a school environment such as class size that is not conducive to learning may lead to under-performance.

Class size refers to the teacher-learner ratio in a classroom (MoE, 2004). Although, class size may affect academic performance of learners in all subjects, in the context of the present study, it may determine how effective an English Language (L 2) can assist all learners during English Language (L 2) lessons. A study by Biama (2014) identifies class size as a determinant and contributing factor of academic performance. Others (e.g. Kyoshaba, 2009; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Mwangi, 2013; Nkandi, 2015) indicate that schools with small classes perform better academically in English Language (L 2) than schools with large class sizes. Similarly, Biama (2014) noted that learners in smaller classes tend to perform better in English literacy skills than learners in larger classes. Biama (2014) also establishes that a class size above 40 learners negatively affects learners' academic achievements in English Language (L 2). For this reason, the staffing norms in Namibian schools have been set at 35 learners per teacher (35:1) for primary and 30 learners per teacher (30:1) for secondary schools, to achieve an equitable distribution of teachers among the fourteen regions of Namibia

Uwezo (2011) indicates that shortage of teachers has a strong negative influence on academic achievement of learners in school. The teacher shortage necessitates the teacher-learner ratio in class leading to overcrowding which has negative impact on

learners' academic performance. Overcrowding has impacted negatively on learners' performance in English Language (L 2) (Nampala, 2013). Over-crowded classrooms are influenced by multiple factors that tend to influence inadequacy of classroom activities for learners and ineffective monitoring of learners' performance.

In Namibia, the desire for learners to excel in academic performance in all subjects has been there since independence (1990). This called for good school governance and leadership style (MoE, 2008). Good governance, administration and leadership in school influence the academic performance of learners positively (MoE, 2008). For Biama (2014) school leadership should provide adequate and relevant facilities and resources. Mwangi (2013) is of the view that school administration and leadership are crucial factors in the success of a school. School management requires the school principal to be a visionary leader who can make the right decisions and institute the right strategies to effect improvement in a school (MoE, 2014). The researcher, being a school principal, is aware that the school principal has a significant role to play in planning, influencing, directing, controlling and managing all matters pertaining to education enhancement in the school, as well as in exemplary behavior. In other words, the performance of the school depends on the administrative style of the school principal.

School performance is influenced by the school principal's attributes such as qualification, in-service training, age, experience and tenure of service in the school (Nannyonjo, 2007). The principal should strive to inspire fellow staff members, train novice staff members, work together with people of different ages and lead all staff members as an effective

team (MoE, 2005). Mwangi (2013) notes that lack of communication; poor relationship between head teachers, teachers, and students; inefficient instructional policies and practices; and leaving parents out of school activities, are significant factors contributing to poor academic performance in high schools. Similarly, Uwezo (2011) observes that quality academic performance can be achieved through team-work with parents, encouraging learners and motivating teachers to work together towards the attainment of the common goal, which is to improve and or sustain the quality of learning outcomes of our learners.

The principal is expected to set a climate of high expectations for staff members and learners, to encourage collegial and collaborative leadership style, and to foster team-building. Sushila (2002) notes that the school principal who employs teamwork as a working strategy is bound to obtain high academic performance. It is in this context that Ndunda (2002) remarks that the students' academic performance depends on the school principal since he or she is the focal person in a school upon whom all important functions rest. It is therefore realized that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the school principal (Wanyama, 2013).

2.3.2 Home-based factors

Home-based factors refer to many aspects such as parental involvement, family socio-economic issues, family size, parents' level of education, qualifications of parents, home chores, religious background, values, interests and parents' expectations for their children

(Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Mlambo, 2011; Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013).

Some studies (e.g. Kyoshaba, 2009; Mwaura, 2014) have established how learners coming from diverse home environments are affected differently by such factors. Studies (e.g. Kyoshaba, 2009; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Mwaura, 2014; Wanyama, 2015) have established that a good environment should be provided at home to enable learners to learn in school. Learners' success at school is closely related or linked to their home backgrounds (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Factors linked to the level of education of parents, family income and marital status, for example married teachers may overloaded by both school work and family responsibilities, are determinants of the academic performance and aspirations of learners in school (Kyoshaba, 2009; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

It is generally argued that family socio-economic issues play a significant role in the education of the child either positively or negatively (Hugo, 2002; Farooq et al., 2011; Mlambo, 2011 Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). The higher the status of a family's socio-economic status, the more likely the child is motivated to learn and perform better (Eze, 2002; Kandeyi & Kamuyu, 2006).

Learners whose parents make resources available at home such as written sources e.g. books, dictionaries, and electronic resources e.g. television and computers, perform better in English Language (L 2) compared to their counterparts from poor families (Hugo, 2002; Smith, 2011). Learners who have access to educational materials at home are more informed, more motivated and better assisted to improve their performance in English Language (L 2) than their counterparts from poor families with no educational

resources or parental assistance to improve their performance in English Language (L 2) (Nkandi, 2015).

Ogoye (2007) describes socio-economic status as a critical issue in many African communities where illiteracy and poverty levels are high, which limits parental involvement in their children's school work. Due to poverty, not all parents are able to buy learning materials for their children. Although, there are certain individuals who have done very well academically in spite of the low-income status of their families and the reverse is also true for some children from well off economic status families who have performed dismally academically, some scholars (e.g. Ogoye, 2007) is of the opinion that low family socio-economic status contributes to the lack of concentration of learners and as a result, homework is not guided, is poorly done, is often incomplete or never done at all (Ogoye, 2007).

In some cases, the academic performance of learners can also be attributed to their family well-being status. Adewale (2002) reports that children's academic performance is greatly hindered in rural community where nutritional status is relatively low and health problems are more prevalent. UNICEF (2007) indicates that many African communities are hard hit by the HIV / AIDS pandemic which has a negative impact on the education of most of the affected learners. Various factors were established which influence the academic performance of learners in any school grade (Mlambo, 2011; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013). Apart from family socio-economic status, there are other institutional and structural factors that play a direct significant role in the learning outcomes of learners (Bascia, 2014).

Despite the low level of family socio-economic status, it has also been argued that children from low income families can compete well with their counterparts from high socio-economic backgrounds under the same academic environment (Eze, 2002).

In general terms, parental involvement refers to, amongst others, parental support in many ways, to the education of their children, collaboration and participation of parents in the learning process of their children in order to achieve sound academic success in English Language (L 2). It involves attending various meetings such as parental and subject meetings, monitoring of learners' work, and provision of learners' basic needs (MoE, 2005). Simply put, parental involvement is entirely about supportive interventions which include motivating, guiding and supporting their children on matters affecting their academic performance in English Language (L 2). The Systems Theory of von Bertalanffy (1930) emphasizes the importance of interdependence of school and home/ family and also parental supportiveness in their children's education, which helps learners to achieve quality academic outcomes.

Literature on parental involvement in children's education indicates that academic performance is affected both positively and negatively by multiple socio-cultural factors (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2008; Amitava et al., 2010; Farooq et al., 2011; Mlambo, 2011; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013). Generally, it is argued that learners' academic achievement is highly influenced by the community and the families' attitude towards education (Wanyama, 2013). It has been noted that learners work harder and

perform well if they realize that their parents and the community are interested in their school work (Eze, 2002; Wanyama, 2013).

Wanyama (2015) observes that negative parental attitude such as a lack of moral guidance encourages children to seek employment and drop out of school early. Learners who are not encouraged by their parents in school work are likely to go to school late as they may be given duties to perform before going to school (Wanyama, 2015). It is generally believed that through proper parental guidance, a learner can change his or her study attitudes and habits in order to perform better. Therefore, proper guidance leads to quality academic achievement (Considine & Zappala, 2002; Moon, 2004; Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Farooq et al., 2011). It can be concluded that a properly guided learner is most likely to perform well in school.

The significance of parental involvement in the education of their children has been stressed in literature (e.g. MoE, 2004; Okantey, 2008; Nampala, 2013). This implies that close link between home and school has a critical role to play in the academic performance of learners. Thus, it is argued that English Language (L 2) teachers cannot do their work effectively without the support of parents (Knapp, 2006). It is therefore, of paramount importance for parents to know what is happening in the English Language (L 2) classrooms to be able to provide proper support.

Despite the fact that parental involvement in the education of children in English Language (L 2) is of paramount importance, the findings of the present study showed that illiterate parents are unable to assist their children with English Language (L 2) homework.

2.3.3 Teacher – related factors

2.3.3.1 Code of conduct for teaching service in Namibia

The Code of conduct for teaching service in Namibia in compliance with the Education Act, 2001 (Act No: 16 of 2001) sets the basic professional requirements and minimum standards of professional conduct for teachers, to guide the teaching profession in its quest to deliver a professional service and to promote a sense of professionalism, accountability and responsibility among teachers to improve effective teaching and learning. Education Act, 2001 (Act No: 16 of 2001) generally requires teachers to:

- establish a safe, disciplined and purposeful school environment dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning and teaching process;
- create a caring and nurturing environment for learners to enable them to develop into caring, honest and responsible adults;
- act responsibly and in a clear and transparent manner, bearing in mind the responsibility they hold in their communities and in society;
- be aware of the imbalances that exist in any teaching situation and vow not to use their position to override the best interests of the learners;
- undertake to avoid using violence as a teaching and disciplinary tool;
- execute their duty of care as imposed upon them by any Act, regulation or rule in the interest of the learners; and

- inform themselves about the diverse cultural backgrounds of the learners under their care, to respect and accommodate this diversity and to adapt their classroom approaches accordingly (MoE, 2004, p.22-28).

Teachers are in a unique position as educators of children. Their general conduct, habits, language and private lives have an influence on their learners' academic performance (MoE, 2005). This influence should be positive, but can be negative if the teachers' own lifestyle and conduct set a negative example. Teachers are directly responsible and involved in carrying out all the related activities of the teaching and learning process (MoE, 2002).

Teachers are essential players in promoting quality education in schools because they are catalysts of change (Onyara, 2013). Teachers at all levels of the education system should have access to training and continuing professional development to enable them to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their teaching environments (UNESCO, 2000). The quality of teachers in terms of qualifications, commitment, dedication, motivation and hard work determines largely the quality of education and academic performance of learners (Mwangi, 2013; Nampala, 2013; Wanyama, 2013). It was discovered by scholars (e.g. Kyoshaba, 2009; Dimmock, 2012; Nkandi, 2015) that teacher training and qualifications, motivation, attitudes and age, have direct impact on the academic performance of learners. In Kenya, Musau (2004) examined how teacher related-factors influence learners' performance in the Central Division Machakos District of Kenya. The research findings revealed that, although teachers are highly qualified

academically and professionally, their qualifications had no positive impact on academic performance of Grade 12 students in the division (Musau (2004).

It is argued that learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) depends on the teachers' knowledge and the effective application of pedagogy in the English Language (L 2) classroom (Nampala, 2013). Thus, for learners to perform well in English Language (L 2), the education system needs well trained, competent, knowledgeable, highly motivated and committed English Language teachers who can explain the subject matter to learners and who can vary their teaching approaches to suit in their English Language (L 2) classes (Gonzalez, Yawkey & Minaya-Rowe, 2006; Nkandi, 2015).

Generally, it is observed that a trained teacher has necessary pedagogical skills which promote learners' understanding, thereby promoting academic performance of the learner. Thus, quality teaching and learning of English Language (L 2) is directly linked to the quality of instructions delivered by English Language (L 2) teachers in the classrooms (Nampala, 2013; Nkandi, 2013; Onyara, 2013). Ellis (2002) is of the opinion that weak English Language (L 2) teachers confuse learners because they lack knowledge and skills necessary for quality instruction in English Language (L 2).

2.3.4 Learner-related factors

2.3.4.1 Learners' attitude

Learner-related factors include amongst others, learners' attitude, lack of exposure to English Language, family background, study habits, peer influence, attendance of school

and co-curricular activities (Fakude, 2012; Smith, 2011). Limited exposure to the English Language is detrimental to learners' academic performance. Because of that, learners cannot produce sentences that are just simple (Nkandi, 2015). They have language barriers, as they do not pronounce English words clearly and they avoid the construction of difficult sentences (Knapp, 2006; Nkandi, 2015). As a result of language barriers, English Language (L 2) learners suffer from limited understanding of complex conversations in the English Language (L 2) classroom. Cummins (2004) notices that the group of English Language (L 2) learners who have a language barrier mainly emanate from low socio-economic backgrounds and from illiterate and poor families. The importance of the parents' ability to intervene in the English Language (L 2) education of their children cannot be over-emphasized.

Griffin, (2004) observes that a learner's ability and determination to achieve his or her academic targets influences his or her academic performance. Fakude (2012), in South Africa, concurs with Smith (2011) that lack of commitment, learners' independence in schools and peer influence has a strong negative influence on learners' academic performance in schools.

In secondary schools, learners are far from the supervision of their parents, and at the same time are at the age of establishing social interaction and sexual relationships which may divert their focus of studying. Consequently, they tend to lose their focus of achieving good academic results (Smith, 2011; Fakude, 2012). Lack of time to study has negative effect on learners' academic performance (Chepchieng, 2004). In his study on learners' achievement in Kenya, Mwangi (2013) found that the major problem in high learner

achievement was the learners' poor and negative attitudes towards Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. Consequently, they underperform in the examinations.

Similarly, Wanyama (2013) shares the same sentiment that the major factor which affects learners' performance is the learner's attitude. The present researcher is of the view that the identified learner-related factors impact the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The present study delved more into the area in order to understand more about possible factors that lead to learners' poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) and to suggest strategies to improve the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in particular.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed related literature to the problem under investigation. Specifically, it looked at the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Relevant studies based on the research questions were reviewed to establish what is already known or not known about the questions raised in this study by the researcher. In the process, empirical studies were discussed to see the gap in knowledge that the present study would fill. The next chapter presents the research methodology.

This study identified and examined how related factors based on the research questions influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. Furthermore, the study also sought to understand the challenges and to find out how challenges

encountered in the teaching of English Language (L 2) by the selected four secondary schools in the Oshikoto region could be mitigated.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used in the study. The chapter highlights the main research methodological components employed, which are; the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, credibility and trustworthiness of the collected data, validity and reliability of questionnaires, data collection procedures and data analysis methods. It also presents at the ethical norms that were observed in this study.

3.2 Research paradigm

The term paradigm originated from the Greek word “paradeigma” which means “pattern” and was first used by Kuhn (1962) to denote a conceptual framework shared by a community of scientists which provided them a convenient model for examining problems and finding solutions. A research paradigm is therefore, defined as an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools (Kuhn, 1962). A scientific research paradigm, in its most basic sense of the word, is a framework containing all of the commonly accepted views about a subject, a structure of what direction research should take, and how it should be performed (Kuhn, 1962).

A paradigm refers to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research (Mertens, 2015). It is considered as a principal guideline which guides researchers on how they should carry their research studies and their role in the research process (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Mertens, 2015). Babbie (2007, p.32.) defines paradigms as models or frameworks for observation and understanding, which shape both what we see and how we understand it. Paradigms are perspectives or ways of looking at reality, and they are the frames of reference we use to organize observations and reasoning (Mertens, 2015).

Researchers approach their studies with a particular paradigm (beliefs or assumptions) in mind to guide their inquiries. These beliefs are related to the nature of reality (ontological issue), the relationship of the researcher to what is being researched (epistemological issue), the role of value in the study (axiological issue) and the research process (methodological issue) (Creswell, 2003).

Morgan (2007) is of the view that paradigms can be conceptualized as systems of intertwined thinking that spell out how research activity is carried out. Haralambos & Holborn (2008) concur with Morgan (2007) that a research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that defines the nature of research enquiry. It is a belief system that guides us on how we do our things and inherently reflects our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Some of the possible worldviews are objectivistic and constructivist

(Muijs, 2011). These different ways of seeing the world have contradictory effects (repercussion) in most academic areas; yet, none of them is considered superior to the other (Muijs, 2011). This shows that paradigms are opposing worldviews or belief systems that are a reflection of, and guide the decisions that researchers make (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Various scholars such as Guba and Lincoln (1994) use the terms “scientific” and “naturalistic” and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) adopted the terms “positivist” and “constructivist” to distinguish the degree of separateness between paradigm positions and between paradigm and method. For example, a quantitative approach implies the holding of positivist paradigm beliefs whereas a qualitative approach implies the holding of beliefs associated with constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2003). Both worldviews are appropriate for certain purposes and insufficient or overly complex for other purposes. A person may also change his or her view depending on the situation where he or she lives (Bryman, 2004). The present study used elements from both views and considered them as complementary.

A paradigm consists of four parts, namely; ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods. Ontology is concerned with the nature of existence (reality) which is considered as the departure point of all research (Grix, 2004). Epistemology comes from the Greek word “epistêmê”, which refers to knowledge (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The epistemological assumption stresses the importance of interaction and relationship of the researcher to what is being researched. In the case of the mixed methods study, researchers should interact with the study participants (Bryman, 2004). For the success

of the research study, the researcher tries to minimize the “distance” or “objective separateness” between himself or herself and those being researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). It was noted by Creswell (2003) that prolonged time in the field by the researcher minimizes the distance as the researcher’s observational role shifts from that of an “outsider” to that of an “insider” during his or her stay in the field. Thus, the assumption of epistemology is that knowledge is gained through specific approaches which take into account the differences between the human world and the objects of natural sciences, and therefore, require the social scientist to understand the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2004).

From the above mentioned distinctions about reality and the relationship between the researcher and the researched being (social actors) emerges the methodological assumption. A research paradigm also relates to methodology which is a research strategy that transforms ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how a research process is conducted. For example, the researcher in a mixed methods approach works out the strategy to conceptualize the entire research process in order to get to know reality (Creswell, 1998; Muijs, 2011). Epistemology and methodology are intimately related; the former involves the philosophy of how we come to know the world and the latter involves the practice. Thus, a researcher’s methodological approach underpinned by, and reflecting specific ontological and epistemological assumptions, represents a choice of approach and research methods adopted in a given study.

The relationship between ontology and epistemology is fundamental. Ontology and epistemology can be considered as the foundations upon which research is built (Grix,

2004). It is the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions that inform the choice of methodology and methods of research.

For Cohen et al. (2003) methods are the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation. Methodology is defined as the strategy, an action plan that justifies the use and choices of certain techniques (Crotty, 1998). This implies that methods of enquiry are the reflections of the researcher's assumptions about reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology).

Research activity is carried out along the ontological question (the structure and type of truth and, consequently, the reality at hand that can be recognized and known about it by the researcher), epistemological(the connection between the knower or could-be knower and what could be known) and methodological assumptions or perspectives(the procedural and methodological issues regarding discovering whatever the researcher wants to know) to reach to its sound conclusion (Bryman, 2004; Morgan, 2007; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Cohen, et al., 2011).

The ontological issue addresses the nature of reality that is internal or external to the researcher. Reality is constructed by individuals involved in the research situation (Creswell, 2003). This means that ontology assumes that reality is subjective and it is indirectly constructed, based on individual conceptualizations and interpretations. Taking into account research approach such as mixed methods, Bryman (2004) sees this approach being influenced by ontological orientation; whether social reality is viewed as external and objective or as constantly shifting dependent on individual creation.

Ontological questions are concerned with the nature of social entities that are considered as objective entities which have a reality external to social actors or can be considered as social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman, 2004). The ontological view point stresses the existence of multiple realities which are referred to as objectivism and constructionism.

From an ontological perspective, it is the task of the researcher to get into contact with other social actors to get to know the reality at hand. For the present study, sampled population who partook in this study are social actors in education who create and interpret their own meaning of factors affecting academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) is unique and cannot be generalized to other contexts. The present study identified the factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The researcher believes that participants can give diverse interpretations to the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia, depending on how they perceived it.

From an ontological perspective, multiple realities exist such as the reality of the researcher, the reality of individuals being researched and that of the researcher interpreting a study. The researcher relied on multiple measures to establish reality. A study by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) points out that the nature of social phenomena is only interpreted through senses and experiences resulting from different

perspectives. Ontology brings to the fore, the reasons why researchers need knowledge as it stipulates the nature of reality as conceptualized by the researcher (Bryman, 2004).

3.2.1 Positivist paradigm

Positivism emerged as a philosophical paradigm in the 19th century with Auguste Comte's rejection of metaphysics and his assertion that only scientific knowledge can reveal the truth about reality (Descartes, 1998). For Comte, observation and reason are the best means of understanding human behaviour. True knowledge is based on experience of senses and can be obtained by observation and experiment (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). It was later formally established as the dominant scientific method in the early part of the 20th century by members of the Vienna Circle who sought to construct a unified scientific world-conception that rejects the use of philosophy as a means of learning about the true nature of reality. Unfortunately, it failed as a coherent philosophy of science because of a critical inconsistency between its theory of "reality" and its theory of "knowledge." (Neurath, 1999).

Positivism adopted Hume's theory of the nature of reality, namely philosophical ontology. Hume(1998) believed that reality consists of atomistic (micro-level) and independent events. Hume advocates the use of the senses to generate knowledge about reality. He thought that philosophical and logical reasoning could lead people to "see" non-existing links between events occurring simultaneously (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). However, positivism also adopted Descartes' epistemology. Descartes believes that reason is the best way to generate knowledge about reality. His deductive method implies that events are ordered and interconnected, and therefore reality is ordered and deductible. The

application of critical judgment in investigating multiple research questions using multiple measures, samples, designs, and analyses are necessary to permit a convergence on a valid understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003).

Positivism is linked to quantitative research approach (Mertens, 2015). For Seale (2000), positivist researchers are committed to value neutrality, statistical measurement, quantifiable elements and observable events to establish causal laws. Positivist researchers believe in the possibility of establishing cause-effect relationship, as they are after regularities to make predictions and establish scientific laws (Dammak, 2015). This implies that positivist researchers use scientific methods or measurement-oriented methodologies such as questionnaire to collect numerical data that are analyzed statistically. The quantitative approach employs pre-determined data collection methods to collect numerical data. The findings lead to the identification of statistical trends, averages and frequencies or correlations. The purpose of positivist researchers is to quantify a research problem, to measure and count issues, and finally to generalize findings to the broader population (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011).

3.2.1.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Guba and Lincoln (1994) are of the view that an apprehendable reality is assumed to exist, driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For Guba and Lincoln (1994), social reality is external to individuals. Cohen et al. (2003) concur with Guba and Lincoln (1994) that objects exist independently and have no dependence on the knower. Similarly, Pring (2000) defines realism as the view that reality

is there, a world, which exists independently of the perceiver or researcher as well as the world which is to be discovered. Based on the above statements, one can draw a clear demarcation between the knower and the subject known to the knower. Epistemologically, positivists hold a dualist as well as an objectivist view. For Creswell (2009), being objectivist is a fundamental aspect of any competent of inquiry. Positivists are interested in facts and hold that research should be value - free.

3.2.1.2 Methodology

Positivist methodology aims to explain the cause and effect relationship of events (Creswell, 2009). For Creswell (2009), experimental designs appear to provide an umbrella to explain this causal relationship. Thus, questions and hypotheses are tested and verified by experiments. Positivist researchers should seek a cause – effect relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

3.2.1.3 Methods

Creswell (2009) maintains that the positivist researcher uses data collection methods to collect quantitative, numerical data that can be tabulated and analysed statistically. To ensure the quality of data collection instruments, positivist researchers use validity and reliability to evaluate the quality of a positivist research.

3.3 Interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivist paradigm is associated with Max Weber (Crotty, 1998) and linked to qualitative research, because it is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. Interpretivism relies on a subjective relationship between the researcher and the world to understand the context of people's experiences (Bryman, 2004). Interpretivist researchers use meaning-oriented methodologies to generate textual data through interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions. Simply put, interpretivist researchers use data collection methods that yield open-ended textual data.

Due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research, few participants are needed, as the purpose is to achieve depth of information. Thus, the collected textual data are analyzed interpretively (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). This implies that interpretivist researchers seek to interpret the meanings that participants give to their views and experiences. Creswell (1998) refers to interpretivist researchers or post-positivists as seeing themselves "within the circle", interpreting the world around them.

3.3.1 Ontology

The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology is that reality is multiple and relative (Bryman, 2004). Interpretive researchers believe in multiple realities and that reality is socially constructed (Pring, 2000; Carson et al. 2001). Scholars like Lincoln and Guba (1994), explain that these multiple realities also depend on other systems for meanings, which make it even more difficult to interpret in terms of fixed realities. The knowledge

acquired from this perspective is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived (Carson et al. 2001).

3.3.2 Epistemology

The position of interpretivism in relation to epistemology is that the researcher is co-creating and sharing knowledge with the sampled population, as well as creating relationships to further an understanding of different points of view (Bassey, (n.d). cited in Pollard, 2002). The research carried out is subjective view, where results can be influenced by the opinions of the researcher.

Carson et al. (2001) assert that interpretivist researchers avoid rigid structural frameworks such as those employed in positivist research. They adopt a more personal and flexible research structure which is receptive to capturing meanings in human interaction and makes sense of what is perceived as reality (Carson et al., 2001; Black, 2006). Interpretivism acknowledges the interaction and interdependence between the researcher and his or her informants. This reflects that the interpretivist researcher enters the field with some sort of prior insight of the research context but assumes that this is insufficient in developing a fixed research design due to complex, multiple and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (Creswell, 1998). Thus, the researcher remains open to new knowledge throughout the study and lets it develop with the help of informants. The use of such an emergent and collaborative approach is consistent with the interpretivist belief that humans have the ability to adapt, and that no one can gain prior knowledge of time and context-bound social realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Interpretivist researchers adhere to the subjectivist view where subjective meaning

and subjective interpretations have great importance (Pring, 2000). The object cannot be adequately described apart from the subject, nor can the subject be adequately described apart from the object. Therefore, the relationship between the knower and the subject to be known is not of detachment, but rather of involvement and interaction (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Dammak, 2015). This implies that according to interpretivism, the world is socially constructed, that is through interaction of individuals. It further implies that the natural and social worlds are not distinct but intertwined and researchers are part of that social reality and are not detached from the subjects under investigation (Dammak, 2015).

3.3.3 Methodology

Interpretivist researchers use various methodologies such as case studies, phenomenology and ethnography to gather data. In qualitative research, researchers employ a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experiences they have studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Interpretivist methodology aims at examining and understanding phenomena inductively. For Cohen et al. (2003), interpretivist researchers believe that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the on-going action being investigated. It should be understood that interpretive research is an interactive process by the researcher and the people in the particular setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Contrary to the positivist paradigm, researchers are not detached from the situation under study, but see themselves as participants in the situation they are studying

(Creswell, 1998). Due to this involvement of interpretivist researchers in real life situation, they are able to provide thick descriptions of the situation under study (Holliday, 2007).

The goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects, (Pring, 2000). For an interpretivist researcher, it is important to understand motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context bound (Pring, 2000). Unlike the positivist who has no direct access to the real world, the interpretivist has direct access to the real world. Unlike the positivist who has a single external reality, the interpretivist has no single, but multiple realities. The interpretivist has multiple realities because his/ her goal is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behavior rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects (Pring, 2000).

Methods

Contrary to positivists who rely on randomization, interpretivists use the purposeful sampling technique and select individuals and sites that are information rich (McMillan, & Schumacher, 2001; Creswell, 2008). They rely on various methods such as, amongst others, interviews and focus group discussions to collect qualitative data. The purpose of interpretive research influences the methods of data collection that the researcher should employ, that enable the researcher to build a relationship of trust with the subjects, for example, a participant observer who opts for prolonged engagement in natural settings builds close relationships with their subjects. An interpretivist researcher may use introspective methods to enable him/ her to achieve deeper understanding of the

phenomenon under his/ her interrogation, as well as perceptions of the subject matter being studied (Bryman, 2004).

Despite the fact that interpretivism has its own weaknesses, for example, small sample size, its strengths come from its naturalistic approach, relying on human communication. The interpretivist researcher studies people's lived experiences which occur in a specific historical and social context (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) are of the view that interpretivism accommodates human change over time and does not make the same type of generalizability claims as the positivists.

Data collected in interpretive research is 'rich' data, which is usually qualitative, although quantitative data can be collected as well. Bassey (n.d.) cited in Pollard (2002) says, to an interpretive researcher, the purpose of research is to describe and interpret the phenomenon of the world to get shared meaning with others. Interpretive researchers aim to interpret their results and detail the meaning to people, rather than just understanding what they have researched. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) concur with Bassey (n.d.) cited in Pollard (2002) as they say that the purpose of interpretivist researcher is to gain understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

3.4 Pragmatist paradigm

Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly re-negotiated, debated and interpreted to solve the problem under investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002). Pragmatism is a de-constructive paradigm that advocates the use of mixed methods in research. It avoids the

contentious issues of truth and reality and focuses instead on what works as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002).

The pragmatic paradigm emerged from “paradigm wars” in which researchers belonged to two distinct camps; that is interpretivism and positivism (Armitage, 2005). The positivist researchers’ belief is that the social world consists of concrete and unchangeable reality which can be quantified objectively; whereas, the interpretive researchers oppose the positivist belief of reality; and argue instead, that reality is socially constructed by humans and can be changed and understood subjectively (Corbetta, 2003; Marcon & Gopal, 2005; Kroeze, 2012).

From the paradigm wars emerged the pragmatic paradigm as a “third way” in response to the emergence of mixed methods and mixed model design (Armitage, 2005). It is derived from the writings of Peirce, Dewey and James in the 19th and early 20th centuries and Rorty in the late 20th century (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002).

Based on the above explanation, it appears that pragmatism is neither positivist nor interpretivist; and neither value free nor value laden; but a combination of both to address social real-life issues (Creswell, 2009). Thus, its philosophical assumption is that choosing between one position is unrealistic in practice as research is influenced by the nature of the research questions. It is argued that the most important determinant of which position to adopt are the research questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The present study adopted mixed methods to examine the factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia, to better understanding the problem.

Pragmatists link the choice of an approach directly to the purpose of, and the nature of the research questions posed (Creswell, 2003). Research is often multi-purpose and an appropriate and workable method allows the researcher to address research questions that do not sit comfortably within a wholly quantitative or qualitative approach to design and methodology (Armitage, 2005). Darling and Scott (2002) are of the view that decisions to take a quantitative or qualitative research approach in reality are not based on philosophical commitment but on a belief of a design and methodology being best suited to purpose. Hence, the pragmatic paradigm arose as a single paradigm which responds to the debate surrounding the “paradigm wars” and the emergence of mixed methods (Creswell, 2003).

The pragmatic paradigm is based on a rejection of the forced choice between post-positivism and constructivism (Creswell, 2003). The pragmatic paradigm implies that the overall approach to research is that of mixing data collection methods and data analysis procedures within the research process (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods are the three approaches to research. Each approach is characterized, not only by the philosophical knowledge, but also by the strategies used to apply the design and the methods of data collection.

The pragmatic paradigm was chosen because it allows the use of the mixed methods approach, which employs data collection strategies that involve collecting data in a concurrent or sequential manner using methods that are drawn from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to best address the research questions (Creswell, 2003). In mixed methods approach, researchers adopt a paradigm that encompasses both

qualitative and quantitative research methods. Such paradigm has been advocated by a number of mixed methods researchers (e.g. Maxcy, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007). Such paradigm has been identified as pragmatic paradigm (Morgan, 2007).

Although quantitative and qualitative methods are different, and no one approach is superior to the other, it was ideal to combine these methods in the present study. Studies (e.g. Maxcy, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Morgan, 2007; Feilzer, 2010) indicate that pragmatism has gained considerable support as a stance for mixed methods researchers. It is oriented 'toward solving practical problems in the "real world" rather than on assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Armitage, 2005; Feilzer, 2010). The pragmatic approach involves collecting data concurrently using measures drawn from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer research questions.

The above discussions have justified the use of the pragmatic paradigm to best address the research questions of the present study. The present study combined the quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data concurrently. The pragmatic paradigm was used in the present study to investigate the research problem.

3.5 Research approach

Research approach refers to the approaches (either qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods) taken in designing, collecting, organizing, analyzing and interpreting findings of a research study (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach in which phenomena are studied in their natural settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, Patton,

2002). A qualitative researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and data are inductively analyzed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). In the quantitative approach, a researcher collects numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon and data are statistically analyzed (Muijs, 2011).

This study followed a mixed methods approach in order to better understand the research problem. Given the nature of the research problem, the mixed methods approach was deemed appropriate for the current study.

The mixed methods research is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing and integrating quantitative (e.g., experiments, surveys) and qualitative (e.g., focus groups, interviews) research (Creswell, 2008; Mertens, 2015). This approach to research is used to provide a better understanding of the research problem being investigated (Creswell, 2008). The mixed methods approach includes both qualitative and quantitative features in the design, data collection, and analysis (Mertens, 2015). Its significance is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides answers to critical research questions of a qualitative and quantitative nature. Simply put, the mixed methods approach focuses on collecting, analyzing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (Mertens, 2015).

Mixed methods is defined as research in which the investigator collects, analyses, mixes, and draws inferences from both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a program of inquiry (Creswell & Plano- Clark, 2007). It is believed that the use of

quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2003). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also argue that the mixed methods approach complements the strengths of a single design, to overcome the weaknesses of a single design and to address a question at different levels. It is for this reason that the present study was designed to use combinations of methods which yield both qualitative and quantitative data. Multiple methods that included questionnaires with open and closed items, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently.

For the present study, the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently to answer research questions and to gain understanding on the phenomenon of interest. Numerical data were collected through questionnaires with closed items, while non-numerical data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Collecting numerical and non-numerical data were more appropriate to explain factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

Briefly, the present researcher collected numerical and non-numerical (visual) data to include diverse data in order to enrich the validity, reliability and credibility of the study. Non-numerical data were analyzed inductively, while numerical data were analyzed by using cross tables. By mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and data, the researcher gained both breadth and depth of understanding. The researcher triangulated data collected by means of multiple methods. The use of triangulation allowed the

researcher to identify aspects of a phenomenon more accurately by approaching them from different vantage points using different methods and techniques (Creswell, 2008).

3.6 Research design

A research design is defined as a strategic plan or a logical arrangement undertaken in research that leads the research activity to its sound conclusion (Patton, 2002; Mushaandja, 2006; Kumar 2011). Similarly, Imene (2015) says that a research design is an overall strategy that is undertaken by the researcher to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical manner, to effectively address the research questions. Simply put, a research design is the plan (blueprint), an overall structure for the procedures the researcher follows, the data collection instruments, collection and analysis of data.

The researcher used the concurrent triangulation design to seek an understanding of factors influencing the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) through triangulating data from multiple methods. The triangulation design, sometimes referred to as the convergent design, is described as a design that involves the collection of different but complementary data on the same phenomena (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Thus, triangulation design is used for the converging and subsequent interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. For this study, the concurrent triangulation design was used to enable the researcher to validate and confirm quantitative results collected through closed questionnaire items with qualitative findings collected through open-ended questionnaire items, interviews and focused group

discussions. This provided a better understanding of the factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The purpose of using the concurrent triangulation design was to bring together the differing strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative (large sample size, generalization) and qualitative (small sample size, details and in-depth insights) methods to produce information and to answer research questions in a single study (Muijs, 2011; Mertens, 2015).

3.7 Population

Population refers to the group of cases (people) with similar characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). It can also refer to a set of similar events or cases which are of interest for the research problem or question.

The population of this study consisted of all the Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers in the four schools (n=4), all the four Principals, all the Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2) (n=240) in the four schools, and parents (n=80) whose children studied English Language (L 2) in the four schools.

3.8 Sample and sampling procedure

A sample can be defined as a sub-group of people or cases taken from a large population studied to get information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). It was impossible and, indeed, not necessary for the researcher to study the factors raised in the literature in the entire population. For Taylor and Bogdan (2015), the researcher's own purpose determines

which settings and groups will be the most interesting and yield the most insights. The researcher chose who to study, where and why.

Four senior secondary schools were purposively selected based on their pass rates. Given that the total number of senior secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region is 15, the researcher identified 4 schools which are slightly more than the 20 percent recommended in literature (e.g. Van Dalen, 2000), two with good passes and two with poor passes for comparative purposes.

The sample of the study consisted of all the 4 principals of the selected schools, all the Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers (n=4); 32 (20%) learners who studied English Language (L 2) selected through simple random sampling, and finally, 2 parents from each school selected through the reputational approach.

It was hoped that the sampled participants in this study would be aware of factors which inspire and contribute to learners' academic performance, because the school exists in their environment. Therefore, as stakeholders, they might have experienced factors which influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.

3.9 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments are measurement devices such as survey, test, questionnaire and interview (Koskei, Tonui & Simiyu, 2015) that are used to measure a given phenomenon. Researchers choose which type of instruments to use based on the research questions (Koskei, Tonui & Simiyu, 2015). Data collection instruments are tools

used to collect data (Oso & Onen, 2008). The common tools are the questionnaire and interviews. The researcher for the present study found the use of a questionnaire with open and closed items, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) as the ideal data collection techniques to provide quantitative and qualitative data on the matter being investigated. The adoption of the pragmatic approach in this study meant that data were collected from Grade 12 learners who studied English Language (L 2), parents of Grade 12 learners who studied English Language (L 2), Grade 12 English Language teachers and principals in the selected secondary schools. Below is the detailed description of the data collection instruments that were used.

3.9.1 Questionnaires

In the present study, the researcher used questionnaires with open and closed items as data collection instruments. The questionnaires were administered to principals and Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers regarding the factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region, Namibia.

It was appropriate to use the questionnaire to identify factors that influence Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia and to determine the presence of the influential factors. The questionnaire as a research tool satisfies very precise objectives (Bryman, 2004). The study followed mixed methods approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative features in the design. The research approach determined the data collection instruments. Questionnaires were preferred to collect quantitative data from the population. Questionnaires were found

useful in this study were distributed to the sampled population to collect quantitative data. Questionnaires were identical that each participant received the identical set of questions. More importantly, questionnaires permit respondents time to consider their responses carefully without interference of the interviewer. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the large population and to save time as time for collecting data was limited.

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the targeted sample who was principals and teachers. The questionnaire for the principals and teachers for Grade 12 English Language (L 2) consisted of four parts. These were Part A - demographic information, Part B - academic information, Part C - open-ended items and Part D - closed items on teacher-related, home-related and learner-related factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The first two parts (Part A and B) sought demographic information of age, gender and working experience while Parts C and D contained questions on home-related, teacher-related and learner-related factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia.

The four point *Likert type* response format was adopted in Part B thus:

SA - Strongly Agree 5 points

A - Agree 4 points

NS - Not sure 3 points

DS - Disagree 2 points

SD - Strongly Disagree 1 point

3.9.2 Interview schedule

Interview is a person-to-person verbal communication where one person asked questions intended to elicit information (Oso & Onen, 2008). Interviewing is a primary way of collecting data in qualitative research to direct the participant in responding to a specific research question (Stuckey, 2013). It is a two-way communication initiated by the interviewer with a particular purpose to obtain in-depth information or data pertaining to the research objectives. Interview, as one of the common ways of data collection techniques, provides factual information about the phenomenon under investigation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003). Three major types of interviews are narrative interviews, structured interviews and semi-structured interviews (Stuckey, 2013). Their differences are described below.

3.9.2.1 Narrative Interviews

Narrative Interviews are stories that are based on the unfolding of events or actions from the perspective of a participant's life experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Narrative Interviews are unstructured and typically begin with a wide open-ended question about a participant's experience, where the participant is rarely interrupted in the telling of his or her story (Stuckey, 2013). In narrative Interviews, researchers encourage participants to tell their story. The benefit of narrative interviews is that the participant guides the

interview and may tell and provide information that could not have been predicted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006; Stuckey, 2013).

3.9.2.2 Structured interviews

Structured interviews can be used to ask questions in a specific and predetermined order with a limited number of response categories (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). This shows that structured interviews have sequential and defined order in the questioning process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). The interview is called structured interview because the researcher follows a specific set of questions in a predetermined order to elicit data on participants' thoughts, beliefs and feelings about a topic under investigation (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This interview technique is appropriate to use when interview requires participant to give a response to each ordered question, which are often shorter in nature (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). By using this interview technique, researchers ask sequential set of same questions for consistency. A structured interview is helpful when the researcher knows much about the topic and creates the questions in a survey-like format with open-ended questions (Johnson & Christenson, 2010). This implies that in structured interviews the questions are routinely asked to elicit research data.

3.9.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview is the most commonly type of interviews used in qualitative research (Stuckey, 2013). The researcher sets the outline for the topics covered, but the

interviewee's responses determine the way in which the interview is directed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006). In general, the interviewer has an interview guide to follow, which is based on the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006; Stuckey, 2013).

For the present study, semi-structured interviews, using an interview guide, were used to collect data. It is called semi-structured because discussions may diverge from the interview guide, which can be more interesting than the initial question that is asked. The participant does not need to answer the questions in order as in the case of structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews thus, allow questions to be prepared ahead of time, which allows the interviewer to be prepared, yet gives the participant freedom to express views with his / her own words (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2006; Stuckey, 2013).

Despite the fact that each of these three types of interviews can be used in qualitative research to collect qualitative data, the researcher found semi-structured interviews most appropriate for the present study to understand factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. It is an appropriate instrument to use when little is known about the research topic, for instance, factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). It was therefore, found very appropriate because it is open and allows participants to give answers in their own words. For this study, an interview guide or schedule which contained predetermined questions was used to gather research data. The pre-determined questions enabled the researcher to probe for more information to corroborate and validate issues raised in the focus group discussions (FGDs).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents (n=8) as they did not take part in the focus group discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire. This reflects that each of the selected secondary schools was represented by parents (n=2) selected through the reputational approach.

The present study used semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information from participants who were parents of Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2). Semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments were utilized to understand factors that are most relevant to poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The interview schedule helped the present researcher to get required information on the school, teachers, learners and home-related factors and to understand how these positively or negatively influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia.

For mutual understanding and acceptance, the participants were informed about the purpose of the interview. The advantage of the semi-structured interviews as a specialized form of communication, in which people interact for a purpose, is that they allow maximum opportunity for free expression by the respondents (Fakude, 2012). Free expression of ideas prevailed during the interview session and allowed the researcher to clarify interview questions. In an interview, the interviewer is present to observe non-verbal behavior as well as to assess the validity of the respondents' answers (Struwig & Stead, 2007).

For the present study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to complement data collected through questionnaire items. The use of in-depth qualitative interviews was necessary to examine the research topic thoroughly and to tap into the rich contextual meanings of the participants' responses. Semi-structured interview questions addressed the major factors related to poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stress the importance of examining data from more than one source as this would enable the researcher to triangulate qualitative research data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) believe that multi methods data insights gained from individual sources can be used to complement and enrich the credibility of the study.

3.9.3 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Focus group is defined as a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (Morgan, 2007). Morgan (2007) is of the belief that focus group discussions rely on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher. Its key characteristics are the insight and data produced by the interaction between participants. Based on the explanation above, focus group discussions involve organized discussions with selected groups of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic. Focus group discussion is an interaction between the researcher and participants to generate data.

A focus group discussion is a small-group discussion guided by a trained leader (Bell, 2010). It is a good way to gather people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest (Bell, 2010). It is a form of qualitative research consisting of interviews in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a phenomenon under investigation (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). The purpose of focus group discussions in research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which it would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-on-one interviews or questionnaire surveys (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). A focus group discussion enables the researcher to gain a lot of information in a shorter period of time as the researcher follows an interview guide to solicit information.

Researchers engage in discussions with the focus group participants in an interactive setting which encourages them to discuss their thoughts freely with the researcher. The open and free discussions generate ideas and can provide a wealth of information for the study (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). Another benefit is that focus group discussion elicits information in a way which allows researchers to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan, 2007). As a result, the gap between what people say and what they do can be better understood (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behavior and attitudes will be more readily articulated (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). If a group works well, trust develops and the group may explore solutions to a particular problem as a unit (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). The interviewer has to allow participants

to talk to each other, ask questions and express doubts and opinions, while having very little control over the interaction other than generally keeping participants focused on the topic. By its nature, focus group discussion is open-ended and cannot be entirely pre-determined (Morgan, 2007).

Although focus group discussions have many advantages, as with all research methods, they have limitations as well. Some of the limitations can be overcome by careful planning and moderating, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. For example, the researcher has less control over the data produced (Morgan, 2007) than in either quantitative studies or one-on-one interviewing. Focus groups can also be intimidating at times, especially for shy members. It can be difficult to assemble. It may not be easy to get a representative sample and focus group discussions may discourage certain people from participating, especially those who have communication problems or have special needs. It may discourage some participants from trusting others with sensitive or personal information. Finally, focus group discussion is not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with others in the group (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). Despite its limitations, the researcher for the present study found focus group discussions one of the most appropriate data collection techniques for this study. A fact that the researcher collects data from the large group at once to understand the matter studied made focus group discussions appealing to the present study. Thus, focus group discussions were used to collect data from the Grade 12 learners studied English Language (L 2) in the four selected secondary schools.

The duration of focus group sessions recommended in literature is one to two hours (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2013). It was for this reason that the researcher for the present study conducted his focus group discussions from 15H00 to 16H00 in the afternoon in all the sites. The researcher used his experience in the Namibian secondary education system to make appointments to conduct focus group discussion sessions on Wednesdays afternoon between 15h00 and 16h00 during which all Grade 12 learners were relatively free. This arrangement was guided by the fact that on Wednesday afternoons, secondary learners engaged in extra-mural programmes, so the arrangement had no negative effects on the academic engagement of learners concerned. This arrangement was also made in compliance with the terms and conditions of the approval letter from the Oshikoto Education Directorate, which stipulated that permission was duly granted to visit schools of my choice in the Oshikoto Region and carry out research under the following conditions:

- I had to make appointments well in advance with the concerned school principals.
- The exercise must not interfere with the normal teaching school programmes.
- Any participation would be on voluntary basis.

The researcher felt that such an arrangement might not have a negative impact on the academic performance of the Grade 12 learners who participated in the focus group discussions. During the course of the discussions, the participants interacted freely as they asked each other constructive questions. The researcher for the present study, facilitated the discussions, ensured that each member (participant) of the group was given

an opportunity to air his or her views. The facilitation process served to keep the discussions focused on the topic under investigation.

In the present study, first and foremost, the researcher thanked group members for coming to the meeting. The purpose and goals of the meeting were highlighted. The researcher gave clear explanations to make people feel at ease and to facilitate interaction between group members. Ground rules were laid down and agreed upon and group members were encouraged to participate openly. Hitchcock and Hughes (2013) recommend using neutral locations to avoid either negative or positive associations with a particular site or building. In this respect, the researcher undertook logistical arrangements to avoid noise and interruptions during the interview session and focus group discussions. The wide and bold visible notice stating “interview in session” was placed on the door and windows of the interview venue (room). This arrangement was done with the research gate keepers’ (such as principals and their staff members) permission in the site.

With the group’s permission, the researcher tape-recorded the discussion. It is generally, best to tape-record interviews and later transcribe the recordings for analysis (Stuckey, 2013). While it is possible to take notes during the session, it is difficult to capture direct quotes from the participants while still engaging in the conversation. The importance of using the tape-recorder is to maintain focus on the participant, to build rapport and dialogue rather than focus on the notes, and for accurately capturing the data (Johnson & Christenson, 2010). The advantage of tape-recorder is that more complete, accurate

permanent record can be kept for further data analysis purposes (Jwan, 2010). The researcher for the present study asked the general opening question to the members of the focus group in order to start off the focus group discussions.

In the course of the discussion, the researcher in the present study asked questions and rephrased some of the questions in different ways to understand the matter studied. In order to sustain mutual trust and more importantly to indicate that he was focused and paid attention, the researcher kept eye contact with the members of the group. Members of the group were given an opportunity to ask, comment or air their views. At the end of the focus group discussions, the researcher, summarized what he thought had been said, and asked if the group agreed with the way the idea was captured.

3.9.4 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences drawn from the research findings. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomena under study (Mungenda & Mungenda, 2003). Validity refers to the quality of data gathering instrument or procedures that enable the instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure (Kumar, 2005).

In the present study, validity was determined by the extent to which the instruments covered the research objectives. To ascertain content validity of the research instrument, the researcher consulted experts in the field in the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare. The inter-rater method was used to establish the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. This involves giving the questionnaire to raters to check its suitability

(validity). The questionnaire was given to 6 raters who all agreed that the questionnaire was suitable. The same raters were also asked to rate the questionnaire out of 10. These ratings were then correlated to see the degree of agreement (reliability). A co-efficient of 0.61 was obtained, indicating that, to a high degree, the 6 raters agreed that the questionnaire was reliable. After that, the questionnaire was test-run or piloted with a group of 4 English Language teachers to see if it worked as intended. After minor modifications, the questionnaire was adopted for use with the main study sample.

3.10 Data credibility and trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of qualitative data can be assured by the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informants' account as well as the investigators' ability to collect and record information accurately (Fakude, 2012). The credibility and trustworthiness of the data were achieved or checked in three ways as discussed following section.

3.10.1 Triangulation of instruments

Triangulation entails combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide adequate and accurate research results. It involves the conscious combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies as a powerful solution to strengthen a research design where the logic is based on the fact that a single method can never adequately solve the problem under investigation (Holtzhausen, 2001). Triangulation enriches the data collected as a single data collection method may be insufficient to yield the anticipated research results.

It also entails the cross-checking of the consistence of specific and factual data items from various sources via multiple methods at different times (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a verification process of research findings through referring to multiple sources of information, using multiple methods of data collection, and often acquiring observations from multiple inquirers (Angen, 2000). In other words, if a conclusion is based on one person's report, given during one interview, to only one interviewer, it is less credible than if several people confirmed the research finding at different points in time, during interviews and through unstructured observations, in response to queries from several independent researchers, and in the review of literature.

In the present study, the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data were ensured through triangulation of questionnaire, interview and focus group instruments. In this study, data triangulation entailed the comparison of qualitative data received from structured interviews and focus group discussions with quantitative data from the questionnaires. The researcher in the present study used these approaches to enrich the credibility and trustworthiness of the data as the weaknesses of one method was countered by the strengths of the other.

3.10.2 Member checking

Member checking can be defined as a process or technique of testing the data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained (Angen, 2000). The primary objective of member checking is to establish credibility and trustworthiness of the collected data (Angen, 2000). This process or technique can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for

member-checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation or focus group discussions. Member checking is one of the most important techniques for establishing the credibility of a qualitative inquiry. For the present study, the credibility and trustworthiness of the data was ensured through this process. The data record, interpretations, and reports of the inquirer were reviewed by the members or participants who provided the data. Parents and learners who were sampled agreed and approved that their perspectives had been adequately represented and that the conclusions reached in the report were credible to them. This ensured that the study was reasonably convincing and credible.

3.10.3 Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement refers to the process of researchers spending sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the culture, social setting, or phenomenon of interest (Angen, 2000). It involves spending adequate time observing various aspects of a setting, speaking with a range of people, and developing relationships and rapport with members of the culture (Angen, 2000). In this process, rapport and trust develop which facilitate and enhance understanding and co-construction of meaning between researcher and members of a setting. Prolonged engagement means being present in the site where the study is being done long enough to build trust with the participants (Angen, 2000).

For the present study, the researcher kept constant consultation with respondents to understand the phenomenon under investigation better in order to produce more credible results. Through a two weeks prolonged engagement in each of the schools, the

researcher built trust among the respondents. Respondents felt comfortable and as such, disclosed information freely, which enriched the credibility of the study.

3.11 Data analysis

Quantitative data which were obtained from closed questionnaire items were analysed using cross tabs and reported mainly in percentages. Qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire items, interviews and focus group discussions were analysed and used mainly to buttress or refute observations made through the closed questionnaire items.

3.12 Ethical considerations

To meet the required ethical obligations, the researcher strictly complied with the ethical considerations discussed below. These considerations involved getting permission to access the research site, obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting participants from any kind of harm and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of participants' personal information.

3.12.1 Permission to conduct the study

Prior to the commencement of this study, the researcher complied with the code of ethics proposed by the University of Fort Hare. The researcher obtained the Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of Fort Hare Research Ethics Committee and written permission from the Ministry of Education (Namibia) to conduct the research in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

3.12.2 Informed consent

The researcher ensured that participants were well informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and everything that would happen during the research process. The participants were expected to agree to participate in this study through voluntary informed consent. The participants were then given consent forms that they had to sign to formally agree to take part in the study.

3.12.3 Voluntary participation

The researcher informed the participants about their rights to or not to participate in the study. The researcher did not compel or influence participants to participate in the study, if they were not interested. If they wished to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process, they were at liberty to do so.

3.12.4 Non-harm to participants

The researcher ensured that participants were free from any form of harm. Cohen et al., (2006) stress that greater considerations must be given to the risks of physical and psychological values of individuals than to the potential contribution of research to knowledge. The present researcher ensured that participants were not harmed in any way- physically or psychologically.

3.12.5 Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity

The researcher assured the participants of their rights to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. Anonymity is in the fact that information provided by participants should in no

way reveal their identities (Cohen et al., 2006). To ensure confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, participants were not required to write their names or any personal particulars that would lead to their identification on the questionnaire. Data obtained from the participants was kept in strict confidence for a maximum of five years before destroying them, and the reporting of the data was done anonymously. Participants were not required to give their names during interviews or on questionnaire. Finally, the participants and their settings were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology that was used in the study. The chapter highlighted the main research methodological components namely; the research paradigm, research design, research approach, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, credibility and trustworthiness of research data; validity and reliability of questionnaires, data collection procedures and data analysis. Each one of these main components was explained in detail in order to clarify the methodological decisions made in the present study. The simple random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted in this study and justifications for their choices were also discussed.

The researcher used semi-structured interview, focus group discussions and questionnaire to collect data. The study used the pragmatic paradigm and the mixed methods research approach. Data analysis and data credibility and trustworthiness as

well as ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter presents and analyses the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion. It presents the demographic information of respondents in terms of their distribution by gender, age and years of teaching English Language (L 2) experience.

Data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Questionnaires were given to both principals and Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers. The researcher also conducted interviews with parents and guardians of Grade 12 learners who studied English and focus group discussion with Grade 12 learners who studied English Language (L2). The purpose was to find views on the causes of poor performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region. The researcher decided to present the data and immediately discuss/ analyze them in order to avoid the unnecessary repetition that often characterizes work where data presentation and analysis/ discussion are separated. The data are presented and analyzed/ discussed in line with questionnaire items. Data from the interviews and focus group discussions were used to buttress or refute the findings from questionnaires. The questionnaires addressed the research questions which were:

Which factors influence the academic performance of grade 12 learners in English language (L 2) in Oshikoto region?

Sub-research questions were:

- How do school-based factors influence the academic performance of grade 12 learners in English language (L 2) in Oshikoto region?
- Identify home-related factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region?
- Examine teacher-related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region?
- How do learner-related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region?
- How can the challenges encountered in English Language (L 2) be mitigated in order to improve the performance of learners in this subject?

The research questions reflected the objectives of the study, which were to identify and examine:

- factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region;
- how school-based factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region;

- identify home-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region;
- examine teacher-related factors that influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region;
- how learner-related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region; and
- strategies that can be effected in order to mitigate the challenges encountered in English Language (L 2) in order to improve learners' performance in these subjects.

Table 4-1: Identification codes for parents interviewed (n=8)

Code	Participants
PA	Parents from School A
PB	Parents from School B

PC	Parents from School C
PD	Parents from School D
Total	8

With the research questions and the objectives in mind, the questionnaires provided quantitative and qualitative data about the factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Part A presented, analyzed and discussed questionnaire data pertaining to the nature of schools and demographic data of participants.

Part B presented, analyzed and discussed general information related to human-related factors and also to physical resources. Twelve questions were designed to gain information related to human-related factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), and to identify the challenges that are faced in the teaching and learning of Grade 12 English Language (L 2). Twelve questions were also designed to solicit factors related to physical resources that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

Part C was divided into two categories. The first category examined learner-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region. Three statements were designed based on a five point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not Sure (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The second category examined the home-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. Four statements were designed to identify and understand home-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Follow-up interviews were conducted with parents to further probe into subtle issues raised in the questionnaires.

Part A

4.2 General information

This part of the chapter presented the number of respondents who responded to the questionnaires as well as the nature of schools in which the respondents operate.

4.2.1 Questionnaire return rate

All the 12 respondents returned the completed questionnaires; marking a 100 percent return rate. A questionnaire return rate of above 50 percent is a good response (Kumar, 2005).

Table 4-2: Nature of schools and questionnaire return rates

Name of school	Nature of school	Number of questionnaire returned	
		Principals (n=4)	Teachers (n=8)
School A	Boarding	1	2`
School B	Boarding	1	2
School C	Non-Boarding	1	2
School D	Non-Boarding	1	2
Total	4	4 (100 %)	8 (100 %)

Table 4.2 shows that schools A and B were boarding schools while schools C and D were non-boarding ones. All schools in this study are situated in the rural areas. The observation suggests that academic performance in secondary schools in this study could be linked to the nature and positinality of the school.

In Namibia, education is provided through two ministries. There is the Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture which runs Pre-Grade to Grade 12, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Training which covers Technical, Vocational and University Education (Ministry of Education, 1993). Accordingly, schools under investigation in this study fall under the Ministry of Basic Education, Arts and Culture.

This study focused on rural schools only because the researcher was interested in finding out why some rural secondary schools performed better than other rural secondary schools, despite being in the same geographical area and region.

4.3 Demographic data

The demographic information was based on gender, age and teaching experience. This was because the researcher sought to establish whether the above variables had an impact on Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2).

In each of the four selected secondary schools, two Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers were given the questionnaires to fill it. The teachers were asked to indicate their age, gender and teaching experience. This was important because, as already said; the researcher was interested in finding out whether or not the teachers' gender, age and teaching experience had an influence on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners.

Table 4-3: Age by gender of the teachers (n=8)

Age ranges of teachers	Gender		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		

25-30	1 (12.5 %)	2 (25 %)	3	37.5 %
31-36	1 (12.5 %)	3 (37.5 %)	4	50 %
37 and above	--	1 (12.5 %)	1	12.5%
Total	2	6	8	100%

Half (50%) of the teachers were in the age bracket of 31-36 years. Three teachers (37.5 %) were between 25 and 30 years, while only one teacher (12.5%) was 37 years or above. All teachers in this study were young, hence, energetic and active in their work. Although all Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers were relatively young, no improvement was made in the performance of Grade 12 English Language (L 2). Generally, most young teachers excel in their performance. Thus these teachers could have positively influenced Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). For Wanyama (2013) young teachers in most schools had positive impact on learners' learning outcomes.

Table 4.3 above also shows the gender of the teachers. There was 1 male (12.5%) and 2 female (25 %) teachers aged 25 to 30; 1 male (12.5 %) and 3 female (37.5%) teachers aged 31 to 36 and 1 female teacher (12.5%) aged 37 and above. These figures show gender imbalance in favor of females. These observations confirm findings of many studies (e.g. Onyara, 2013; Biama, 2014) which indicate that; generally, there are more female than male teachers in both primary and secondary schools. In Canada and other western countries, gender distribution in secondary education has switched from an

imbalance in favor of men to an imbalance in favor of women over the last two decades (Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2003).

The findings of this study show gender imbalance in the recruitment of teachers in senior grades such as Grade 12. More female teachers were recruited in the senior grades than their male counterparts. However, Nampala (2013) note that female teachers have been found to be generally soft-spoken and are therefore, not taken seriously by their learners. The researcher is of the view that, although, the academic attainment does not want strength more than care and love, female teachers are naturally not as strong compared to their male counterparts in terms of class management. Their gender may negatively influence the Grade 12 academic performance in English Language (L 2). Ndunda (2002) argues that gender has an impact on learners' academic performance on the basis of class control and management.

The years of experience as a teacher was also among the demographic variables examined. The teaching experience of teachers was considered an important factor which could influence Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). For Milkie and Warner (2011), experienced teachers make a positive influence in learners' academic performance, and their experience matters most if they continue to teach the same grade. Studies (e.g. Ost, 2014) found that generally, teachers' experience improved and influenced learners' learning outcomes. In the context of the present study, Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers had more than five years' teaching experience, yet, they could not produce quality learning outcomes.

Below are the data for the variable.

Table 4-4: Years of teaching experience of teachers (n=8)

Ranges of years of teaching experience in Grade 12 English Language (L 2)	(n=8)	Total	Percentage
1-5	2	2	25 %
6-10	5	5	62.5 %
11-15	1	1	12.5 %

The teachers' years of experience ranged from 5 to 15 years. All schools in this study were staffed with experienced English Language (L 2) teachers. The findings concur with Knapp (2006) who says that availability of experienced English Language (L 2) teachers in a school is very important for better learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2).

All the 4 principals in the four schools were males. This observation confirms observations in literature (e.g. Nyikanyika, 2017) where most leadership positions in schools are

occupied by men. All the 4 principals were relatively young (31-40 years) with principal experience ranging from 1-4 years. The principal's job requires not only an understanding of the educational process at the classroom level, but also the skill to coordinate the efforts of a staff that includes teachers, other administrative personnel and other professional and non-professional staff (MoE, 2005). To some extent, this should assist them to produce good results in their schools.

The present researcher believes that knowledge is not static as social phenomena are dynamic. The knowledge or skill that a teacher learnt ten years ago may no longer be relevant to the new challenges or new problems that emerge today. The classroom also keeps on changing. The classroom is very dynamic. New problems arise and new challenges emerge. We live in the 21st century, an era characterized by new technologies. Thus, new solutions are needed, because the old solutions (skills / knowledge) may not be helpful today.

Part B:

4.4 Information related to human resources

The findings of the study were presented following questionnaire items, which too were guided by the research questions and objectives of the study. Data from interviews and focus group discussions were used to buttress or refute findings from the questionnaire.

In Item 2.1(a) the researcher wanted to know if schools have adequate Grade 12 English Language teachers. The findings reveal that there were no enough English Language teachers. The inadequacy of Grade 12 English teachers might have negative impact on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). It was explained that teachers did not have enough time to give sufficient activities to learners. This was necessitated by the fact that one teacher has high number of learners under his or her care. So it becomes difficult for a teacher to do the preparations, give assignments and other written activities, and mark learners' written activities. This happened in the non-boarding secondary schools. The findings confirm observations in literature (e.g. Achilles & Pate-Bain, 2002) where the negative effect of large class size on the learners' academic performance were pointed out. Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers found it difficult for them to give enough work to their learners who are in dire need of practice. Teachers also found it difficult to attend to individual learners.

Literature (e.g. Uwezo, 2011) indicates that shortage of teachers has a strong negative influence on academic achievement of learners in school. The observations from the questionnaire responses find support in literature, for example, Sifuna (2009) who notes that due to insufficiency of teachers, the teachers in most districts in Kenya do not produce quality learners' academic achievement.

Principal C wrote:

We do not have specialist English Language teachers in our schools. This seriously affects our Grade 12 learners' performance.

Four teachers (50 %) in the boarding secondary schools provided a contradictory explanation. They explained that their schools had adequate Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers. In their explanation, they pointed out to the fact that adequacy of Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers has a positive influence on Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). It was indicated that both teachers and learners had sufficient time to do the required activities. The workload was fairly distributed, thus, teaching and learning process took place more effectively. Conclusion can be drawn that adequate English Language (L 2) teachers positively influences academic achievement.

Three principals (75%) indicated that they had sufficient Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers. They posited that adequate Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in a positive manner.

Although majority of principals indicated that there are sufficient Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers in their schools, teachers and learners have different views. From English Language (L 2) teachers and learners' viewpoints, English teachers were not sufficient and consequently were overloaded. Learners went to the extent of saying that even teachers at hand, they are incompetent as they could not express themselves in English and were unable to teach in English which is the medium of instruction. English

teachers tend to teach English in local language. English teachers and learners contradict principals' viewpoints. English teachers and learners were of the view that adequate Grade 12 English Language teachers may help to improve the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners because all learners in a class are attended to.

The demographic information of principals was presented. All the principals had been in their schools for a period of five years.

Principal B wrote:

If you stay for some time in a school, you come to know which teacher is effective in which area. This helps in subject allocation. You may have many English Language (L 2) teachers but they are not equally competent. Your experience in the school will tell you which English Language teacher should take Grade 12.

In Item 2.2 (a), the researcher was interested in determining the teachers' teaching experience in English Language in Grade 12. As indicated in Table 4.4, all teachers had English Language teaching experience ranging from 5 years to 15 years. Many of the teachers felt that their experience in teaching English Language was very instrumental to them producing good Grade 12 results. They argued that over the years, they had established effective strategies and techniques of teaching English Language and prepare learners for examinations.

Although all English teachers were experienced, the region is consistently performing poorly; Grade 12 learners fail English Language (L 2) annually. One is tempted to pose a question of why Grade 12 learners did not perform well in the national examinations.

The majority of the learners and parents interviewed were of the opinion that the majority of the teachers in Oshikoto Region have a problem of expressing themselves in English as a medium of instruction. Learners and parents indicated that teachers struggled to teach in English due to limited exposure to English. Both parents and learners noted that the majority of teachers who had problems in using English during instruction used the mother tongue (Oshiwambo) in teaching.

Parent A 2 remarked on the lack of English proficiency among teachers as follows:

The usage of English is a problem in both learning and teaching. Some teachers use their vernacular to teach their subjects because they cannot express themselves well in English.

Both learners and parents felt that this kind of practice disadvantaged learners because when it comes to the examinations, they would be expected to answer questions in English.

In Item 2.2 (b) the researcher wanted to find out the effect of teachers' teaching experience on the learners' performance. The questionnaire responses reflect that teaching experience has great effect on the learners' performance in English Language (L 2). All the teachers felt that one's teaching experience has an impact on learner

performance. They argued that experience helps one to know such things as aspects to stress when teaching.

The findings obtained from the questionnaire indicated that all teachers and principals stressed that teachers' teaching experience contributed to the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in Oshikoto Region. Both teachers and principals were of the opinion that the quality of teaching staff in terms of experience is one of the main determinants of achievement of learners in examinations. Thus, they believed that learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) depends on the teachers' experience, knowledge and the effective application of pedagogy in the English Language (L 2) classroom. Although all schools in this study had teachers with above five years teaching experience, they achieved poor results e.g. school C had achieved 7 %, while school D had achieved 6 % in 2014. In 2016 the same schools, school C had achieved 9.8 % and school D had achieved 1.5 %. Although, the 5 years teaching experience confirms literature (e.g. Onyara, 2013) which says that only a few years of experience matter, learners performed poorly in their national examinations. Generally a teacher who had been teaching at a particular grade level for more than five years was positively and significantly associated with increased learners' achievement (Onyara (2013).

Although teachers were experienced, learners who participated in the focus group discussion felt that their experiences had no positive influence on learners' academic performance. Instead, they were responsible for learners' poor academic performance in English Language (L 2).

Findings reveal that teachers' teaching experience did not significantly influence learners' academic performance in English Language as measured by their performance in the NSSCO examinations.

One learner from School D said:

Although teaching experience matters, this is not the case in our school.

The responses from the questionnaire showed that teachers had varied years of teaching experience. As indicated earlier (Table 4.4) many teachers (6-75%) had teaching experience of more than five years. The majority of teachers (7-87.5%) pointed out the importance of teaching experience in the performance of learners.

Teacher A 2 wrote:

I have adequate subject (English Language (L 2) content knowledge. I have been exposed to the marking of Grade 12 English Language (L 2) at national level which helps me to know what to stress when I teach.

Teacher B 1 wrote:

My teaching experience enables me to deliver effective teaching to my learners, which in turn, influences their academic performance in English Language (L 2).

Teacher D 2 also remarked:

Yes, to a certain extent, experience influences good academic performance of learners, but the main problem still lies in the fact that many learners do not have a good foundation in English Language.

The views expressed above support the claim by Oparanya et al. (2015) that experience and good exposure to English influences and contribute to the improvement of results in the subject. The findings are in line with literature (e.g. Haley & Austin, 2004) which notes that English Language (L 2) learners' performance is linked to English Language (L 2) teachers' experience.

Teacher A1 wrote:

Teaching experience helps in the sense that I know which content to cover for my Grade 12 learners. Experience counts when it comes to what to teach my learners.

Although, many teachers shared common understanding in regards to teaching experience, TeacherD1 felt that teaching experience does not influence learners' academic performance.

Teacher D1 wrote:

Teaching experience does not really help to produce good results for Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). It is about the learners' foundation as to where they obtained primary and junior secondary education. It is not about best teachers. In some cases, the type of learners I have also determines the learning outcomes.

Principals, however, noted the importance of teaching experience in the learners' learning outcomes. Principal D wrote:

Teaching experience helps to improve learners' academic results. Experienced teachers are able to provide support to individual learners.

The responses of Principal D contradicted the responses obtained from the focus group discussions with learners in School D who see no effect of teachers' experience on learner achievement. As reflected above, the responses of learners agreed with those of Teacher D1 who sees no importance and effect of teaching experience in the learners' learning outcomes. The findings tallies with scholars e.g. Ndunda (2002) who points out that if a teacher lacks experience or is dispassionate about teaching, the children may not be able to develop comprehensive understanding of the subject material.

Item 2.3 (a) sought information on the average of number of teaching periods per teacher per week and what respondents thought regarding the effect it had on the performance of learners. Given that the Namibian allocation of teaching period is 40 per week, and taking into account the class groups, whereby one teacher may be responsible for more than 5 class groups ranging from 37-43 learners, the responses from the questionnaire described an average of 40 periods per week as heavy. On the one hand teachers felt that to have 40 periods per week is a good thing, because the more the periods, the more the chances the teacher had with the learners. On the other hand the more the periods, the less the time to mark learners' written work which negatively influenced the academic performance of learners. Teachers have to find extra time in the afternoon or weekends to mark learners' written work, which has an impact on their health (Rockoff, 2009).

Teachers' heavy workload is not only detrimental to the learners' academic performance, but also to the psychological well-being of teachers, stability of their family relationships, their blood pressure and heart health (Rockoff, 2009). Some teachers in their response obtained from the questionnaire, expressed their dissatisfaction with teachers' workload in their establishment.

Teacher C 2 wrote:

The teaching load in our school is heavy in all subjects, but the situation is even more discouraging in English Language (L 2) because there are no enough English Language teachers.

Teacher D1 added:

The teaching career is very stressful and frustrating. We are teaching so many periods per week. We are working in a very poor environment.

Some teachers felt that they were exploited by the government, because their teaching load was extra heavy. Teachers indicated that the heavy teaching load was caused by teachers who were not attracted to rural schools. Literature (e.g. Ndunda, 2002) says that highly qualified teachers are less attracted to rural schools, due to a number of factors which include among others, large class sizes, resources availability and facilities such as libraries, laboratories, books, lack of proper accommodation for both teachers and learners and lack of transport. In turn, this results in teachers' heavy workload which negatively influences the learners' academic performance.

Principal D wrote:

The situation is worse in my school. I had only two teachers teaching English Language from Grade 8-12. Their teaching loads are extra heavy. Heavy work load makes teachers exhausted and demoralized.

The findings of the present study concur with a study by Nampala (2013) which revealed that teachers in rural areas are more overloaded than those in urban areas. Both principals and teachers shared same sentiment in respect to teachers' heavy workloads that it may lead to teachers' low commitment to teaching and as a result, learners will end up performing poorly in national examinations. The findings from the questionnaire showed principals' dissatisfaction with heavy teachers' workload in relation to learners' academic performance.

Principal C 2 wrote:

The teaching load in our school is too heavy due to shortage of teachers. Teachers spend extra time in order to cover topics. For example, some teachers decide to teach even on Saturdays.

The responses are in line with literature (e.g. Hodge, 2015) which says that teachers make time to teach on weekends. What is surprising is that the Namibian Government, through the University of Namibia, trains and produces many teachers every year, but the problem of teachers' workload resulting from shortage of teachers is still persistent.

Item 2.3 (b) which was a follow up item after item 2.3 (a) sought to find the effect the number of teachers' teaching periods per week had on the learners' performance. Majority of the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the allocation of periods. They felt that more times translates to more attention that can be given to learners.

Teacher A1 expressed that he is happy with his 37 periods per week. He had 3 free periods in a week. He felt that with free periods he could finish lesson preparation and importantly could mark learners' written work. The majority of teachers claimed that they had enough time to meet with and give attention to their learners.

However, two teachers claimed that they have 40 periods per week which is detrimental to the learners' performance because this made it difficult for them to teach, to mark and to carry out administrative tasks at subject level. They claimed that they had no time to meet with their learners after school. In their responses, they argued, in order to carry out their tasks as per ministerial expectation they have to create time.

Teacher C1 wrote:

I frequently work until midnight and at weekends in order to do the marking, the recording of learners' marks in the continuous assessment mark sheet.

Teacher C 2 added:

I get to work every morning at 6:45 and leave on average at 17:30. I take home marking almost every evening which takes about one hour of my time at home and about three hours' worth at weekends.

They claimed that although, they want to meet with and give attention to their learners in the afternoon, the situation did not allow. They therefore concentrated only on the lesson preparation, the marking and other related administrative tasks.

The current study findings are in line with Ndunda's (2002) study which found similar results. Ndunda (2002) observed that the students' performance depended on the

teachers' morale and moderate workload. Similarly, Wanyama (2013) notes the negative influence of teachers' heavy workload on learners' learning outcomes. Over-loaded teachers deliver poor teaching, as over-load induces a reduction in teaching activities. As a result of lack of constant and regular interactions between teachers and learners, learners suffer in terms of learning. They suffer the most in terms of reduced performance when such contacts or tailored feedback is less frequent (Aghion; Boustan; Hoxby & Vandenbussche, 2007). Lack of specialist English Language (L 2) teachers in schools influenced teachers' over-load which impacts negatively on learners' performance in English Language (L 2) (Nampala, 2013). This tends to contribute significantly to inadequate classroom activities for learners and the effective monitoring of learners' performance (Nampala, 2013). A study by Uwezo (2011) also found similar results that teachers' over-load has a strong negative influence on learners' academic performance.

From Item 2.4 (a), the researcher wanted to determine how heavy, moderate or light the workload of English Language (L 2) teachers in the schools in this study was. As discussed earlier, teachers differ from each other on the allocation of periods with regards to learners' academic performance. Those who had less than 37 periods per week were happy with allocations, while those who had 37 up to 40 periods per week expressed their dissatisfaction. They claimed the allocation deprived their learners an opportunity for assistance. They also based their arguments on the fact that they had not only 40 periods, but had also more 30 learners in more than one class group.

Teacher C 2 wrote:

An average of 40 periods per teacher per week is an obstacle to good academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). We are over-loaded and have no time to assess learners and give special attention to the needy learners. We are subjected to physical fatigue which in turn, negatively affects our teaching delivery.

The findings showed that the majority of teachers were of the view that lessons were too many. This made their work difficult. Time for assessment was not enough. Both principals and teachers felt that English has many components which one cannot cover under over-loaded circumstances. Generally, the results above indicate that many English Language teachers were over-worked which might have caused poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the region.

Although, there are similarities in item 2.3 (b) above and item 2.4 (b), both items were determining the effect of the teachers' workload on the academic performance of learners, they were still differ from one another. The difference lies in the terms heavy, moderate and light. The findings from the questionnaire showed that 6 respondents (principals and teachers) 50 % indicated that their workload was heavy, while another 6 respondents (principals and teachers) 50 % claimed their work was moderate. The terms moderate and heavy were differentiated in such a way that once a teacher was allocated periods below 37 per week was considered had moderate workload, while a teacher who was allocated more than 37 periods per week was considered had heavy workload. The teachers claimed that the workload is heavy once the teacher did not have any single

period a week. For Nkandi (2015) teachers' workload had both positive and negative influences on the academic performances of learners. Literature (e.g. Nkandi, 2015) shows negative effects of teachers' workload on the learners' performance.

Ndunda (2012) argues that teachers who are exhausted and demoralized by a heavy workload are not effective and creative in the classroom; hence, the teaching and learning process is negatively affected. The number of periods taught by one teacher per week, internal tests, exercises, marking load, administrative and non-administrative roles by teachers affect both teachers' workload and learners' academic performance in secondary schools.

Literature (e.g. Onyara, 2013) notes that teachers carry administrative and non-administrative roles which affect both teachers' workload and learners' academic performance. Based on this, it can be no surprise that both experienced and inexperienced teachers leave the teaching profession due to heavy workload (Nkandi, 2015). Onyara (2013) notes that over-crowded classes increase the teachers' workload which in turn negatively affects learners' learning outcomes.

It is regarded as light teacher workload when teachers execute their teaching duties, for example teaching less than forty periods per week and having reasonable number of learners in a class, and teachers not being involved in administrative roles (MoE, 2004). Literature (e.g. Onyara, 2013) notes that light workload increases efficiency and effectiveness of teachers in the teaching process and leads to positive learners' learning outcomes. Teachers can teach better and assist slow learners if they have light workload

(Onyara, 2013). Light teachers' workload positively affects both teachers' teaching and learners' academic performance in secondary schools. It is clear that teachers' light workload has positive effect on teaching and learning outcomes.

From item 2.5 (a), the researcher wanted to know the class size of Grade 12 classes for English Language (L 2).

The finding from the questionnaires, respondents (principals and teachers) showed that the school with least number of learners was the one who had 37 learners in class, while the school with highest number of learners was the one with 43 and above in class.

Generally, classes were big, for example, in School A, the Grade 12 class had 43 learners, in School B, it had 42 learners, School C had 42 learners and School D had 37 learners. In terms of the Namibian staffing norms or teacher learner-ratio, a primary teacher is expected to have (1: 30) learners in a class, while at secondary level, a teacher is expected to have (1:35) learners in a class. . These figures show that on average, Grade 12 classes had 41 learners.

The class size determines how best an English Language (L 2) teacher can assist all learners during English Language (L 2) classes. Biama (2014) established that class size above 40 learners has negative effect on learners' academic achievements in English. The present study established that a large teacher-learner ratio has negative influence on the teaching / learning process. Research (e.g. UNESCO, 2017) has revealed that quality learning is not possible under high teacher-learner ratios compared to lower

teacher-learner ratios. Both the teacher and learners are affected negatively because the teacher cannot give the required amount of work to the learners and learners cannot be exposed to and assessed on all aspects of the subject matter (UNESCO, 2017). Research in New Zealand shows that learners who attended small classes displayed improved learning behavior, increased engagement in school, and decreased disruptive behavior compared to their counterparts in large classes (Achilles& Pate-Bain, 2002). There is research evidence to the effect that learners from smaller classes graduate on schedule than those from large classes (Achilles & Pate-Bain, 2002).

Item 2.5 (b) which was a follow-up to the above question, aimed to find out how the class size affected and influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Teachers explained that large class sizes had negative effect on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The present researcher established that Grade12 learners need to be given a lot of exercises, which have to be marked and discussed within a reasonable time. Due to large classes, English Language (L 2) teachers were unable to finish marking on time in order to give feedback to their learners. The findings from the questionnaires indicated that many a time, Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers found themselves with a pile of unmarked exercises or essay books. This resulted in learners not being given feedback on their work on time. Literature (e.g. Nkandi, 2015) points out the negative influence large class size has on the academic performance of learners.

All the four principals indicated that large classes in their schools negatively influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), because such large class sizes promoted ill-discipline among learners demotivated both teachers and learners which may lead to improper assessment of learners. The present study established that in large classes, teachers cannot give attention to each and every individual learner.

Teacher A1 wrote:

From my experience, a class of 40 learners is not that manageable.

Teacher B wrote:

Classes are over-crowded and this makes it quite difficult for the English Language (L 2) teachers to give fair and necessary attention to the learners, resulting in poor performance.

In item 2.6 (a), the researcher wanted to know how often Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers assess their learners. The findings from the questionnaires indicated how frequently teachers assessed their lessons. The results showed that two (2) teachers (25%) assessed their learners on a daily basis, five (5) teachers (62.5%) assessed on a weekly basis while one (1) teacher (12.5%) assessed only once a month.

In the United Kingdom, the significance of assessment was highlighted by scholars (e.g. Race, Brown & Smith, 2005) who indicated that assessment and its associated feedback was essential to students' learning. In expressing the importance of assessment, Race, Brown and Smith (2005, p.17) assert:

Nothing we do to, or for our students is more important than our assessment of their work and the feedback we give them on it. The results of our assessment influence students for the rest of their lives.

An ideal assessment for learning focuses on the opportunities to develop learners' ability to evaluate themselves, to make judgments about their own performance and improve upon it (Race, Brown & Smith, 2005; Nampala, 2013). It is appropriate to make use of authentic assessment methods and offer lots of opportunities to learners to develop their skills through formative assessment and use summative assessment sparingly (Race, Brown & Smith, 2005).

In Item 2.6 (b), the researcher wanted to establish whether or not the frequencies of learners' assessment of English Language (L 2) have an influence on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Although, both principals and teachers did not specify the effect of the frequencies of assessment on the learners' performance, they pointed out its significance. The majority of principals (75%) and teachers (87.5%) agreed that assessment is a very important aspect in the learning process. It gives a clear and true reflection of learners' level of understanding and of mastery of basic competencies. The respondents felt that more assessment is necessary

in the learning process. Learners acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding through engaging in various learning activities. Teacher B1 wrote:

Assessment is a very important aspect in the learning process, but due to large class sizes it is impossible for us to assess our learners daily and as a result, there is no good performance at all.

Assessing learners helps teachers to determine and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learners. Teacher A1 wrote:

Regular assessment facilitates the understanding of learners. It also ensures the exposure of learners to different types of questions and the ways/ approaches of approaching them when given feedback.

Scholars (e.g. Race, Brown & Smith, 2005; Cowan, 2005) indicate that learners benefit most from regular assessments. Through feedback, learners will be able to clarify their mistakes and improve their results. Cowan (2005) sees assessment as an engine which drives learners to learn.

The importance of assessment of English Language (L 2) was hailed in this study by the majority of the respondents. However, they expressed concern over challenges such as overload and over-crowded/ large classes. Despite the fact that the importance of assessment is highly and strongly pointed out, due to large class sizes, teachers fall short

in assessing learners regularly. A study by Wanyama (2013) noted that assessment has a substantial impact on learners' academic performance.

The majority of the respondents expressed the wish to assess learners on a daily basis but due to the large numbers of learners in the classes, it was practically impossible. In many cases, they fell short of assessing learners daily or even weekly, which had a negative effect on learners' performance.

From item 3.1 (a), the researcher wanted to find out if schools had enough physical facilities such as classrooms, study halls, libraries, laboratories, toilets playgrounds and furniture for the learners. This was important because it is difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place under the tree. It is very difficult for Grade 12 learners to concentrate if classrooms are not adequate. The adequacy of classrooms facilitates proper learning. Scholars (e.g. Krull, Wilbert & Hennemann, 2014) have pointed out the importance of proper and adequate classrooms in the learners' learning outcomes. A study by Bierman (2011) also highlights the importance of well-organized classrooms as an important component that positively influences learners' academic outcomes. Adequate and ideal classroom environments in which learners feel safe influence and enable learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Oparanya et al., 2015). Similarly, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebengo (2002) note the significance of proper classrooms in the attainment of learners' learning outcomes.

Scholars (e.g. Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999; Deakin-Crick et al., 2013) note that inadequate classrooms result in poor academic performance by learners. The EFA Global

Monitoring Report (2005) established that lack of classrooms influences learners' academic performance in a negative way. Milkie and Warner (2011) also stressed the significance of conducive classroom environments. They also noted that an improper and unconducive classroom environment has negative impact on the learners' academic results, because learners are frustrated and demotivated by their surroundings. This shows the importance of classrooms in the academic performance of learners in any grade. Nickols (2007) is of the view that what occurs within the classroom influences learners' academic performance. The learners' immediate surroundings influence learners' academic performance, either in a positive or negative way. The System Theory and School Context Model stress the interdependence of the school and the surrounding environment where the school is located. Classroom settings for learning and teaching influence the learners' learning outcomes (Nickols, 2007; Deakin-Crick et al., 2013; Bascia, 2014).

In their responses, six (6) teachers (75 %) responded that they had adequate classrooms in their schools. All principals (100 %) indicated that they had adequate classrooms in their institutions. Only two (2) teachers (25 %) provided a contradictory response that they did not have adequate classrooms in their respective schools. It was revealed that all schools had no study halls. Learners used classrooms for study purpose. Responses obtained from questionnaire reflected lack of physical facilities such as laboratories; libraries, study halls, play grounds and flush toilets were experienced at non-boarding schools. Although boarding schools had these facilities such as libraries, they were under-resourced. All non-boarding schools participated in

this study had no libraries. During the focus group discussion with learners in school D, one learner remarked:

There is no library in this school.

For item 3.1(b), the researcher asked respondents to explain the effect of any five physical facilities on the learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). The researcher was also interested to know if the existence of physical facilities especially, the library had any positive influence on academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). This aspect was very important because, with enough library resources, learners, especially English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners, would be exposed to various reading materials which help them broaden their vocabularies. Studies (e.g. UNESCO, 2017) stress that resourced libraries opens a world of wisdom for the learner to build confidence in the learning process. The mind of the learner gets broadened and he/ she gets a better grasp of the subject. A resourced library enables learners to develop their literacy skills by reading various materials. UNESCO (2017) posits that a school library exhibits positive impact on the academic achievement of the learners. Learners can perform better during examinations by reading various books. UNESCO (2017) is in line with Oparanya et al. (2015) who established that school facilities such as libraries determine the quality of the school which in turn influence the achievement of its learners.

It was indicated that most schools had libraries that were not adequately resourced. Focus group discussions with the learners also established that libraries were poorly resourced. Most libraries lacked current and useful reading materials. Interviews with parents also revealed that parents too were worried about the state of libraries in the schools in the region. Parents felt that the availability of library resources could develop a reading culture among learners. The reading culture among learners could enhance their academic performance in English Language (L 2).

Libraries are essential resource centres which help learners to access a lot of educational information; and the lack of this facility could result in the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The researcher established, through focus group discussions, that, in School A, for example, the library contained very few reading materials. Similarly, learners in the focus group discussions in School B concurred with those in School A, that their school library was poorly resourced and many a time, there was no staff member to attend them. It was also established that poorly resourced facilities like libraries in schools prevented learners from being active and independent learners by reading on their own. Scholars (e.g. Nannyonjo, 2007; Vijay, 2016) point out that, to enhance their knowledge, learners can use reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopedia etc. Furthermore, Nannyonjo (2007) and Vijay (2016) stress the use of library reading materials in building a strong foundation of a learner that influences learners' academic performance.

Principals, teachers, learners and parents who were interviewed felt that quality learning outcomes cannot be achieved if the resources and facilities are not available or are of insufficient quantity or inappropriate quality. Parents also felt that lack of resources and facilities such as libraries might have negative influence on the learners' learning outcomes. From this perspective, we can assume that the lack of resources might also demotivate teachers in teaching English Language (L 2).

Learners from School A pointed out the significance of libraries. One learner said:

We direct our suggestions to the Namibian Government to undertake the programme of extending libraries everywhere in the Oshikoto Region, even at far remote areas such as Okankolo, Onkumbula, Eengodi and Nehale ljaMpingana districts to motivate and instill reading culture in its citizens.

Based on the given dimension, teachers need motivation to sustain their good morale. They have a role and responsibility to encourage learners to believe that they can reach the top in education. From this, we can say that lack of resources which in turn leads to lack of motivation and ambition holds people back in their lives. It is clear that the support of the government, parents and society is an important factor that influences learners' academic performance. Lack of facilities can lead to inefficiency in English Language (L 2) which in turn influences learners' poor academic performance. Teacher's low motivation can lead learners to lower academic results than they are capable of.

Findings from the questionnaire show that some schools were in critical shortage of physical facilities such as libraries which influenced poor motivation among teachers and

learners. The study established that teachers were unhappy, frustrated and unmotivated as their school environments were dotted with poor resourced libraries. The findings complement the responses from the interviews and focus group discussions. One learner in School A expressed her view as follows:

The library is there, but it is not well resourced.

It is clear teachers at times have to work under unsafe and unhealthy conditions. It can be concluded that lack of physical facilities had negative impact on the learners' academic attainment.

The researcher also sought to understand the effect of furniture on the learners' learning outcomes. This was important because it is difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place while learners share a chair or sit on the ground. It is very difficult for them to concentrate if furniture is not adequate. Again taken together, the majority of principals (3 -75 %) and teachers (7- 87.5 %) said that there was adequate furniture in schools; one principal of School D (25 %) said that there was inadequate furniture while one teacher (12.5 %) was undecided over the issue. The study established that in boarding secondary schools there was adequate furniture, comparing to non-boarding secondary schools where there was no adequate furniture. Learners had to share desks. In focus group discussion with learners in School D, one learner stated that they shared chairs. A study by Oparanya et al. (2015) established the importance of desks as quality elements related to the academic performance of learners. The school environment and what the school had influenced the academic performance of the learner. For Oparanya et al. (2015), once

the learner enters the school, the environment of the school influences his/ her academic performance.

The responses of many parents and learners complemented the findings obtained from the questionnaire that many schools in this study were equipped with adequate furniture.

Parent A1 said:

Our school has enough furniture. Each learner has a chair and desk.

The majority of learners who participated in the focus group discussions expressed their satisfaction with the availability of furniture in their schools. On the contrary, the learners from School D showed that furniture was inadequate in their school. One learner said:

There is no adequate furniture in our school, hence, we share it.

The study found that some schools, specifically, non-boarding secondary schools had inadequate and poorly maintained desks which had negative effect on the teaching/ learning of Grade12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. One assumes that learners have to be on alert to avoid falling down and being embarrassed. For Oparanya et al. (2015) a learner is not well motivated if he/ she is squatting on an uncomfortable stool. Legotlo, Maaga and Sebengo (2002) note that school facilities determine the quality of the school which, in turn, influences learners' academic attainment. It can be said that conducive physical conditions under which a class is working positively affect and influence the learners' academic performance.

Item 3.2 (a) sought to know the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) for the past three years. Their responses were tabled in tables below.

Table 4-5: Schools pass rate of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) Results for School A (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016)

Year	Intake	Number passed	Percentage
2014	262	32	13.7
2015	278	73	26.3
2016	294	114	38.8

Table 4-6: English Language (L 2) Results for School B (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016)

Year	Intake	Number passed	Percentage
2014	70	25	36
2015	69	21	30

2016	72	30	42
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Table 4-7: English Language (L 2) Results for School C (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016)

Year	Intake	Number passed	Percentage
2014	54	2	3.7%
2015	50	3	6%
2016	61	6	9.8 %

Table 4-8: English Language (L 2) Results for School D (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016)

Year	Intake	Number passed	Percentage
2014	64	8	12.5
2015	68	8	12.0.

2016	58	02	3.4
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Table 4-9: English Language (L 2) combined Results for Schools A, B, C and D (2014-2016) (MoE, 2016)

Year	Intake	Number passed	Percentage
2014	386	67	15.69
2015	465	105	22.58
2016	427	152	35.59
Total	1278	324	25.35

The results of schools under study shown in all the Tables above reflected poor and unsatisfactory performance in English Language (L 2) study from year to year. Although, fluctuation was experienced in some schools, generally, the results showed no improvement. As discussed earlier, poor academic performances for the past 5 years in national examinations were recorded by the Ministry of Education (2015-2016). The

performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region was not satisfactory (MoE, 2016).

All the participants (parents, principals, teachers, learners) involved in the present study indicated the lack of exposure to English Language as the main reason for learners' poor performance. Lack of exposure to English Language is not only a critical challenge in Namibian education system, but also a threat to the socio-economic development of Namibia envisioned in Namibia Vision 2030. English Language presents not only a challenge to Namibia but also to many countries around the globe where English Language is spoken as a second language. In Malaysia, Bhowmik (2011) established that parents and learners tend to use their own language to speak with their classmates. They are more comfortable and fluent in speaking their languages. Bhowmik (2011) further notes that the majority of parents talk to their children in their own language and not in English. Bierman (2011) notes that lack of exposure to English Language creates fear among learners who are weak in English Language to communicate and interact during classes. Although practice makes perfect, it is clear that many learners tend not to speak English. English needs to be practiced and be part of learners' lives in order to be fluent in the language (Bhowmik, 2011).

Despite the fact that English is the medium of instruction, English Language (L 2) teachers tend to teach in vernacular (Oshiwambo). All participants highlighted the use of vernacular (Oshiwambo) in English Language (L 2) lessons or classes by both teachers and learners. As discussed earlier, learners in the focus group discussions indicated that

some of their Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers, although they have the knowledge of the subject content, they tend to teach in local language (Oshiwambo). These findings agreed with what parents expressed, as they indicated that although English is officially the medium of instruction, many teachers use mother tongue hiding behind the fact that learners do not understand, cannot comprehend, therefore, they do not teach in English. As a result, most learners do not get much of English being spoken. As such, the use of mother tongue was found to hamper the academic performance of learners, as many learners could not express themselves in English Language.

The present study established that, although both teachers and learners are aware of the importance of English Language in today's society, they just do not put more effort to master it. It became evident that the use of Oshiwambo in English lessons influenced the poor performance in the subject under study. Scholars (e.g. Alex, 2010) established that local teachers in Malaysia often used bilingual methods while teaching English classes. An English teacher tries to explain in mother language when learners do not understand during classes. The use of local language means that English Language proficiency is kept low among teachers and learners, and in return, this influences poor performance. Urban Trust Namibia (2011) established that many teachers and learners were not fluent in English.

The *Language Policy for Schools* regarding the learning of English Language was implemented in 1992 to promote the use of mother tongue alongside English, in schools and colleges of education (MoE, 2008). The implementation of the *Language Policy for*

Schools in Namibia forms the basis of the Namibian School Education system, which is a 12-year system, ranging from Grades 1 - 4 (Junior Primary), Grades 5 - 7 (Senior Primary) and Grades 8 -12 (Grades 8-10 Junior Secondary and Grades 11-12 Senior Secondary) education (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). Given this policy, one can argue that while there is nothing wrong with promoting the mother tongue, using the mother tongue alongside English may confuse learners when it comes to learning English because of mother tongue interference.

Tötemeyer (2010) noted that the *Language Policy* was implemented prematurely without putting all necessary mechanisms in place such as specialist English teachers, which might have a negative influence on academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language in the Oshikoto Region. Many parents, teachers and principals in this study also pointed this out.

Even the Namibian Ministry of Education (2008) pointed out that the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in Namibian schools is a major cause of poor academic performance which the Namibian Government has over-looked (MoE, 2008). Similarly, the Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) attributes learners' failure to the lack of standardized medium of instruction used in primary schools (Grades 1-3) despite English being the official language. The Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) is of the belief that the value of English as a medium of instruction is highly dependent on the ethnicity of that community, which means that the most popular language each community speaks becomes the medium of instruction for learners, especially in Grades 1-3. This implies that learners

start to learn English as a subject in Grade 1 up to Grade 3. When they enter Grade 4, they use English as the medium of instruction. The Language Policy in Namibian schools becomes a complex and critical problem for the attainment of Grade 12 learners' quality educational outcomes. Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) reveals that learners who are not taught in their Home Language find themselves struggling to comprehend material in their English lessons as nearly 50 percent of secondary learners failed English Language (L 2) in 2010. Some learners even get confused or take time to grasp the English learning process which leads to difficulties in school later (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011).

It also appears that the lack of English Language proficiency of Namibia's teachers is an issue which contributes to low English Language proficiency among learners (Alexander, 2000). Literature (e.g. Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006) has shown the importance of communication (speaking) skills and competence in English towards academic achievement. Most of the parents interviewed were of the view that Grade 12 learners may fail English Language (L 2) in a school, because there are no specialist teachers for English Language (L 2). Parent A 2 interviewed stated that although most of the English Language teachers were professionally qualified teachers it is clear that they lack English proficiency.

Parent A 2 felt that most of the English Language teachers were not well-trained to specialize in teaching English in Grade 12. Tötemeyer (2010) argues that in Namibia, English, Afrikaans and German groups taught from Grades 1-12 who are taught by qualified teachers in their mother tongue tend to achieve better results than the indigenous Namibian learners.

Additionally, many principals, teachers, parents and learners put blame on the locations where schools are situated, that the location of school had an influence on learners' academic performance. They were of the opinion that schools outside urban areas used Home Language instead of English Language (L 2) in their daily interactions.

Parent B also shared the same sentiments that English is hardly spoken in rural areas. All four (4) principals (100 %) and all eight (8) teachers (100 %) showed that one of the critical factors that negatively influenced the learners' academic achievements in English Language (L 2) was their living environment, because in rural areas, people communicate in vernacular which makes learners to think first in mother tongue and thereafter translate to English. Learners suffer a lot from mother tongue influence; as a result, they do not perform well in English. In the focus group discussion learners were also of the opinion that living environment had deprived them from learning and mastering English language. Like parents and principals, learners too felt that their rural background influenced their performance in English Language (L 2) because learners were hardly communicating in English.

Generally, all participants felt that in rural areas learners were not exposed to English Language being spoken. Conclusion can be drawn that the living environment could be one of the factors that influenced poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) over the years.

Teacher A 1 wrote:

The rural setting influences the performance negatively. There is less exposing to variety of reading materials and hardly to access to facilities such as libraries and TVs.

All respondents (principals, parents, teachers and learners) indicated that English was hardly spoken in rural areas. Teacher B1 wrote:

The setting of our school influences negatively the performance of our Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Our learners lack exposure to English. In turn, they do not understand it and it becomes difficult for them to pass English Language (L 2).

One learner from School D said:

Unlike our counterparts in the semi-urban and urban areas who are exposed to media and other resources that improve their performance, we have poor foundation in English because of lack of exposure to English. In villages we speak Oshiwambo.

Principal A also shared same sentiments as he wrote:

Learners are not exposed to English Language being spoken outside the classroom. In rural areas, people communicate in vernacular which makes learners to think first in mother tongue and thereafter translate to English. Learners suffer a lot from mother tongue influence; as a result, they do not perform well in

English. Learners are not exposed to media where they can learn English from.

This is the reason why they do not perform well in English at the end of the year.

Teacher B 2 also wrote:

The rural setting influences the performance of our Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) because they lack expression in English and there are no libraries around where they can access reading materials to improve and expand their English vocabularies.

From the above, English Language seems an issue and comes out as a major problem which negatively influences the academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2) in Namibian schools. Research findings by the Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) indicate that about 83% of learners prefer to use their Home Language for learning purposes and about 87% of learners wish to address their teachers in their Home Language. Learners have these preferences, not because they do not understand the importance of English for their future, but because they struggle to understand their teachers and find it difficult to express themselves in English (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011). The Urban Trust of Namibia (2011) found out that the lack of a clear language policy that is translated into action is a critical factor in poor educational results in Namibian schools.

From item 3.2 (b), the researcher wanted to know why the students' performance has been consistently poor for the past three years. The majority of participants (principals,

parents, teachers and learners) related poor performance to a number of factors including geographic location, family background, lack of exposure to English, poor English background of learners, lack of reading materials at school, inadequate library resources, unavailability of ICT devices and less effort to encourage English communication in the school during and after school hours.

The respondents felt consistent poor academic performance was linked to the geographical location of schools. The location of schools negatively influenced the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The responses of all four (4) principals (100 %) and all eight (8) teachers (100 %) showed that rural setting negatively influenced the learners' academic achievements in English Language (L 2).

All respondents (principals, parents, teachers and learners) pointed out among others, lack of exposure to English among learners as one of the critical factors that negatively influence learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.

Teacher A 2 wrote:

The rural setting influences the performance negatively, because there is less exposing facilities to English such as libraries and TVs.

All respondents (principals, parents, teachers and learners) indicated that English was hardly spoken in rural areas. Teacher D 1 wrote:

The setting of our school influences negatively the performance of our Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Our learners lack exposure to English. In turn, they do not understand it and it becomes difficult for them to pass English Language (L 2).

One learner from School D said:

Unlike our counterparts in the semi-urban and urban areas who are exposed to media and other resources that improve their performance, we have poor foundation in English because of lack of exposure to English. In villages we speak Oshiwambo.

Principal A also shared same sentiments as he wrote:

In rural areas, people communicate in vernacular which makes learners to think first in mother tongue and thereafter translate to English. Learners suffer a lot from mother tongue influence; as a result, they do not perform well in English. In rural, learners are not exposed to media where they can learn English from. This is the reason why they do not perform well in English at the end of the year.

Teacher D 2 also wrote:

The rural setting influences the performance of our Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) because our learners hardly communicate in English and there are no libraries around where they can access reading materials.

The findings are in line with views of some scholars (e.g. Nickols, 2007; Bascia, 2014) who established that the learning environment plays a major role in the learning process and the area where learners live determines and influences their performance at school in studies. All respondents (principals, teachers, parents and learners) felt that academic performance in the region was affected by multiple issues.

Parent A 1 stated that their children hardly get an access to newspapers. Consequently, they remain behind in terms of acquiring information on contemporary events. He further pointed out that the written materials their children had access were mostly school books. He therefore felt that such state of affair had negative impact on the learning of their children. Parent A 1 felt that although the government made education accessible to all, children in the formerly disadvantaged and marginalized communities still suffer the consequences of marginalization.

Parent A 2 also shared the same sentiments as she indicated the lack of required instructional materials. She is of the view that resources were not equitably distributed, although the government made effort to ensure all equal access to education. She also linked poor performance of their children to their geographical setting.

UKessays (2017) indicates that learners from rural schools mostly receive an inferior education compared to the learners that live in urban areas. There are many factors that cause the gap in performance between learners in rural and urban areas. The reasons for the variations in academic achievement are geographic location, resources, availability of technology and also the quality of teachers. Learners in urban areas usually perform better because of their better quality education, availability of information that they get from various sources like mass media and electronic media, their educated families and peer groups which help them attain better performance. They have many advantages and facilities in their education compared to their counterparts in the rural schools. Participants have pointed out many factors that may contribute to the differences in performance between learners in rural and urban areas. Factors, among others, include family factors, low socio-economic factors, lack of facilities and resources, and less qualified teachers.

A learner in School D was of the view that academic performance in the region remained low due to multiple factors. Most of the learners pointed out to poverty, that although their parents understand the importance of education, parents cannot afford to send them to the best schools in the urban areas. Their parents could not even afford to buy supplementary learning materials like dictionary, mathematical calculators etc.

Although they approached the matter from a different perspective, learners in School B stated that most of them were fortunate to have parents who employed and could afford to provide them basics to enable them to study. Literature (e.g. Mlambo, 2011; Farooq,

Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013) notes that the majority of parents in rural areas are less educated than parents in urban areas. Hence, the family background is one of the important factors in influencing the learning outcomes of learners. Literature (e.g. Chevalier & Lanot, 2002; Schiller, Khmelkov & Wang, 2002; Mancebon & Mar-Molinero, 2000) found that most of the learners who live in rural areas come from low income families. Parents cannot provide them enough educational resources at home. Some of the learners in rural areas are less motivated and as a result feel no pressure to attain good learning outcomes.

Many parents who were interviewed emphasized low family socio-economic status that it had a significant negative impact on the academic performance of their children. Many parents stated that they did not buy supplementary reading materials for their children, as they could not afford financially, and they are illiterate. These findings confirm what scholars (e.g. Duke, 2000; Eamon, 2005) observe that low socio-economic status of parents hinders people from gaining access to sources and resources of learning. Only very few parents who were interviewed stated that they provided their children with supplementary materials. All participants (parents, principals, teachers and learners) felt that family background has strong impacts on the learners' learning outcomes. One parent indicated that their children are only exposed to English Language being spoken at school. UKessays (2017) notes that learners in rural areas are disadvantaged as their non-exposure to educational resources results in their poor learning outcomes.

Poor facilities in most schools, especially in rural areas, result in the poor academic performance of learners. Facilities are important in order to make the teaching and learning more effective. Participants in this study indicated that all schools in the present study do not have language laboratories to promote English Language proficiency of learners. Lack of facilities makes learners' learning less effective and they will have less language proficiency and expression.

UKessays (2017) concurs with Amitava, Manojit, Seswata & Braja – Gopal (2010) who conducted a study on factors that affect students' academic performance in Pakistan and found a number of socio-economic factors such as students' attendance in the class, family income, mother and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence of trained teachers in schools, as factors that affect students' academic performance in Pakistan. All participants (parents, principals, teachers and learners) in this study also pointed this out. The majority of the principals (75 %) indicated they severely affected learners' lack of English proficiency in their schools.

The study also discovered that learners' background also impacts on their academic performance (UKessays, 2017). This indicates that low performing learners are usually in public rural schools. Learners in public rural schools under-perform due to poor quality education as a result of, among other things, lack of information that could be accessed from various sources like mass media and electronic media, low level of parental education, and peer groups which cannot help them for better performance (UKessays, 2017). It is also revealed that learners in rural areas are less exposed to the outside world

and consequently, they lack knowledge about the current issues that happen (UKessays, 2017).

From item 4, the researcher wanted to know the challenges that negatively influenced the Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The responses from the questionnaires showed the feelings of the respondents with regards to the challenges that had negative influence on the learners' academic performance in the region.

The majority of both principals (75 %) and teachers (87.5 %) identified a number of challenges which they thought influenced the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. The following challenges were identified.

- Lack of language laboratories;
- Inadequate school libraries;
- Incompetence of learners
- Teacher-learner ratio, large class sizes and poor background of learners were also identified as some of the factors that influenced the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

All participants involved in the present study indicated that inadequate infrastructure (e.g. libraries, laboratories) negatively influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The results from the focus group discussions with learners buttressed these observations from the questionnaires. Learners indicated acute shortages of library reading materials. This shows that although libraries existed in schools under study, they were poorly or under -resourced. The present study established that a poorly resourced library deprived learners of the opportunity to learn.

One learner in School B said:

I like writing which helps me to write or answer Paper 2. When I am at home, I watch TV and learn how the words are pronounced which helps me to write the Paper for listening. Watching and listening to the TV helps me a lot.

It was evident that the Namibian education system is still plagued with serious problems of basic infrastructure. Basic infrastructure, such as furniture, library and ICT equipment was inadequate in schools. Inadequacy of the basic infrastructure negatively influenced the academic performance of learners. In an interview with Parent B 2 the challenge of lack of school library school and community library in the region was highlighted. A study carried out in Kenya by Cowan (2005) indicated that inadequacy of infrastructure constitutes another source of frustration and disillusionment among teachers. A study by

Alton-Lee (2005) revealed that inadequate infrastructure negatively influenced the performance of learners.

The observations from the focus group discussions with learners indicated a number of learner-related factors that have the potential of negatively influencing the academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2). They include learners' poor socio-economic background, lack of exposure to English, lack of commitment among learners, and negative peer influence. These findings support the observations from the questionnaires and interviews with parents.

The findings of studies by some scholars (e.g. Smith, 2011; Fakude, 2012; Nampala, 2013; Wanyama, 2013; Nkandi, 2015) reveal learner-related factors that influence the academic performance of learners. These are, among others, learners' attitudes, family backgrounds, learners' study habits, peer influences, attendance of school and co-curricular activities and distance to and from schools. Oparanya et al. (2015) noted that learners who stay far from school are prone to absenteeism and fatigue which lead to poor academic performance.

In Australia, Knapp (2006) found that children who come from low socio-economic backgrounds have a poor command of English Language (L 2) as far as vocabulary, syntax and morphology are concerned, because they have limited knowledge of the English language. The importance of socio-economic background of learners in their academic performance was also stressed in Kenya by Kandeyi and Kamuyu (2006). Fakude (2012) in South Africa concurs with Smith (2011) that lacks of commitment,

learners' independence in schools and peer influence have a strong negative influence on learners' academic performance in schools. The present study established a number of the identified learner - related factors that have a direct influence on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

Item 5 required respondents to suggest the strategies that English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners, teachers, principals, and parents/ guardians of Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2) should employ to improve the Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia.

5.1: Expectations from learners were to:

- avoid feeling inferior when it comes to speaking English both in class and in public;
- take courage to participate in debating activities, role plays, use school library and language laboratories extensively;
- participate in, and promote the use of, English Language in different contexts;
- take courage and initiate the initiatives to write exercises and essays; and
- make effort to read more and a wide variety of books and other reading materials in order to improve language use.
-

5.2: Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers were expected to:

- be models in speaking the English Language well so that children/ learners can emulate
- upgrade and improve their English Language teaching approaches through short courses;
- be exemplary to their learners by reading more materials and showing total commitment to their school work;
- encourage their learners to communicate in English Language;
- prepare interesting, productive and meaningful lessons in order to cultivate a culture of participation and high involvement;
- involve their learners in practicing English Language all times;
- give appropriate written work, mark it and give feedback to learners on time;
- advise, help and guide the learners;
- use a variety of instructional materials to enrich their learners' vocabularies;
- expose learners to media such as TV's, audio players, local English newspapers such as The Namibian, The Namibian Sun, The Villager, The Windhoek Observer, etc;
- motivate their learners through giving recognition for good achievement / academic performance in English activities;
- set exchange programmes to visit and learn from well-performing secondary schools; and
- learn the secret behind the better performance of other schools through exchange programmes.

5.3: Principals were expected to:

- ensure they monitor teachers' work through conducting class visits to observe lessons in English Language;
- avail teaching and learning resources through the use of School Grants;
- intensify departmental meetings in order to motivate teachers to work hard;
- inspire both teachers and learners to communicate in English; and
- recognize both teachers and learners for the good work done by giving prizes/ awards.

5.4: Parents / Guardians of Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2) were expected to:

- work closely with the school by monitoring the work and progress of their children regularly.
- engage in talks with English Language (L 2) teachers in order to strategize on how to assist their children to perform as desired.
- provide supportive and supplementary English reading materials such as dictionaries, novels, etc.
- challenge their children by always communicating to them in English.

The majority of the parents felt the same with regard to their supportive role in the education of their children. Their opinions agreed with those of some scholars, for example, Moore and Wade (2000), who state that parents as prime educators of a child have a significant influence on the child's learning in schools and beyond schooling.

Parent A 1 had this to say:

I visit the school each term to monitor the progress of my children. I monitor their written work to see how they progress. I hold meetings with both my children and with English Language (L 2) teachers to hear their views on the schooling of my children.

ParentA2 added:

I visit the school twice per term to see the progress of my child, and to engage in talks with teachers.

The majority of the parents shared the same sentiments that visiting the school to check on learner progress influenced learners' attitudes and behavior, which eventually reduced indiscipline among learners. Parents were of the view that their involvement encouraged learners to pay maximum attention to their school work which helped them to do better.

Based on the given responses, the study findings agree with the body of research available (e.g. Moore & Wade, 2000) which indicates that parental involvement in children's learning activities influences their learning positively. Similarly, Alex (2010) notes that the importance of parental involvement as an accelerating and motivating factor in their children's education is a worldwide accepted fact. The present study established that parental involvement in children academic activities is linked to the children's benefit in terms of formal literacy.

5.5: Suggestions to the Ministry of Education were made:

Participants suggested that the Ministry of Education should do the following:

- provide more and current materials, as well as equip school libraries and language laboratories with relevant reading materials.
- advise teachers of Languages to visit Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers and offer support; especially to schools with poor academic performance in English Language (L 2);
- organize workshops to update Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers;
- establish competitions such as spelling, Readathon and quizzes at different structural levels such as at school, cluster, circuit, regional and national level. The aim would be to expose learners to the use of English language;
- in the case of vacant posts, speed up the recruitment process to avoid delays in covering the syllabus;

- provide current information on time to both teachers and learners regarding syllabi and textbooks; and
- award prizes to teaching staff members and learners who perform well.

Part C

1. Learner-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

1.1 Results and Discussion

The English Language (L 2) Grade 12 teachers and principals were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed (SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree) with each given statement on the factors that influence Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language in the Oshikoto Region, and to explain each of their choices.

The results of the teachers' and principals' views on learner-related factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) are presented in Table 4.10. As described in Chapter 3, SA and A were collapsed to show agreement or positive attitudes while SD and D were also collapsed to show disagreement with the Statement or negative attitudes. The neutral point (not sure) was left out in order to make the results directional (Fishbein, 1975).

Table 4-10: Responses of principals and teachers (n=12)

Statement	Responses				
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
Most of the Grade 12 learners find it difficult to understand the examination question papers in English Language (L 2).	4	5	3		
Most of the Grade 12 learners have poor English background from lower grades which makes it difficult for them to understand examination question papers in Grade 12 English Language (L 2).	9	3	--	--	--
Most of the Grade 12 learners believe that English is difficult to understand.	6	4	2		--

Table 4.10 indicates that four respondents (33.33 %) strongly agreed that most of the Grade 12 learners find it difficult to understand the examination question papers in English

Language (L 2). Five (5) (41.67 %) agreed and three (3) (25 %) were undecided (unsure). These results show that the majority of respondents (75 %) agreed that Grade 12 learners found it difficult to understand the examination questions in English. The main reason given for this is their poor background in English since it is a second language to them. The observations from the questionnaires concur with a research study conducted in Namibia by the Ministry of Education through NIED, an organ of the Ministry of Education, which revealed that a high proportion of learners in Namibian schools were confused by the second language, English Language (MoE, 2011).

The negative influence of poor background in English Language (L 2) was also pointed out in literature by scholars (e.g. Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Kyoshaba, 2009; Mlambo, 2011; Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013; Mwaura, 2014; Wanyama, 2015) who established how learners coming from diverse home environments are affected differently by such variations. Studies (e.g. Kyoshaba, 2009; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012; Mwaura, 2014; Wanyama, 2015) recommend that a good environment be provided at home to enable learners to learn in school. It appears that learners' success at school is closely linked to their home backgrounds (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Factors linked to the level of education of parents, family income and marital status are determinants of the level of academic performance and aspirations of learners in school (Kyoshaba, 2009; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

In the identification of factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), four (4) parents (50 %) identified lack of exposure to English as one of the main factors that negatively influenced the academic performance

of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. Findings from parents agreed with the research findings of the study conducted in Kenya by Onyara (2013), which indicated that lack of exposure to proper learning environment makes teaching and learning in secondary schools not comfortable resulted in the poor academic performance of learners.

Table 4.10 shows that all twelve (12) respondents (100 %) agreed that most of the Grade 12 learners have a poor English background from lower grades which makes it difficult for them to understand examination question papers in Grade 12 English Language (L 2). Their poor background in English Language is due to lack of exposure to English Language from lower primary education. Literature (e.g. Tötemeyer, 2010; Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011) highlights lack of exposure to English Language due to the *Language Policy for Schools* which was implemented in Namibian schools in 1992. The implementation of English as a medium of instruction in Namibian schools is a major cause of poor academic performance which the Namibian Government has over-looked (MoE, 2008). The results from the semi-structured interview with parents and focus group discussions with learners support the observations from the questionnaires. Parents also felt that lack of exposure to English was one of the critical factors that negatively influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Parents felt that although English is the medium of instruction, not many learners have the opportunity to speak, to use or to listen to proper English being spoken outside the classroom. Learners also indicated that the use of English at home was very rare. They did not communicate in English in the village. In some instances, if you speak English to

people around you they may think that you are insulting them. So the use of English outside the classrooms, especially in the village, was sometimes a taboo.

Table 4.10 also shows that the majority of the respondents (10 - 83.33 %) agreed that most of the Grade 12 learners believed that English was difficult to understand. Respondents explained that most of the Grade 12 learners had poor English background, because of lack of exposure to English. Onyara (2013) notes the importance of exposing learners to a variety of teaching and learning resources if they are to improve their English. Onyara (2013) indicates that learning involves interaction of students with the environment and teaching and learning resources which include, among others, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, playing fields, textbooks. Indeed, physical resources go a long way in creating conducive environments that promote effective teaching and learning. Mwangi (2013) conducted a study in Kenya, which revealed the importance of teaching and learning resources in the performance of learners. The present study determined the extent of the physical facilities in influencing learners' performance in English Language L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The study established the positive effects of provision of teaching and learning resources on pupils' performance in all boarding secondary schools and non-boarding secondary schools in the region.

In many cases, when answering examination questions, learners' answers are far from what is expected. They misinterpret the examination questions. These findings seem to confirm what was revealed by the parents who participated in the semi-structured interviews as they indicated that most of their children were not exposed to English. Studies (e. g. Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011; Nkandi, 2015) warn that if learners have a

low level of proficiency in English, they will always be at a disadvantage when it comes to taking examinations in English. It can therefore be concluded that learners' performance in examinations in Namibia was negatively affected because most of the examinations are taken in English (Urban Trust of Namibia, 2003).

However, the learners themselves in the focus group discussions refuted the issue or belief that English was difficult. They indicated that English Language required only practice by engaging in competitions and reading a variety of reading materials such as newspapers, listening to the national radio and watching TV to expand their vocabularies. In Kenya, Onyara (2013) notes the significance of teaching and learning resources to enhance the quality and relevance of imparted skills of learners. He stressed that through such things as TVs, learners develop their vocabularies, strengthen their English Language proficiency and mastery of language skills. Learners felt that practice makes perfect. The importance of a dictionary in a school as a teaching aid and critical tool was highlighted in the focus group discussions. The learners' sentiments concurred with observations in Kenya by Onyara (2013) who highlighted the importance of learning materials such as dictionaries and textbooks on the performance of learners in the examination.

1.2 Home-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

Table 4-11: Principals' and teachers' responses on home-related factors (n=12)

Statement	SA	A	NS	DA	SD
2.1 Most of the parents support their children in doing their English Language (L 2) home work.	--	2	--	--	10
2.2 Most of the parents of Grade 12 learners provide their children with required instructional materials such as textbooks to help them learn English Language (L 2) better.	--	1	1	4	6
2.3 Most of the parents have good knowledge of English to provide support to their children in English Language (L 2).	--	--	2	2	8
2.4 Very few of the parents of Grade 12 learners assist their children in doing their English Language (L 2) home work.	4	2	1	--	5

Table 4.11 shows that two respondents (2 - 16. 67%) agreed that parents support their children in doing their English Language (L 2) home work. The majority of the respondents (10 - 83.33%) strongly disagreed that most parents supported their children in doing their

English Language (L 2) home work. The reason given was that most parents are uneducated and illiterate in English.

Studies in the United Kingdom by Alex (2010) revealed family adversity as a common factor that hindered children's development. Literature (e.g. Wanyama, 2015) shows that learners who are not encouraged by their parents in school work are likely to go to school late, because they may be given chores to perform before going to school. Considine & Zappala (2002), in their study in Australia, found that families who provide emotional support to their children make their children perform better. The results obtained from parents in the current study suggest that illiterate parents are not self-confident as such they do not take effective involvement in the education of their children. Interview data showed that many parents were afraid to visit schools. They only went there when invited to do so. Parent C1 said:

Oh, we as parents are afraid to visit schools. We go there, when invited to attend meetings. Yes, if I am given a learner's exercise book, I can see a cross, but do I know what it means? I feel it could be helpful if teachers can organize information - sharing sessions to sensitize parents, to empower parents in order to be able to monitor meaningfully the school work of their children.

In this respect, the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children was stressed (Moon, 2004; Fakude, 2012). Educated parents were in a better position to assist their children with English Language (L 2) homework than uneducated parents (Moon, 2004).

Parent A 1 had this to say:

It is my responsibility to provide reading materials such as newspapers and magazines to my children in order to improve their language skills. I provide these support reading materials to develop a reading culture in my children. I ensure that healthy family-school relationships are maintained for the benefit of my children.

The perceptions of the majority who participated in this study were in agreement with literature, for example, Asikhia (2010) who notes the significance of well-prepared adequate learning materials in motivating interest and maintaining concentration of learners for meaningful learning. Fuller (2007) and Mwangi (2013) also share the same sentiments as Asikhia (2010) who stated that effective parental involvement in the education of their children motivates learners to attain high pass marks. Motivated learners do better academically compared to unmotivated learners. The findings of present study also indicate that learners from the boarding secondary school perform academically better comparing to their counterparts in the non-boarding secondary schools. Although, not always the case, this is also apply to children from the well off families outperformed their counterparts who come from low income families.

4.5 Physical resources / materials

Physical resources refer to consumable and non- consumable stocks in a school and they are also referred to as teaching and learning instructional materials (MoE, 2005; MoE,

2014). The teaching and learning instructional materials (resources) include classrooms, laboratories, libraries, textbooks, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment such as radios, computers, and overhead projectors. Physical resources were categorized into two. The first category consisted of instructional resources. The second category consisted of the infrastructural resources. The first research question raised in this study sought to examine how school-based factors (physical facilities) influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the region.

4.5.1 Instructional resources

The present study, through semi-structured interviews with parents and focus group discussions with learners, established a number of factors which caused the poor academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners. These factors are discussed below and suggestions to minimize their effect are made.

Three parents (3) 37.5 % identified the ministerial system of automatic promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12 as one of the critical factors that negatively influenced the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners. It is a practice which involves the promotion of learners to the next grade without them having attained the basic competencies of the current grade (Namibia Press Agency - NAMPA, 2015). NAMPA (2015) established that automatic promotion in essence means promotion of a problem. This means that learners are promoted when they are not ready for the next grade.

A study carried out in Pakistan by Qadir (2011) revealed that automatic promotion was not a solution for the learning problems of learners not meeting educational achievement

standards. It is a widespread and controversial educational practice both in developed and developing countries.

Parents and learners' were in agreement with the findings of a research study conducted in Namibia which indicated that learners who were transferred without attaining the basic competencies for the grade, accumulated the learning backlogs and failed at the exist point, specifically Grade 12 (MoE, 2011).

Parents and learners felt the same that automatic promotion of Grade 11 learners to Grade 12 contributed significantly to the poor performance of learners in English Language (L 2). Once learners enter Grade 11, they have an understanding that they automatically have to proceed to Grade 12 in the next academic year. It was noted that when learners enter Grade 11, despite the fact that they obtained high points, for example, 37 or 42 points in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) end of year national examinations; they tend to relax, claiming they are on a free ticket to enter Grade 12. Consequently, a large number of learners enter Grade 12 unprepared. Parents and learners' views concurred with research findings by MoE (2011) on automatic promotion. The findings indicate that learners who were automatically promoted from Grade 11 to Grade 12 were not motivated to work hard in Grade 11 as they were aware of the fact that the requirements clearly stated that a learner qualifies for transfer to the next grade. As such, learners could not see the difference between those promoted and those transferred. Parent A 1 said:

Oshikoto Region has been number one nationally for seven consecutive years in the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) academic achievements.

Once a learner enters Grade 11, despite the fact that the learner scored even 42 points in JSC, he/ she may leave Grade 11 to Grade 12 with less than twenty points. Learners do not study while in Grade 11, claiming they are on free ticket to enter Grade 12.

Parent A 2 was also of the same view as shown below:

I would rather not ask the school to do anything. This problem we face in Namibia and in Oshikoto in particular is not a school problem but it is a ministerial problem. The Government of the Republic of Namibia should re-visit its policy of automatic promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12.

The present study established that the introduction of Grades 11 and 12 as a two-year course created educational doom since learners could sail up to Grade 12 without seating for mandatory examinations in Grade 11, an examination that intended to gauge the academic performance of learners at Grade 11 (MoE, 2005). Hence, learners who are weak do not fear to fail examinations, since it was guaranteed that once the learner entered Grade 11, he/ she has a free ticket to enter Grade 12. This negatively affects and influences both learners and teachers. Teachers' morale to teach to their best abilities was reduced since no examination would be set for Grade 11. Examinations are understood as benchmarks of both teachers and learners (Wanyama, 2013). This implies that examination is a push factor that influences or pushes learners to study hard in order to pass it.

Similarly, examination pushes teachers to teach intelligently to ensure learners pass the examination. Good pass record also enhances the reputation of both the school and the teacher. The introduction of non - examination in Grade 11 made it difficult for Grade 12 learners to pass English Language (L 2) in Namibia. It could be concluded that the ministerial issue of automatic promotion from Grade 11 to Grade 12 has a direct negative influence on academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in Namibia as a whole.

5. Human - related factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia

Parent - related factors

The Namibian education system is anchored on three pillars, namely; learner, teacher and parent (MoE, 1993). For the attainment of effective academic performance, the parent remains the primary educator with specific obligations of contributing towards the shaping and moulding of the Namibian child (MoE, 1993).

The Ministry of Education (2011) urges the parents and the community to contribute in any possible way towards the education of their children. Parental involvement refers to, amongst others, provision of various basic needs, provision of instructional materials, creating conducive home environment, attending various meetings such as parental meetings, subject meetings, monitoring of learners' work (MoE, 2005).

The researcher believes that parental involvement is entirely about supportive attitudes including motivating, guiding and assisting children on matters affecting and influencing their academic performance in English Language (L 2). The Systems Theory by von Bertalanffy (1930) emphasizes the importance of interdependence and parental support in their children's education, which helps learners to achieve quality academic outcomes in English Language (L 2).

In interviews with parents on how often they visited the school, individual parents provided different answers. However, more than half of the parents (5 - 62.5 %) felt that school visits were very important in the attainment of quality academic performance in English Language (L 2). Parent B 2 had this to say:

I visit the school each term to monitor the progress of my children. When I visit the school, I monitor the written work of my children to see their progress. I hold meetings with my children and finally with English Language (L 2) teachers to hear teachers' views on the schooling of my children.

Parent B1 said:

I visit the school twice per term to talk to both the child and class teacher and especially, with English Language (L 2) teacher to positively influence the academic performance of my child.

Although some parents indicated that they visited schools regularly, the findings from the focus group discussions with learners refuted this claim. All learners indicated that they had never seen parents come to school for academic purpose. Learners claimed that parents do come to school for parent meetings only.

One learner in School D said:

For the past five years I have been in this school, I never saw parents come to influence me to learn in order to do better in English Language (L 2). Parents only visit the school to attend parents' meetings.

What learners said contradicts the findings from questionnaires that parents assist their children in doing English Language activities at home. Most parents provide their children with the required instructional materials such as dictionaries. Parent C 2 shared the following information:

I provide support learning materials such as dictionaries, quizzes, magazines and newspapers to my children in order to develop their skills, proficiency, comprehension and vocabularies.

Even learners felt that parents helped them. One of the learners in School B stated:

At home I use internet to search information, watch TV and listen to radio.

The present study established that majority of parents in this study assisted their children by providing the basics like clothes, guidance and supplementary reading materials such as dictionaries, newspapers and magazines. The present study found that educated parents provided necessary support and proper parental guidance to their children and in the process positively influenced the academic performance of their children. Their children performed better in English Language (L 2). The findings agree with many studies reviewed in literature (e.g. Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Fakude, 2012; Wanyama, 2013) on parental involvement in the education of their children. Studies (e.g. Eze, 2002, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011; Chaudhry, Wanyama, 2013) note that learners work harder and perform better if they realize that their parents and the community are interested in their school work. Okantey (2008) is of the view that a learner whose parents are supportive and have positive attitudes towards his or her education is encouraged to perform well in English Language (L 2).

Parental involvement plays a significant role in helping teachers and the school to improve their learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). The present study found that parental guidance is significant to the attainment of learners' good academic results in school. Through proper parental guidance, a learner can improve his or her study attitudes and study habits and perform better. The present researcher is of the view that proper guidance leads to academic achievement.

Farooq et al. (2011) reveal that proper parental guidance has a direct positive influence on the academic performance of learners. Similarly, it is noted in literature (e.g. (MoE, 2006; Nampala, 2013) that parental involvement builds a strong link and promotes strong communication between the school and home, and also helps learners to see the importance of English Language (L 2) education and it motivates them to work hard.

In the context of this study, the importance of parental involvement in the education of a child was found to be very significant in influencing learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). It is believed that the close link between home and school has a positive influence on the learner's academic performance (MoE, 2006). Thus, English Language (L 2) teachers cannot do their work effectively without the support of parents (Knapp, 2006). It is, therefore, important for parents to know what is happening in the English Language (L 2) classrooms to be able to provide support. Proper parental support has a significant and positive influence on the learners' acquisition of the four language skills, viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as sentence construction. The present study found that literate parents were in a better position to assist their children with English Language (L 2) homework than uneducated parents.

Literate parents can better communicate with their children regarding school work, and the information being taught at school. Fantuzzo and Tighe (2000) stress that educated parents can better assist their children in their school work and also participate at school. Educated parents can provide healthy home environments that are best for the academic success of their children. Thus, scholars (e.g. Eze, 2002; Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu,

2011; Wanyama, 2013) revealed that academic performance of learners does heavily depend upon the parental involvement. The findings of the present study reflect that parental assistance is crucial for the accomplishment of performance goals of learners at school.

However, despite the fact that parental involvement in the education of their children in English Language (L 2) is of paramount importance, the present study established that some parents could not provide the necessary support to their children to do better in English Language (L 2). This was due to high level illiteracy, mainly in English Language. These findings are in agreement with literature (e.g. Ogoye, 2007) which notes that illiterate parents are unable to assist their children with English Language (L 2) homework.

The present study identified two categories of parents; literate parents and illiterate parents. It was established that, although literate parents assisted their children in many ways to do better in English Language (L 2), few of them made time to visit schools where their children were schooling, as they see no need to do so. Parent B 1 responded:

I never visit the school.

Parent C1 added:

To be frank and honest, I never visit the school to monitor the academic progress of my child. I only visit the school when invited to the parent meetings. In reality, in parent meetings, parents do not concentrate on

academic performance of learners, but mainly on managerial issues or disciplinary matters.

However, the present study established that although parents did not visit schools, they provided moral and material support to their children to do better in English Language (L 2). Parent C 1 says:

I encourage my children to speak English wherever they are. I encourage my children to take their education seriously. I provide support learning materials such as dictionaries, quizzes, magazines and newspapers to my children in order to develop their skills, proficiency, comprehension and vocabulary. I also put in place a timetable for watching TV news or reading a newspaper, then compile the news bulletin.

The present study established the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children. A healthy parent-school link has a positive influence on academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners. The study findings on parental involvement agree with Krashen (2005) who posits that learners whose parents visit the school occasionally perform better than those whose parents do not visit.

Based on the research findings, it appears that parental involvement in the education of their children is influenced by internal and external factors which eventually influence the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. The research findings are in agreement with Farooq et al.'s (2011)

idea that learners in public schools belong to a variety of backgrounds depending upon their demography. These diverse backgrounds influence the academic performance of learners differently. This study established that most of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners belong to the economically-disadvantaged parents who are less able to influence their children to do better at school. The present researcher is of the view that most of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners from disadvantaged families do not perform well in their English Language (L 2). Such underperformance could be attributed to lack of parental support and poor involvement in the education of their children. Furthermore, it could be linked to lack of exposure to English Language which contributes to lack of understanding of English Language. A study by Biama (2014) established that parents' academic and professional qualifications, and occupational affiliation, were associated with the academic gain of their learners. The higher the parental education, the better the learner performed.

The findings from the questionnaires revealed an acute shortage of instructional reading materials in the secondary schools under investigation. It was noted that three to four English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners shared one English text book. Similar findings were also obtained from semi-structured interviews with parents and the focus group discussions with English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners. The results from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions complemented the observations from the questionnaires. There is high shortage of textbooks in these secondary schools, which in turn may adversely influence the learners' performance in English Language (L 2).

Thus, the state of insufficient textbooks in the Oshikoto Region served as one of the critical factors that caused the poor academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners. Although textbooks are not only essential in developing countries, the findings of the present study agree with literature, for example, Ayoo (2002), and Juma (2011), who states that textbooks have a direct positive impact on performance among learners in developing countries. The researcher is of the opinion that the provision of adequate textbooks enhances the achievement of quality academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

The significance of textbooks was also highlighted in literature (e.g. MoE, 2008) which describes textbooks as an indispensable resource in developing countries such as Namibia, where teachers might be inadequately trained. In the context of Namibia, which is one of the developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of textbooks is strongly correlated with learners' poor academic achievement (MoE, 2008).

The results from the questionnaires indicate an acute shortage of instructional reading materials, such as textbooks and dictionaries. Lack of such valuable reading materials may influence the poor academic performance of learners in English Language (L 2). Literature (e.g. Juma, 2011) also links academic performance in examinations to a state of teaching and learning resources in schools. Juma (2011) notes that students from poor backgrounds perform poorly in the examinations, because the poor are often in areas where schools are seriously deprived of vital facilities. It is, therefore, recommended in literature (e.g. Biama, 2014) that the school leadership must provide adequate and

relevant facilities and resources to realize successful academic achievement. UNICEF (2007) notes that the quality and adequacy of resources such as physical facilities, equipment, teaching and learning materials have a direct positive bearing on the quality of academic outcomes of learners as they determine how effectively the curriculum is implemented. Scholars, for example, Amitava et al., 2010; Farooq et al., 2011; Mlambo, 2011; Mushtaq & Khan, 2012) are of the opinion that quality learning outcomes cannot be achieved if the resources and facilities are not available or are insufficient or inappropriate.

Parent A 1 had this to say:

It is my duty to ensure that my children are given necessary supplementary reading materials such as dictionaries, story books, newspapers, etc. to develop their language skills.

The perceptions of parents in this study and those of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners who participated in the focus group discussions on the significance of textbooks were in agreement with literature. Literature (e.g. Asikhia, 2010) notes that well prepared adequate learning materials determine the amount of learning that can be placed in a learning setting. Asikhia (2010) notes that learning materials of good quality can motivate interest maintain concentration of learners and make learning more meaningful. Materials motivate and encourage participation of learners in the learning process of English Language (L 2) and help to clarify concepts and meaning of texts.

It was highlighted in literature that textbooks, visual and audio materials do not only enhance English communication (speaking skills) between teachers and learners, but also facilitate learner-centred learning through discovery (Fuller, 2007, Mwangi, 2013).

However, the present study established that learner-textbook ratio was not adhered to as required by the Text Book Policy which aimed to achieve a 1:1 ratio by 2013-2014 (MoE, 2008). Regrettably this ideal was not achieved, and the issue of insufficient textbooks in schools continues to cause many Grade 12 learners to fail.

The study further established that lack of supplementary teaching materials such as dictionaries and audio-visuals such as TVs made it difficult for Grade 12 learners to broaden their English language vocabulary. It was also established that in some secondary schools under study, TV resources were available, but they were under-utilized such that these resources did not serve their intended purposes. By so doing, learners were deprived of their full right to access education. The use of TV has proved successful as learners prefer learning visually at a young age (UNESCO, 2017). UNESCO (2017) continues to stress that television tackles difficult questions in the areas of morality and ethics. Through the medium of television, children are exposed to ideas and are made aware of diverse cultures that they can not necessarily experience for themselves. In the context of the present study, the use of TV helps to reduce the lack of exposure to English Language among learners, as it stimulates the learners' interests.

The Ministry of Education (Namibia) set four goals; two of which are access and quality education (MoE, 1993). These goals are based on Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution

which calls for the provision of facilities to ensure this right for every resident within Namibia.

Given the above, all instructional reading and audio materials should be optimally utilized in terms of the Namibian Constitution to benefit directly or indirectly every resident within the Namibian borders. The right to access and quality education is an inalienable right which is further guaranteed by virtue of Namibia being a Member State to the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), where Namibia became a signatory to a number of international, continental and regional conventions, declarations and treaties in support of free and compulsory education (MoE, 2011).

A study by Considine and Zappala (2002) revealed that most teachers working in schools that run short of basic facilities, such as libraries, often have low expectations from their learners and when learners know that their teachers have low performance expectations from them, it leads to poor academic performance by learners.

The present study observed that some of the Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers seemed to be either ignorant or negligent in their teaching process as they did not utilize the library to render effective teaching services to their customers. Effective utilization of available teaching – learning resources at one's disposal can transform the school environment into a healthy and conducive teaching-learning environment. Healthy learning environments influence English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners to remain

engaged in learning English Language (L 2) and develop their vocabulary, which eventually leads to good academic performance in English Language (L 2).

The researcher, through item 4 of the semi-structured interview, sought to know the role parents played in order to improve Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). The study established that all parents (8 - 100 %) took full responsibility to assist their learners to perform better in English Language (L 2). It was found that parents, regardless of their educational backgrounds, played a significant role in the education of their children.

Parent D1 said:

As a parent, although I do not understand English, I encourage my children to read and study hard in order to pass English of Grade 12, because English is a major concern in Namibia, especially in the Oshikoto Region. With the little money I have, I use it to buy reading materials such as newspapers. But, I also buy books when asked by the school to buy some books.

The above reflects that parents provide supplementary reading materials and moral support to their children to improve their academic performance in English Language (L 2). In this respect, Parent C explained that being a retired citizen with a good command of English, she always stays closer to her children to ensure they do school work. She allows them to watch news on TV, thereafter they have to compile what they have seen

and heard in the news and read news to the family. This parent put such arrangements in place in order to encourage her children to take their studies very seriously.

Parent C 2 explained:

I encourage my children to speak English wherever they are. I encourage my children to take their education seriously. I provide learning materials such as dictionaries, newspapers in order to develop their skills, proficiency, comprehension and vocabulary. I also put in place a timetable for watching TV news; reading news after listening to the news on TV or read a newspaper, then compile news bulletin.

Parent D 2 had this to say:

I help my child with her homework, exercises and activities at home. I also bought supplementary books such as dictionaries, books, study guides, videos etc.

Literature (e.g. Hugo, 2002; Smith, 2011) shows that learners whose parents make resources available at home such as books and dictionaries; and electronic resources e.g. television, computers as well as provision of study-rooms or tables perform better in English Language (L 2) compared to their counterparts from poor families. Learners who have access to educational materials at home are more informed, motivated and assisted to improve their performance in English Language (L 2) while their counterparts from poor

families with no educational resources lack parental assistance to improve their performance in English Language (L 2) (Kahlenberg, 2006; Kirkup, 2008; Nkandi, 2015). Learners' academic success at school is closely related and linked to their home-backgrounds (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

However, as it was highlighted in literature by Ogoye (2007) as well as in the present study, that due to poverty, not all parents are able to buy supplementary English Language learning materials for their children so that they study and improve their academic performance.

High levels of illiteracy and poverty among parents limit meaningful parental involvement in the education of their children. The present study established, through semi-structured interviews with parents and focus group discussions with learners, that in some cases, due to lack of learning and reference materials, learners have to share learning materials, especially English Language (L 2) textbooks. Due to lack of appropriate reading materials in secondary schools under study, learners lose concentration and, as a result, homework is not guided, is poorly done, incomplete or never done at all. It can be concluded that the state of illiteracy and poverty among parents ultimately negatively influences the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia.

In the Namibian context, the Namibian Government, through the Ministry of Education stresses the significance of parental involvement in the education of their children. Parents are required to provide basics to their children and encourage them to perform

better in terms of academic attainment (Ministry of Education, 2004). For the attainment of quality education, the Namibian Government advocates the involvement of three pillars in education who are the parent, teacher and learner, as one of the three alone cannot do work effectively without the support of others.

All parents (8 - 100 %) interviewed identified and highlighted critical factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). Although, the findings of the present study are in agreement with literature (e.g. Ellis, 2002; Asikhia, 2010; Dimmock, 2012; Nampala, 2013; Onyara, 2013; Nkandi, 2015) that identifies contributing factors to learners' academic outcomes, the factors are not necessarily the same as the ones identified in literature. Thus, it could be concluded that English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners' academic performance in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia, is influenced by many factors among others, lack of exposure to English and lack of English Language proficiency among both teachers and learners.

4.5 Teacher-related factors

The present study identified teacher-related factors that influenced the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. This study found that there were many teacher-related factors that negatively influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. They included lack of a reading culture, poor language proficiency. Although, parents and learners viewed teachers as essential players in promoting quality education in schools, teachers suffer from lack of English proficiency.

Onyara (2013) describes teachers as catalysts of change. UNESCO (2000) notes that teachers at all levels of the education system should have access to training and continuing professional development to enable them to influence quality learners' academic performance.

Parent A1 felt:

Heads of Departments should intensify their class visits, monitoring of lesson preparation, learners' writing and the frequency of written work. Teachers should give educative activities to learners to develop their language proficiency. Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers need to pay maximum attention to the grammar structures, tenses, verbs, adjectives, punctuations etc.

The present study also examined how teacher-related factors influenced the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region. Its findings concurred with the research findings of some scholars (e.g. Musau, 2004; Nampala, 2013; Wanyama, 2013) who found a number of teacher-related factors that negatively influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language. It is understood that learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) depends on the teachers' knowledge and the effective application of pedagogy in the English Language (L 2) classroom (Nampala, 2013). Many parents felt that for children to perform well in English Language (L 2), the education system needs quality teachers who are well trained and specialized in English Language (L 2).

On the contrary, the present study found that many of the teachers lacked English Language proficiency. As a result, they negatively influenced the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region. The findings of this study show that lack of English Language proficiency among teachers negatively influences learners' academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region. Maybe, the Grade 12 learners fail English Language (L 2) in a school because there are no specialist teachers for English Language (L 2). Consequently, it may be attributed to a lack of reading culture among learners which eventually may negatively influence their academic performance.

Parent B 1 suggested:

It is the duty of the principal to create healthy relations with parents, to engage in discussions with parents in order to find possible ways on how to terminate the poor academic performance of Grade12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. Healthy relations create an environment of mutual acceptance and understanding.

These findings show that parents A, B, C and D ($n = 6 = 75\%$) had common views pertaining to the factors that influence the poor academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region. They identified lack of exposure to English Language, lack of reading culture and the environment as some of the main factors that negatively influenced the academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

Parent B1 in her suggestions, agrees with literature (e.g. MoE, 2008) that good governance, administration and leadership style in school influence the academic performance of learners positively. These are crucial factors in the success of a school (Mwangi, 2013). School management requires the school principal to be a visionary leader and be in a position to set the right decisions and strategies to effect improvement in a school (MoE, 2014). Similarly, the researcher, being a school principal, is aware of the fact that the school principal has a significant role to play such as planning, influencing exemplary behaviour, directing, controlling and managing all matters pertaining to education enhancement in the school. The performance of the school may depend on the administrative style of the school principal.

In their contributions, parents stressed the importance of effective school leadership. In his study, Nannyonjo (2007) notes that school performance is influenced by the school principal's credentials and qualities such as qualification(s), in-service training, age, experience and tenure of service in the school. The principal should strive to inspire, train, work together with people of different ages and lead all staff members as an effective team (MoE, 2005). Mwangi (2013) shares the same sentiment that lack of communication and poor relationships between and among head teachers, teachers, and students, inefficient instructional policies and practices, and leaving parents out of school activities are significant factors contributing to the poor academic performance of learners in high schools. Similarly, Uwezo (2011) elucidates that quality academic performance can be achieved through team-working with parents, encouraging learners and motivating teachers in order to improve the quality of learning outcomes of learners.

The principal is expected to set a climate of high expectations for staff members and learners, to encourage collegial and collaborative leadership style and team-building. Sushila (2002) notes that the school principal who employs teamwork as a working strategy is bound to obtain high academic performance. It is in this context that Ndunda (2002) remarks that the students' performance depends on the school principal since he or she is the focal point of a school upon whom all important functions rest. The performance of a school is therefore, appraised against the performance of the school principal (Wanyama, 2013).

The desire to excel has been there in Namibia since independence (1990), but in practice, English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners do not perform well in English Language (L 2).

Parent B1 is of the view that:

Lack of a reading culture among our English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners negatively influences the academic performance of our Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). The issue should be, to encourage learners to communicate in English Language, to read extensively story books in order to upgrade their language proficiency. Teachers need to train their learners on how to answer examination questions, to ensure their learners are familiarized with the format and structures of the examination question papers, use TV and radio-cassettes.

Learners indicated the need for the establishment of School English clubs to help learners learn and master English Language better. Both parents and learners felt that teachers should use English when teaching. Furthermore, English Language teachers should ensure English is spoken in and outside the classroom.

Parent C 2 was also of the same opinion as he expressed that:

All teachers irrespective of grade or subject need to contribute to the development of English Language in a school.

Teachers need to establish and sustain teamwork, because it is only through team-building that they help their learners develop and expand their vocabulary through various activities such as games. Through teamwork, teachers, regardless of the subject they teach, will be able to assist learners to develop English vocabularies. Learners in focus group discussions in School A felt their teachers lacked English Language proficiency. One expressed her feelings as follows:

It appears that most of the teachers we have are those who were trained to teach Core Level. They did not update themselves to be able to handle new issues. Thus, they tend to refer their learners to the best performing schools in the other regions, such as Boniface High School in the Kavango Region, while they fail to make their own school the best performing school. So they need workshops based on the current curriculum.

The majority of the parents (6=75 %) were of the opinion that English Language (L 2) Grade 12 teachers in the Oshikoto Region confuse their learners with their low level of English Language proficiencies, lack of vocabularies and their use of vernacular language instead of teaching learners in English Language (L 2). Their opinions align with those expressed in literature (e.g. Ellis, 2002) that weak English Language (L 2) teachers confuse learners because they lack knowledge and skills necessary for quality instruction in English Language (L 2).

Item three of the semi-structured interview with parents sought to identify challenges which might face both Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers and their learners in teaching and learning English Language (L 2). As indicated earlier on, teachers are faced with critical challenges which negatively influence the academic performance of Grade 12 English Language (L 2) learners in the Oshikoto Region. The challenges, as identified in the present study, are more or less the same as the ones that were highlighted in literature by scholars (e.g. Mwangi, 2013; Nkandi, 2015). These challenges include, among others, persistent use of mother tongue (Oshiwambo) in English lessons, lack of specialist English teachers, poor parental involvement in the education of their children, large class sizes, shortage of textbooks, under-resourced libraries, high teacher-learner ratio and ineffective school administration. All the above challenges face English teachers and they may negatively influence the academic achievement of learners.

4.6 Learner - related factors

The study established that most of the learners in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia, were not exposed to English Language outside the classrooms. The findings of the present study are in agreement with literature (e.g. Nampala, 2013; Wanyama, 2013) which highlights that students' academic performance is influenced by a number of factors such as students' attitudes and morale. The present study findings also confirmed what Knapp (2006) found in Australia that the social background of learners is an important variable in determining their background in English Language (L 2). Knapp (2006) states that children who come from low socio-economic backgrounds have a poor command of English Language (L 2) as far as vocabulary and other language skills are concerned, because they have little knowledge of the English Language. Due to these deficiencies, learners cannot produce sentences that are complex. Generally, parents interviewed were of the view that their children do not pronounce English words clearly or construct complex sentences. This results in poor academic performance in English.

From this point of view, we can say that English Language (L 2) learners who come from a low socio-economic background mainly suffer most academically, because they lack supplementary instructional materials. English Language (L 2) learners in rural areas come from previously disadvantaged families; hence, they have difficulty understanding English. Literature (e.g. Simasiku, 2006) reveals that many people in Namibia are unemployed, and as such experience difficulties in providing a basic home environment for learning English Language (L 2) to their children. Simasiku (2006) notes that most of the parents cannot afford to purchase the required English Language (L 2) learning

materials such as textbooks, dictionaries and other educational resources. Most English Language (L 2) learners in the schools in this study were subjected to poverty, large class sizes, teachers of poor quality, lack of teaching aids, all of which negatively influenced learners' learning outcomes in English Language (L 2).

From this viewpoint, it can be concluded that the differences in English Language (L 2) learners' performance lie in the differences in life experience of the learners concerned. The World Bank (2005) notes that economic factors hinder the education progress of English Language (L 2) learners in Namibia. This suggests that learners from low income families in the region tend to live in poverty with little access to English Language learning materials. Thus, socio-economic disparities influence children's English Language (L 2) learning outcomes.

The Systems Theory and School Context Model guided and underpinned this study. The School Context Model was used as a framework to examine how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influenced the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region. The Systems Theory, which is an input-output model, views school as dependent on the environment in which it is established (Hayajneh, 2007; Nickols, 2007). Thus, the environment influences the academic performance of learners either positively or negatively. Literature (e.g. Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999; Deakin-Crick et al., 2013) reveals that learners' surroundings, such as family, school, church, etc. have an impact on the teaching and learning outcomes. The way these institutions interact with learners

influences how learners perform. The more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and environments are, the better learners will be able to perform academically (Nickols, 2007). Thus, based on the two models, the academic performance of learners is influenced by institutional structural factors (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Nickols, 2007; Mlambo, 2011; Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu; Bolu-Steve & Sanni, 2013).

In the context of the present study which examined how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2), it was found that interdependence of school and other institutions had an effect on the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The findings showed that various players (structural institutions) in the environment have an influence on the learning outcomes of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, data gathered were presented, analyzed and discussed. The major focus of the study was to examine factors that influence academic performance of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in the Oshikoto Region. The objectives of the study were derived from the main research question and its sub-research questions. While the questionnaire was the main data collection instrument, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were also used to collect data that were mainly used to buttress or refute observations from the questionnaire. The study findings were presented and discussed.

The next chapter gives a summary of the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study and for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the whole study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the study results, as well as recommendations for further research. Five sections are presented in this chapter. The first section presents a summary of the study by highlighting key points from each of the preceding four chapters. The second section presents a summary of the findings of the study, taking into consideration the research questions, research objectives and assumptions of the study. In the third section, conclusions based on the study's findings are presented. The fourth section offers recommendations based on the major study findings, while the fifth and last section recommends and suggests areas for further studies.

The study identified and examined how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). The assumptions underpinning this study were that there are a number of contextual factors that constrained the provision of quality teaching and learning, causing Grade 12 learners not to achieve quality learning outcomes in English Language (L 2). The study was conducted in four secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. The study aimed to seek solutions to the problem with the view of improving the results.

5.2 Summary of the study

This section gives a summary of key points from each of the four preceding chapters.

Chapter One attempted to situate the research problem within the proper context. It began by highlighting the international context, moved into Africa and SADC Region, then finally into Namibia, where the study was conducted. The problem for this study was the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. The poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) compromised the socio-economic and sustainable development of the country (Namibia) as it is envisaged by Namibia Vision 2030 and the Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development (2004) which calls for the transformation of Namibia into a knowledge-based society by the year 2030. In Namibia, it is nationally agreed that the transformation process of Namibia into a knowledge-based society can only be achieved through the provision of quality education and the consequent attainment of quality educational outcomes (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2004).

The chapter discussed, in its background information, the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) which has remained static for the past six years in the Oshikoto Region in particular and Namibia in general (Ministry of Education, 2015). For the past six consecutive years (2010-2016), the Oshikoto Region failed to produce satisfactory educational outcomes to justify the money being spent in the education sector (MoE, 2015; MoE, 2016). The education sector has failed to offer satisfaction to its consumers, and to develop the country's human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. Academic performance of poor quality for the

Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region was considered a great concern as it directly and indirectly posed a threat to the socio-economic and sustainable development of Namibia, the SADC Region and the international community at large (Wikan & Mostert, 2010; The Urban Trust of Namibia, 2011).

The chapter highlighted the significance of learners' academic performance for societal transformation. Scholars (e.g. Mushtaq & Khan, 2012) highlight the significance of learners' academic performance for the socio-economic development of society. The social and economic development of any country is directly linked to student academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Other scholars (e.g. Ali, Kamaruzaman, Syukriah, Mokhtar, Salamt & Andin, 2009) note the important role learners' academic performance plays in producing good quality graduates who would become great leaders and manpower for the country and further becoming responsible for the socio-economic development of the country.

The focus of this study was, therefore, mainly to identify and examine causal factors for the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. The chapter presented the statement of the problem, research questions and sub-research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, and definitions of key terms.

Chapter Two reviewed related literature. Specifically, it looked at the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and literature based on the research questions in order to see

what is known as well as not known about the problem under investigation. The review mainly centred on two theories which had a bearing on the present study. The theoretical framework that underpinned and guided the present study was the Systems Theory of von Bertalanffy (1930) which was complemented by the School Context Model of Bascia (2014). These helped with understanding how the school context shaped core processes of teaching and learning.

The Systems theory provides an analytical framework for viewing an organization such as the school. In the present study, the Systems Theory and School Context Model were used as framework to identify and understand how school-based, home-based, teacher and learner-related factors influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region. As an input-output model, the theory helped one to understand that learners' results were influenced by what was put into the system; both human and material inputs. The Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1930) and School Context Model (Bascia, 2014) were considered appropriate guidelines for framing the examination of contextual factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

A school, like other institutions, does not exist in a vacuum; but depends on the environment in which it is situated (Hayajneh, 2007). Thus, these models helped to show how institutions such as families, business community, church and state which interacted with the school influenced the academic performance of learners. The models put emphasis on how interaction and interdependence of the school with other institutions

influenced the academic performance of learners. Thus, these models were appropriate because they recognized interdependence of the school and the impact of the environment on school structure, and the effect of outside stakeholders on the school. By using these models, the causal factors that influenced the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) were identified and examined holistically, which helped the study to suggest plans of action on how poor academic performance can be addressed to improve results. Related literature was reviewed to see what was known and not known about issues that influenced the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

The chapter ended with a discussion of research findings from other studies regarding contextual factors that influence the academic performance, and by identifying a gap in literature which the topic under the present study sought to fill. In short, the research findings discussed indicated that many learners have problems with English Language as a second language and that Namibia is not exempted from this problem. While reasons for this poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) vary from country to country, reasons for the failure in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia have not been adequately explored; hence, the present study.

Chapter Three was a discussion of the methodology that guided the whole research process. The main research methodological components discussed were the research

paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, credibility and issues of trustworthiness of the collected data, validity and reliability of data collection procedures and data analysis methods. Each one of these components was explained in detail to give its meaning in the context of the present study. The chapter also looked at the ethical considerations that were observed in this study. In this study, the researcher wanted to identify and understand school-based factors, home-based factors, teacher and learner-related factors that influence academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

The research questions raised in this study determined the research approach adopted. The mixed methods approach which falls within the pragmatic paradigm was adopted to better interrogate the research problem. A paradigm that was ideal to capture both quantitative and qualitative data was considered. The researcher adopted the pragmatic paradigm to concurrently collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Three research instruments, namely; questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data. Questionnaires were used to gather data from principals while teachers and parents were interviewed. Focus group discussions were conducted with learners.

Chapter Four focused on data presentation, analysis and discussion. As a way of avoiding unnecessary repetition, the researcher presented the data and immediately analyzed and discussed them. The data were presented, analyzed and discussed in line

with the research questions and objectives. Data from interviews and focus group discussions were used to buttress or refute findings from questionnaires. The triangulation of data collected from the instruments ensured that the data were credible. Patton (2002) argued that triangulation involves checking the findings of some sources against the findings of other sources to increase their credibility.

The chapter first examined the demographic characteristics of the participants. The demographic characteristics examined included age, gender and experience. It was necessary to present demographic data of the participants because variables like age, gender and experience were critical elements with regard to issues of influencing the participants' views on the problem under investigation.

The study found that contextual factors such as teacher and learner-related factors such as lack of exposure to English, poor English Language proficiency, the use of English medium of instruction and the use of local language in English classes, home-based factors such as parental involvement, family level of education and family income, and school-based factors such as lack of physical resources and instructional materials had negative impact on Grade 12 learners' learning outcomes in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region. It emerged that lack of exposure to English language among both teachers and learners is a critical factor that resulted in the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

With regard to poor English Language proficiency, the study revealed that the school's interaction and interdependence with the environment where the school exists had strong negative influence on English Language proficiency. It emerged from the study that location of schools in rural environments lowered learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). This was largely due to the fact that the environments where both teachers and learners lived have failed to effectively expose them to the English Language.

All participants argued that English Language (L 2) teachers and learners faced challenges in the use of English as a medium of instruction. The majority of the participants pointed out that English Language (L 2) learners and teachers struggled with the use of English as a medium of instruction. The study discovered that English Language teachers persistently used the local language namely (Oshiwambo) in English Language (L 2) classes. Persistent use of local language in English classes by teachers denied learners opportunities for developing their English vocabularies, which had a negative effect on their performance.

Due to poor English Language proficiency, teachers and learners were not comfortable to express themselves in the medium of instruction. The use of English as a medium of instruction was one of the critical challenges teachers faced. It emerged that improper use of the medium of instruction contributed to Grade 12 learners' poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) at all the four secondary schools.

Many participants indicated ineffective parental involvement in the education of their children as a contributory factor to the failure rate. It was established that one of the major causes of the poor academic performance in English Language (L 2) at all the four secondary schools was the lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Many parents failed to provide necessary support to their children in the learning of English Language (L 2). Lack of structural facilities and materials such as books and other written resources had negative impact on the learners' learning outcomes in English Language (L 2).

The main home-based constraining factor identified in this study was home environments which were not conducive to effective learning and understanding English Language (L 2). Children lacked basic needs; especially English Language (L 2) study materials and other necessities to enable them to practice the use of English language outside the classroom. The study revealed that the majority of English Language (L 2) Grade 12 learners in all the four senior secondary schools came from low socio-economic backgrounds. All participants were of the view that family background was one of the strongest predictors of educational outcomes. The study found that poor home and school environments had strong negative influence on the learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2).

The lack of resources such as written materials and other appropriate equipments such as audio-visual made teaching and learning of English Language (L 2) in all the four schools difficult; which negatively affected the learners' academic performance in the end.

5.3 Conclusions

In all the four secondary schools in this study, there was a lack of exposure to English Language among both teachers and learners. The findings showed that most teachers and Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2) lacked English Language proficiency due to lack of adequate exposure to English. The research findings also showed that inadequacy of infrastructure such as libraries, language laboratories and study-halls were matters of serious concern. Inadequacy of such facilities negatively impacted upon influenced learners' academic performance. It can also be concluded that physical resources were not enough in most of the secondary schools since an overwhelming number of respondents claimed unavailability of physical facilities in schools. This affected the academic performance of the learners negatively since they did not get a comfortable environment in which to study.

Human resources in secondary schools in this study were also a critical concern that negatively affected the learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2). Thus, one can conclude that Grade 12 learning outcomes in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia were not satisfactory due to a number of factors identified and discussed in this study.

5.3 Recommendations

The study suggests that schools should reinforce the use of English Language inside and outside the classroom as a means of enhancing the exposure of learners to English Language. For learners to perform well in English Language (L 2), Oshikoto Region needs quality, well trained and experienced and specialist English Language (L 2) teachers.

5.3.1 Recommendations based on the findings of the study

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

- English Language (L 2) learners should be exposed to newspapers, novels, short stories and watch educational TV programs to improve their English proficiency. This may help them to improve their English proficiency and improve results.
- Teachers should actively involve learners in the learning of English Language through such methods as debates, drama etc. Teachers should encourage learners to use English at school and in class etc. to improve their English proficiency.
- Secondary school principals should establish partnerships with best performing secondary schools in other regions of Namibia in order to share expertise and learn from them. This may lead to the introduction of support programs such as workshops, training and team-teaching to expose learners to diverse teaching approaches to enhance the learning of English Language (L 2) in order to improve learners' learning outcomes.

- Since parental involvement is a crucial issue in the education of the learner, the study also recommends that parents be sensitized and encouraged to participate in the education of their children. They should provide learning materials that provide conducive home environments for learning English Language (L 2). They should visit schools to discuss with teachers, their children's progress and how these learners can be assisted to learn and master the English Language.
- The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Directorate of Education Namibia Library Service and Life-Long Learning should equip school libraries with adequate current reading materials. This may ensure that both English Language (L 2) teachers and learners are exposed to relevant as well as teaching and learning materials in schools to help improve results.

5.3.2 Recommendation for future research

- The current study focused only on four secondary schools located in a rural setting in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia. The findings of this study may not be generalizable to other secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region and Namibia at large. Thus, there is a need to carry out a study in urban secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region and in other regions for comparative purposes.
- The present study used the mixed methods approach. Perhaps in future, a study that is purely qualitative may be necessary in order to gain in-depth knowledge on the factors that influence the poor academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region of Namibia.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: MUS121SLIM01

Project title: **Examining factors that influence the academic performance of grade twelve learners in English (L2) in the Oshikoto Region , Namibia.**

Nature of Project PhD in Education

Principal Researcher: Tobias Imene

Supervisor: Prof T.D Mushoriwa

Co-supervisor: N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document;
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research.

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: *Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:*

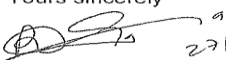
Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected;
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented;
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require;
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to.
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office.

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

 27/06/2018

Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola
Dean of Research

25 July 2018

APPENDIX II: REQUEST TO BE PERMITTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

University of Fort Hare

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Alice (main) Campus:
Private Bag X1314, King William's Town, Road Alice, 5700, RSA
Tel: +27 (0) 40 802 - 2412 • Fax: +27 (0) 40 653 - 2448

East London Campus:
Private Bag X9083, 50 Church Street, East London, 5201, RSA
Tel: +27 (0) 43 704 - 7227 / 7218 • Fax: +27 (0) 43 704 - 7113



15th July,, 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

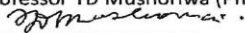
Re: Request to be permitted to conduct Research.

This letter serves to indicate that Mr Tobias limene (Student No.86011913) is doing a PhD in Education at the University of Fort Hare and is under my supervision. His research topic is: **Examining factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia.**

Mr limene is now at the data collection stage. I would greatly appreciate if you would allow him and help him where necessary, to have access to your Institution(s) which he wishes to involve in his study.

Should there be any queries or problems, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance.

Professor TD Mushoriwa (PhD)


Cell: +27 (0) 780830012

E-mail Tmushoriwa @ufh.ac.za

www.ufh.ac.za

APPENDIX III: REQUEST TO BE PERMITTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM THE RESEARCHER



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

University of Fort Hare
P / Bag x 1314
Alice, 5700
Republic of South Africa
20 July 2017

The Regional Director
Oshikoto Educational Directorate
Dear Sir

Ref: Request to be permitted to conduct Research

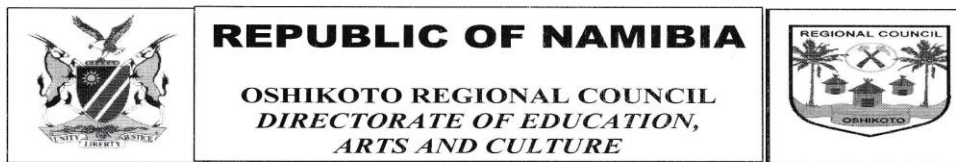
I am a student at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree in Education. In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct research. My research topic is: **Examining factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia**

Given the above I kindly request you to allow me to have access to the four selected secondary schools in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. Three of the selected secondary schools are in Onathingie Circuit and the other one is in Omuthiya circuit. I am aware that this activity will not interfere with the normal school teaching programme.

Thanking you in advance

Tobias Imene

APPENDIX IV: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION



Tel (065) 281900
Fax (065) 240315
Enq: Ms H Tende

Private Bag 2028
ONDANGWA
26 July 2017

Ref: 12/3/10/1

Mr Tobias Imene
Cell: 0812985144
E-mail: tobiasiimene@gmail.com

Dear Mr Imene

RE: REQUEST TO BE PERMITTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN OSHIKOTO REGION

1. We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 20 July 2017, seeking for approval from the office of the Director to conduct a research study at Nehale SSS, Olukonda SS, Ontananga SS and Ekulo SSS, in Oshikoto Region.
2. The writing of this letter therefore serves to inform you that permission has been granted to you to conduct research at the afore mentioned schools on the following conditions:
 - You have to consult the school principals well in advance to ensure a proper co-ordination of other school activities,
 - The research should not interfere with the normal teaching and learning process at the schools,
 - Participation in the research should be on a voluntary basis,
 - And the information to be gathered should only be used for research purposes.
3. With that in mind, it is my wish that your research study will yield satisfactory results, towards the completion of your qualification.

Yours Faithfully,


27 JUN 2017
MR LAMEK T. KAFIDI
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
OSHIKOTO REGION



APPENDIX V: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent / Guardian

Ref: Permission to do research

I am a student at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education degree. In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct research. My research topic is: EXAMINING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE (L 2) IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION, NAMIBIA

Given the above, I kindly request you to participate in this study. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. All answers are useful. You are also assured that all information given in this study will be treated confidentially. No one not connected to this study will have access to your responses.

Thanking you in advance.

Tobias Iimene

Interview questions for parents

1. What are the factors that influence the Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region?
2. How often do you visit the school to influence the academic performance of your child in English Language (L 2)?
3. What challenges do you think face both Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers and learners in teaching and learning English Language (L 2)?
4. As a parent/ guardian, what is your role in improving Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2)?
6. In your opinion, what should the school do to improve grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2)?
5. Suggest support strategies that may contribute to the improvement of Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.

Thank you.

APPENDIX VI: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH LEARNERS

Dear Learner

Ref: Permission to do research

I am a student at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education degree. In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct research. My research topic is: EXAMINING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE (L 2) IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION, NAMIBIA

Given the above, I kindly request you to participate in this study. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. All answers are useful. You are also assured that all information given in this study will be treated confidentially. No one not connected to this study will have access to your responses.

Thanking you in advance.

Tobias Iimene

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with Grade 12 learners

1. What are the factors that contribute to Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region?
2. How often do your parents/ guardians visit the school to influence your academic performance in English Language (L 2)?
3. What challenges do you face in learning English Language (L 2)?
4. As a Grade 12 learner, what is your role in improving Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2)?

5. Suggest support strategies that may contribute to the improvement of Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region.

Thank you.

APPENDIX VII:QUESTIONNAIRES FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Questionnaires for principals and teachers

Dear Respondent

Ref: Request to Participate in a Research Study

I am a student at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education degree. In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct research. My research topic is: EXAMINING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 12 LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE (L 2) IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION, NAMIBIA

Given the above, I kindly request you to allow me to collect data from your school.

Thanking you in advance

Tobias Iimene

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is designed to gather data from secondary school principals and Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers on the factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2) in the Oshikoto Region, Namibia. Kindly answer the questions to the best of your ability. Be assured that all information given in this study will be treated confidentially. Thus, you are strictly requested not to write your name or the name of your school or any personal particulars that may lead to your identification on the questionnaire. Use an (X) to indicate the option that applies or fill in the blank spaces.

What is your status?

Principal	
Teacher	

1. Part A: Demographic information

Mark your choice with an (X).

1. What is your sex?

Male	
Female	

2. Which one of the following age categories applies to you?

25-30	
31-36	
37 and above	

2. Part B: Information related human resources

2.1(a) Does your school have adequate Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers?

Yes	
No	

2.1 (b) How does this affect the performance of your Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2)?

Explain.....

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2.2 (a) For how many years have you been teaching Grade 12 English Language (L 2)?

1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21-25 years	

2.2 (b) Does this help to produce good results for your Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2)?

[illegible]

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2.3 (a) What is the average number of teaching periods per teacher per week?

25-30 periods	
31-36 periods	
37- 40 periods	

2.3 (b) Does this affect the performance of your Grade 12 English Language (L 2) learners?

Explain.....

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[illegible]

2.4 (a) How do you rate this workload?

Heavy	
Moderate	
Not sure	

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2.5 (a) What is the size of your Grade 12 classes for English Language (L 2)?

20-25 learners	
26-31 learners	
32-37 learners	
37-42 learners	
43 and above	

2.5 (b) How does this class size affect the performance of your Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2)?

Explain.....

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2.6 (a) How often do you assess your Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2)?

Daily	
Weekly	
Monthly	
Termly	
Others: Specify	

[illegible]

3.1(a) The table below shows some of the facilities/ infrastructure in the school environment. Use an (X) to indicate their level of availability and adequacy in your school.

Name of facility	Adequate	Inadequate	Not sure	Not available
Classrooms				
Furniture				
Libraries				
Laboratories				
Study hall				
Flush Toilets				
Latrine Toilets				
Playfields				

3.1 (b) Briefly explain how any five of the above, may influence the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

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3.2 (a) For the past three years, what has been the academic performance for Grade 12 in English Language (L 2) in this school?

3.2 (b) Why do you think the performance has been like this?

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4. What challenges do you think can negatively influence the Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2).

Explain.....

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5.As an instructional leader, suggest the strategies that the following stakeholders should take to improve the Grade 12 learners' academic performance in English Language (L 2) in Oshikoto Region.

5.1 Grade 12 learners

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5.2 Grade 12 English Language (L 2) teachers

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5.3 Secondary school principals

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5.4 Parents/ guardians of Grade 12 learners doing English Language (L 2)

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Part C

1. Learner-related factors that influence the academic performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2). (Tick one box. SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree)

Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1.1 Most of the Grade 12 learners find it difficult to understand the examination question papers in English Language (L 2).					
1.2 Most of the Grade 12 learners have poor English background from lower grades which makes it difficult for them to understand examination question papers in Grade 12 English Language (L 2).					
1.3 Most of the Grade 12 learners believe that English is difficult to understand.					

2. Home-related factors that influence the academic the performance of Grade 12 learners in English Language (L 2).

Statement	SA	A	NS	D	SD
2.1 Most of the parents support their children in doing their English Language (L 2) home work at home.					

2.2 Most of the parents of Grade 12 learners provide their children with required instructional materials such as textbooks to help them learn English Language (L 2) better.					
2.3 Most of the parents have good knowledge of English to provide support to their children in English Language (L 2).					
2.4 Very few of the parents of Grade 12 learners assist their children in doing their English Language (L 2) home work.					

Thank you.

APPENDIX VIII: PUBLIC NOTICE ON FOCUS GROUP
DISCUSSION

Public Notice

Public Notice

OBSERVE SILENCE!

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN
SESSION!

Thank you for your cooperation.

By order!

APPENDIX X: EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE



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25 March 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proof read and edited the following PhD thesis using Windows 'Tracking' System to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the author(s) to action:

**EXAMINING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 12
LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE (L 2) IN THE OSHIKOTO REGION, NAMIBIA**

By
Tobias Imene

Although the greatest care was taken in the editing of this document, the final responsibility for the product rests with the author.

Sincerely

25.03.2018

SIGNATURE

DATE