

Factors that shape learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts: A social realist study in two rural senior secondary schools in Omusati region, Namibia

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late parents who raised me in socially disadvantaged and rural settings with little financial and material resources.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own and where other people's work (whether from a printed source, internet or any other source) have been utilised this has been acknowledged and referenced as required by the university's department.

E. Shilongo

Date

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ABSTRACT

Learners' performance and the reasons for either achievement or failure in school has long been a topic of debate. In early research on academic achievement, theorists, educators, biologists and psychologists traditionally focused on the learners from socially disadvantaged family backgrounds who underachieve. Much of the debate internationally centred on whether learner academic achievement / underachievement is a product of hereditary traits or the social context. In particular, arguments for and against whether the reasons for the achievement / underachievement of children from socially disadvantaged families are genetic or the social context in which they find themselves continue unabated. Such explanations do not provide insight into why it is that despite familial (genetic) and social circumstances (social disadvantage), some children succeed and/or are able to act outside expectations of failure. Little research has focused on those in the same or similar contexts who are achieving academic success despite their limiting circumstances and the reasons for their success.

This study used a social realist lens to investigate the factors that shape the academic achievement of 12 learners in two rural senior secondary schools in Omusati region, Namibia. All 12 learners are from low socioeconomic family backgrounds. The data was collected through survey, interviews with learners, parents and teachers, field notes and document analysis. The main finding of the study show that contrary to research that portrayed learners' achievement as determined either by heredity or social contexts, the 12 learners constantly used their agentic possibilities to navigate constraining structural and cultural conditions at regional, familial and school levels to achieve academic success. Their agency was shaped by the socioeconomic conditions in their lives, namely, socioeconomic deprivation; large extended families in rural households, lack of amenities and utilities in their families, participation in household chores, experience of family tragedies and of changes when they were young.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

ALSS	-	Aludhilu Secondary School
APA	-	American Psychological Association
APM	-	Advanced Progressive Matrices
CBS	-	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEHAT	-	Centre for Enquiry into Health and allied Themes
CEP	-	Cultural Emergent Properties
CR	-	Critical Realism
DZ	-	Dizygotic
EC	-	European Commission
ELCIN	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
EMIS	-	Education Management Information Systems
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FARMS	-	Free and Reduced-Price Meals
IECN	-	Integrated Environmental Consultants Namibia
IQ	-	Intelligent Quotient
MEC	-	Ministry of Education and Culture
MISTRA	-	Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart
MLSS	-	Malenga Secondary School
MZ	-	Monozygotic
NAEP	-	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCES	-	National Centre for Education Statistics
NELS	-	National Education Longitudinal Study
NSA	-	Namibia Statistics Agency
NSSC	-	Namibia Secondary School Certificate
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ORC	-	Omusati Regional Council
PEP	-	Agential Emergent Properties
PISA	-	Programme for International Student Assessment
RPM	-	Raven Progressive Matrices
SACMEQ	-	Southern Africa Consortium for Management of Education Quality
SEP	-	Structural Emergent Properties

SES	-	Socioeconomic Status
SPM	-	Standard Progressive Matrices
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
UNESCO	-	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	-	United States
WHO	-	World Health Organisation
YITS	-	Youth in Transition Survey

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The academic achievement / underachievement of learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds have been a topic of debate for centuries. Much research in this area has focused on the majority of the learners who underachieve (Coleman et al., 1966; Willis, 1977; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). While biological and social context explanations have been provided to account for the underachievement phenomenon of children from socially disadvantaged circumstances, little research focused on the few learners that succeed in the same or similar circumstances. The aim of this study is therefore to explain and understand the factors shaping the academic success of a few learners from a socially disadvantaged and rural context in Omusati region, Namibia.

This research was sparked by personal and work related experiences in the northern rural regions of Namibia where I was born and grew up with my parents and seven siblings. As a child, my early schooling experiences were in the rural Catholic Primary Schools in the village where I was born in Omusati region and later at a Catholic Boarding school a 100 kilometers away from home. My father was a contract mine worker while my mother remained home to take care of the children. When I was growing up, I experienced first hand racial segregation and thus only knew people from the northern regions of Namibia. Due to colonialism, I went into exile in 1977 together with other teenagers to join the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), a liberation movement that fought for the independence of Namibia. While in exile, I had a chance to study first at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), a United Nations (UN) established institute for exiled Namibians in Lusaka, Zambia and later went to study in Canada under the sponsorship of the Commonwealth Secretariat before returning to Namibia at independence eve in 1989. Since 1992, I worked for 25 years first as a rural secondary school teacher and then lecturer at Ongwediva College of Education in the northern part of Namibia. My experience as a child, learner, teacher and lecturer has been that there were always a few learners who achieved academic success in rural schools in the northern regions of the country while the majority failed. My curiosity to understand why a few learners were able to succeed in similar

circumstances motivated me to embark on this research to find out what factors propel the few learners who achieve academic success in socially disadvantaged and rural settings of Omusati region, Namibia where the majority is failing. Hence, unlike the current dominant trend in research on achievement that foregrounds underachievement, this study focuses rather on learner success despite studying in contexts where rural and social disadvantage are pervasive. I begin this chapter by highlighting the major conclusions from the key literature on academic achievement internationally. I then highlight the context of the problem of this research with the view to set the stage for understanding the factors that shape learners' academic achievement in Omusati Region despite their socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances. I highlight the problem statement, aims of the study, the main research questions and provide an outline of the chapters for this study.

According to Lawrence and Vimala (2012), academic achievement refers to a measure of knowledge which an individual gains in formal education usually designated by test scores, grade, grade points average and degrees. This means that the individual learner achievement level is judged by the marks obtained from tests or examinations. In early research on academic achievement theorists, educators, biologists and psychologists traditionally focused on the learners from socially disadvantaged family backgrounds who underachieve in comparison to those from advantaged family backgrounds (Galton, 1892; Coleman et al., 1966; Willis, 1977; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). For example, Coleman et al. (1966) in their landmark study on *Equality of Educational Opportunity in the United States* (US) concluded that family socioeconomic status accounted for learners' academic achievement, with children from low socioeconomic backgrounds not achieving as well as those from high socioeconomic status families. Willis (1977), in his ethnographic study in the United Kingdom (UK) of how working class children landed up getting working class jobs concluded that working class 'lads' (white boys from the working class) rejected the values, expectations and social control embedded in the schooling process because they saw it as failing their own aspirations as reflected in their cultural milieu. In other words, working class children underachieve in school because they distrust schooling and have thus developed a counter school culture.

Nevertheless, subsequent research has shown that disadvantage, school and family all account for the underachievement of working class children. For example, Reay (2009) argues that the disadvantage with which working class children starts school make them feel powerless and not worth of education. As Reay (2006, 293) puts it, working class children have been

treated as “the inferior other” within education, a trend that continues as reflected in elite prejudices. Hence, such children, in particular boys “perceive troublesome, oppositional and resistant behaviour within school as a social good” and an exercise which they find necessary to construct their identities and elevate their status within peer groups (Reay, 2009, 27).

Conversely, different reasons have been provided for the underachievement of working class boys other than the oppositional culture advocated by Willis (1977) and his proponents. Entwisle, Alexander and Olson (2007) postulates that working class boys are shaped on the basis of their gender upon entry to school because teachers consistently rate girls higher than boys and their contact with boys tend to be negative and focused on discipline. Evans (2006) associates the underachievement of white working class boys to the cultural characteristics of working class life while Swain (2006) affirms that it is through primary socialisation in family that working class boys acquire their working class behaviour which in turn affects their social identities at primary school level. In other words, disadvantage, issues pertaining to social justice (e.g. how teachers treat working class children in school) and how working class children are socialised in family have been identified as some of the factors shaping their social identities and eventual underachievement.

Other researchers attribute the underachievement of working class children to the oppositional ethnic identity. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Ogbu & Simons (1998) in the US found that children from deprived socioeconomic backgrounds do not achieve success because they have adopted an oppositional ethnic identity which associates school success with “acting white”. Ogbu (2003) found that African involuntary immigrants were treated as second class citizens in the US and thus learned to build resistance to what they perceived as white Eurocentric education system. Similarly, Wiggan (2007) affirms that student alienation and oppositional identity account for differences in achievement between Whites and African Americans. Such differences are said to emerge because African American students are sanctioned by their peers and accused of acting white when they achieve academic success (Wiggan, 2007). In other words, academic achievement is seen as a white thing (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). These and other studies have associated learners from low socioeconomic status with underachievement with little consideration for those in similar circumstances who are achieving academically. In opposition to the burden of acting white hypothesis, Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) used interviews and available data from eight north Carolina Secondary Public schools and found that black adolescence are generally achievement oriented; that there are similarities in

the experiences of both black and white children who achieve high in school; and that children who perform high in general are stigmatised (called ‘nerds’ and ‘geeks’) regardless of their race. They concluded that school structure instead of oppositional culture account for how stigma becomes racialized and class-based producing the burden of “acting high and mighty” for whites of low income (Tyson et al (2005, 582).

In a related study, Cook and Ludwig (1997) analysed data from the National Longitudinal Study (NELS) focusing on the relationship between popularity and academic achievement and found that there are no significant differences in peer-group norms between black and white students. They concluded that high-achievers are more popular than low-achievers in both groups with popularity being more pronounced among blacks. Such conclusion questioned the empirical relevance of the “acting white” hypothesis.

Harris (2006) critiqued the oppositional culture theory, arguing that oppositional culture is not the reason for low performance among black students but issues of equity. He argues that most blacks believe that they could transcend poverty and social disadvantage through educational achievement. For Harris and Robinson (2007), underachievement amongst black people in the US is due to their underdeveloped skills of literacy and numeracy which emanate from their previous education rather than a result of an oppositional culture. Likewise, research by Fryer and Torelli (2010) in the US investigated the relationship between racial differences, social status and academic achievement. They concluded that “acting white” does not exist in nationally representative samples and that there is little empirical evidence to support the oppositional culture hypothesis.

In a relatively recent review article, Mangino (2013) critiqued the perceived black-white opposition culture theory arguing that blacks are mistakenly identified as opposed to education without consideration for their economic circumstances. According to Mangino (2013, 1), Black Americans have higher educational aspirations and argues that:

...continued framing of a ‘race gap’ without economic consideration reifies race and lays the blame for educational failure on schools, families, and students when the real culprits are social and economic issues, educational professionals are compelled to practice as if economic inequality and poverty do not matter, but they do.

This means that the oppositional culture thesis which has been used to justify the underachievement of Black Americans does not consider the socioeconomic conditions in which they live. In addition, the successful academic achievement of some of the learners is overlooked because they are seen as an underachieving group (Rhamie, 2007).

There is no universal definition of the concept of underachievement (Smith, 2003). Earlier definitions view the concept in terms of an individual's internal cognitive ability to achieve in school as measured by intelligent quotient (IQ) tests (Clark, 1988; McCall, Evahn & Kratzer, 1992). Carr, Borwosky and Maxwell (1991) and Gallagher (1991) define underachievement as the discrepancy between achievement and ability. Learners who achieve lower grades than predicted in school are considered as being underachievers. Underachievement was then linked to poor cognitive ability and explained in terms of individual characteristics such as gender, family background, socioeconomic status and parental level of education (Thorndike, 1963; Carr et al., 1991). While some researchers view underachievement as determined by hereditary traits as it becomes clearer in Chapter 2, researchers such as Willis (1977) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) explain underachievement in terms of an anti-school culture that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds develop. In this study, underachievement is defined as the discrepancy between the academic potential that learners possess and their actual performance in school (Carr et al., 1991; Smith, 2003). A learner who achieves worse than would be expected is considered to be underachieving.

Early explanations for learner achievement (and underachievement) have been embedded in nature/nurture debates that concern the internal/external interface that produces success or failure (McGue & Bouchard, 1998; Sternberg, 2005; Sternberg, Grigorenko & Kidd, 2005; Paul & Day, 2008). Such explanations have had to do with either heredity (biological dispositions) (Galton, 1869, 1874; 1892) or a combination of social factors such as social capital (Coleman, 1988); family context (Coleman et al., 1966), class status (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), school effects (Edmonds, 1979) and/or geographic location of schools as predictors of success or failure (Ladd, 2011; Lee, Zuze & Ross, 2005; Zhang, 2006). I briefly trace two major perspectives on the phenomenon below to situate the current study.

The first, emanating from the 1800s, focuses on heredity (or genetic) explanations that describe learner achievement (or underachievement) as attributable mainly to biological factors (Galton, 1892; Galton, 1865; Jensen, 1969; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Rushton & Jensen,

2005). Francis Galton (1892), an advocate of the genetic perspective in explanations of achievement and one of the founder members of modern psychological measurement, suggests that intelligence is the main predictor of achievement and that it is biologically determined, and thus internal to the individual. He argues that intelligence, passed on by familial descent, predicts levels of success in school (Galton, 1892). In other words, hereditary traits determine the level of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which in turn determines whether learners achieve success or not. Such a biological explanation, however, presupposes that factors external to the individual have little effect on the learning outcome. The implication of this argument as it relates to underachievement is that those who underachieve not only have low IQs that are biologically determined, but also have limited chances of success. The importance of the above assumptions on which such research is based is that it applies a deterministic approach to understanding achievement. That means that it is the ontological basis of the research that is in question here. In brief, this body of research that I return to in Chapter 2 is premised on a positivist ontology that views reality as objective and existing independently of the knower (Matthews, 2004; Scotland, 2012). The belief that intelligence is a product of the individual, and that it is internal to self, led to research that gave primacy to individual traits, with cultural and social indicators absent in explanations on learner (under)achievement. Thus, research emanating from such an ontological position is deterministic and positions the individual as having little choice and capacity to act outside inherited traits.

Additionally, most biological research used quantitative methodologies as characterized by IQ tests, surveys, regression analysis and correlational studies. For example, in their genetic studies, Galton (1892) and Wainwright, Wright, Geffen, Luciano and Martin (2005) used achievement standardized IQ tests to conclude that learners' academic achievement is genetically determined and thus IQ correlated. Similarly, biological studies (Galton, 1892; Rushton & Jensen, 2005; Wainwright, Wright, Geffen, Luciano & Martin, 2005) on IQ and achievement employed quantitative methods such as correlational studies (predominantly used in twin studies) to establish correlations between IQ and gender, race and social class. The quantitative methods used in this research are predominantly underpinned by positivist ontological orientations and epistemological positions that have consequences for how we come to know and explain either phenomenon. The positivist orientation assumes that reality is fixed and observable, and that quantitative methods such as correlational methods determine how we get to know a phenomenon (Moore, 1993). The implication is that what constitutes knowledge is what can be measured and universalized.

The second body of research that I also return to in Chapter 3, is concerned with factors outside the individual as those determining learner achievement (or underachievement). These, amongst others, include social capital (Coleman, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer (1987 cited by Peterson and Viarengo, 2009; Acar, 2011); socioeconomic status/social class (Coleman et al., 1966; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1991 ; Dika & Singh, 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2010; McLoyd, 1998; Sirin, 2005; Reeves & Bylund, 2005; Barrow & Rouse, 2006; Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Ramos, Dugue & Nieto, 2012); and school effects (Edmonds, 1979); and social disadvantage (Lee & Burkam, 2002; Machin, 2006). The main argument in research emanating from this perspective is that factors external to the individual mainly account for learner achievement. While acknowledging the role that heredity plays, this body of work puts primacy on the social environment in which children are nurtured and posits that such a discursive space plays a more important role in shaping achievement than individual traits (Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979).

As indicated earlier, social capital is one of the factors associated with learner achievement. Coleman (1988) and Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997) in their research concluded that learner achievement is shaped or determined by social capital: the social networks within which a child grows up. Similarly, Muller (2001) examined data from the National Longitudinal Study of 1988 and concluded that social capital (defined as social trust between participants) in the form of teacher-student relationship influences learner' success. Likewise, Lumsden (1994) reported the impact of the significant others such as parents and the family environment as shaping learners' performance at school while Ryan & Deci (2000) concluded that parental support, family background and teacher support have an influence on learner achievement. The implication of this research is that the absence of social capital in learners' lives leads to underachievement.

As far back as the mid-1960s, Coleman et al. (1966) concluded that learner achievement is determined by the socioeconomic background of their families. In support of this conclusion, Sirin (2005) in his meta-analysis of the research literature found a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement, with children from low socioeconomic families faring worse at school compared to those from middle class families. Barrow and Rouse (2006) in their study which was conducted in the US found that learners from advantaged families attained higher average scores and were unlikely to be held back a grade in comparison to

those from disadvantaged families. These research findings on the relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement have also been contested. White (1980) in a meta-analysis of research on the impact of socioeconomic status on achievement prior to 1980 found that relations between the two variables (socioeconomic status and achievement) vary based on how socioeconomic status and academic achievement are measured. The key conclusion that White (1980) draws from the literature review on socioeconomic status and achievement is that early research has created divergences in the way the research findings are interpreted.

Another wave of research focused on school as having an influence on learners' academic achievement. Research on school as a variable influencing learning was a response to the publication of the Coleman et al. (1966) study and culminated in the effective schools movement. The rationale behind the effective schools movement was to reveal whether school makes a difference to the learning of learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds who are portrayed as underachieving (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009). Edmonds (1979) in his study of the *Urban Poor*, concluded that schools do play a role in making a difference to learning and that all learners can learn regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Lezotte (2009) reached a similar conclusion that all learners, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds can achieve in school. The focus of the research was to investigate whether there are schools attended by poor children that are instructionally effective and what makes such schools effective which culminated into the correlates of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979).

Another wave of research on achievement focused on whether school resources have an effect on learner academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1966; Hanushek, 1986, 1989, 1997; Laine, Greenwald & Hedges, 1995; Greenwald, Hedges & Laine, 1996; Krueger, 2003). Research in this area has also produced mixed results. For example, Hanushek (1989, 1997) in his review of education production concluded that there is no consistent relationship between school resources and academic achievement. The implication is that children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds cannot succeed even if educational resources are allocated to the schools they attend. This conclusion supports Coleman et al.'s (1966) conclusion that the impact of school resources on academic achievement is insignificant. Conversely, after analysing Hanushek's findings, Laine, Greenwald and Hedges (1995) found that more school resources are positively related to learners' academic achievement. Additionally, Card & Krueger (1992); Greenwald et al. (1996) and Krueger (2003) all found positive correlations between school resources and learner achievement. Furthermore, Savasci & Tomul (2013) in

their investigation of the relationship between school resources and Grade 7 learners' academic achievement in Turkey found that educational resources play a significant role in reducing the effects of socioeconomic status on academic achievement.

Other researchers targeted the type of school attended i.e. urban or rural (Sanders, 1997; Zhang, 2006; Byun, Meece & Irvin, 2012; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999); private or public (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1981; Neal, 1997; Evans & Schwab, 1995; Dronkers & Robert, 2008; Grimes, 1994; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2006); school size (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004; Demir, 2009; Lee & Smith, 2000; Cotton, 1996; Howley, 2001; Barnett, Glass, Snowdon & Stringer, 2002) and social disadvantage (Lee & Burkham, 2002; Machin, 2006) of learners who experience these circumstances in their lives. This strand of research also primarily focused on learners who do not achieve. For example, Lubienski and Lubienski (2006) found differences in academic performance in favour of private schools while public schools are associated with failure. Similarly, Lee and Smith (2000) found schools with a smaller learner population performing better than those with larger populations.

Research has also targeted learners from socially disadvantaged settings. Social disadvantage is viewed not only as referring to low income but also to “impoverished lives” that includes lack of opportunities, personal capabilities, family circumstances, the support children receive, the type of communities where they live, life events, and their social and economic environments (McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon, 2013, 2). In other words, social disadvantage is a concept that involves various aspects of human life in order to understand the factors that shape learner achievement. It is also often associated with low social class (those regarded as being on the lower ranks of the social ladder within the social structure) in which people experience poverty in terms of poor sanitation, nutrition, health, housing, and the like (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). Such factors are said to negatively impact people's lives, preventing them from achieving success in school and obtaining jobs that could improve their living conditions.

The dominant discourse in research that focused on learner achievement in socially disadvantaged backgrounds is that learners perform poorly in comparison with those from well-off backgrounds (Lee & Burkam, 2002; Hirsch, 2007; Machin, 2006; Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). Lee and Burkam, (2002); Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) concluded that social disadvantage positively correlates with learner achievement in that children from socially disadvantaged families do not achieve as well as those from high socioeconomic status

families. Hirsch (2007) in the review of evidence on the experience of poverty and educational disadvantage found that children who grow up in poverty and disadvantage are less likely to do well in school which negatively affects their future lives. Similarly, Cassen and Kingdon (2007) found that there are group variations in low achievement with boys outnumbering girls by three to two and that white children who are most likely to underachieve are those who receive free school meals and live in poor urban areas. They argue that the gap in social and educational achievement emanates from learners' experiences in their lives and what happens in the classroom setting.

Machin (2006) and Hirsch (2007) found that educational and employment opportunities and social disadvantage are linked. In this regard, the contexts in which individuals grow up are seen as critical factors in determining learner achievement or underachievement and subsequent employment opportunity. According to Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), children who experience poverty attain the worst outcomes in school. Research by Feinstein and Bynner (2004) supports this argument, pointing out that while learners from poor families are already disadvantaged by their circumstances, they are further disadvantaged when they attain low educational outcomes, thereby negatively impacting their life chances during adulthood. Regier (2011), McLachlan, Gilfillan and Gordon (2013) and Cassen and Kingdon (2007) concur that individuals who experience prolonged social disadvantage are unlikely to be employed; they experience absence of income; develop low self-esteem; and experience poor health. That means that social disadvantage is often associated with unemployment and limited resources that make it difficult for individuals not only to lead productive and healthy lives, but also to be in a position to support their children's education.

In general, as is the case with the genetic studies, social context research (Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979; Hanushek, 1989; Lamdin, 1996) used predominantly production function studies, regression analysis and surveys to reach their conclusions. Hence, the ontological basis of the work that gives ascendancy to the social context as a determining factor, is also primarily positivist in that individuals are perceived to be already determined, in this case, by their social environment. Even though the research points to various reasons as to why individuals might or might not succeed in school, the ontological roots of this work remain by and large the same as that developed by proponents of the hereditary explanation. In other words, factors external to the individual shape success with little or no influence by the individual (Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979). Like research on genetics, the implication

of this research is that the individual is thought to have little control to act differently to shape learning outcomes.

As it is evident in the studies provided earlier, research on the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged, poor and rural circumstances has focused primarily on underachievement (Coleman et al., 1966; Carr, Borkowski and Maxwell, 1991; Khattri, Riley & Kane, 1997; Smith, 2003). In most of the research, learners from low socioeconomic status are portrayed as underachieving while those from middle class families attain academic success. Whereas the latter body of research marked a shift from the discourses that focused on individual traits, the ontological basis for both research trajectories remained constant. Both do not offer explanations that focus on the interaction between the individual and the context (Hilliard III, 1996). While most research on academic achievement was conducted in European countries whose conditions are significantly different from that of Omusati region, Namibia, the focus of such research has been on the majority of the learners that are underachieving and Namibia is no exception. There is thus paucity in research that emanates from the complex interaction between individual traits, choice, and the social and cultural context in which learners make meaning of their lives, especially as it pertains to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, focusing on factors internal or external to the individual as accounting for learner achievement or underachievement implies a deficit paradigm which views achievement as pre-determined by genetic or social context factors. Such deficit thinking does not take cognizance of the fact that learners have agency to shape their own achievement destinies.

While the importance of early research on learner achievement is not in question here, the dominant ontological orientation of this work, particularly research that focused on learners from socially disadvantaged contexts, not only led to the questions posed, but also to the theoretical and methodological decisions made in this study. These concern the factors shaping learner achievement and the reasons why some learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts achieve success in circumstances where large proportions fail. This study thus examines the reasons for academic success by some learners where the majority is underachieving. Using a social realist framework, this study examines structural and cultural conditions that shape the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts in Omusati region, Namibia.

1.2 Context of the problem

In Namibia, as is the case in many other societies, education according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Namibia. MEC, 1993), is a significant driver to improving individual life chances and the primary route to improved social and economic conditions in society. Education is viewed as a way of gaining access to employment and/or a productive career as well as an escape from socially disadvantaged circumstances (Namibia. MEC, 1993). This is in line with international research. Researchers such as Machin (2006) and Regier (2011) propose that positive academic outcomes have the potential to enhance life chances and improve the living standards of the socially disadvantaged in society. Education has the potential to create routes towards employment, a good income, improved health and a sense of self-worth. Educational success is also seen as a “passport to middle class status” (Gunn, 2005, p. 59). The implication is that if learners do not make it through education, they are likely to face the consequences of remaining socially disadvantaged and poor. In general, access and participation in education is proposed as the conduit for people to gain social mobility, health and other benefits that education provides (Regier, 2011).

Research on learner achievement, social disadvantage regionally and internationally has focused primarily but not exclusively on the underachievement of learners and the difficulties they have with remaining in the system or completing their schooling (Khattri et al., 1997; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001; Makuwa, 2005). Namibia is no exception. In Namibia, learners who live in disadvantaged and rural circumstances are often portrayed as not achieving success in school (Marope, 2005). A body of research on learner achievement in Namibia indicates that the phenomenon of underachievement is more prevalent in the rural regions of Kavango, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Zambezi and Ohangwena where the majority of the population is found but also where the poorest populace live. Researchers like Marope (2005), Makuwa (2005), Jauch, Edwards and Cupido (2009) and Spaul (2011) all concluded that learners in the aforementioned rural regions perform worse than those in urban areas.

Internationally, the concept of rural is contested and thus there is no collective definition (Khattri et al., 1997). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (FAO/UNESCO, 2005) define the term ‘rural’ as the opposite of ‘urban’ while others define the term in relation to the population density of an area (Khattri et al., 1997). This conception of rurality is based on European

definitions which are significantly different from the way rurality is viewed in the African and therefore the Namibian contexts. The European conceptualization of the concept of rurality is based on the understanding that both urban and rural areas are changing. As Kule (2008, 11) puts it, “rural areas are undergoing urbanization, while cities are undergoing ruralisation ...” In other words, the population density in both rural and urban areas is declining with the advancement in urbanization of rural areas and ruralisation of cities. Conception of rurality in Namibia as it becomes clearer is similar to that of South Africa mainly because the two countries share a common Apartheid political history.

The concept ‘rural’ in South Africa refers to:

... sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including the villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas. In addition they include the large settlements in former homelands, created by the apartheid removals, which depend for their survival on migratory labour and remittances’ (Jacobs & Hart, 2012, p. 9 citing Government of South Africa, 1997).

This definition is reflective of the conditions that affected the rural population prior to the change of government in 1994 (Jacobs & Hart, 2012). The definition includes both commercial farming areas and homelands which were created by the Apartheid government. In this context, rural areas are distinguished from urban areas in terms of population density, settlement patterns, livelihood, and availability of resources and the history of rural areas. According to Jacobs and Hart (2012), this definition is confusing because it connotes economic, historical, political and legal frameworks. These factors (economic, historical, political and legal factors) have shaped rurality in South Africa over centuries to what it is today.

The South African definition is similar to that of Namibia where rural refers to areas outside proclaimed towns and cities while urban areas refer to “all proclaimed municipalities and towns” (Namibia. Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2003/2004, p. 7). In this study, rural areas, and therefore schools, are places away from proclaimed urban (large and small) centres attended by the majority of learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Urban schools are found in cities and towns. As is the case with South Africa’s conception of rurality, some of the characteristics of rural areas in Namibia include long distances from urban centres (towns), sparse population density, lack of essential services such as piped water, sanitation facilities

and electricity, poor quality of life, high unemployment and lack of infrastructure (Namibia Statistics Agency [NSA], 2012).

In Namibia, the rural population occupies 824, 011 square kilometres of the land with farming as the main economic activity. In total, when including the land which is under state conservation, Namibia's land is 99% rural with only 1% accounting for urban areas while 36% is communal land (Namibia. Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development [MRLGHRD], 2011). With a sparse population density and vast areas, the rural areas have poorly developed infrastructure and services (Namibia, MRLGHRD, 2011). In Omusati region, 93% of the rural households engage in subsistence farming. Whereas 85% of the rural population in Omusati region live in traditional homesteads, rural localities in Omusati region in particular is further characterized by lack of fertile land for cultivation, large flood plains, poverty, inequality, unemployment, absence of sanitary facilities and lack of amenities and utilities (Namibia. Namibia Statistics Agency [NSA], 2012).

Poverty in Namibia is generally taken to mean an inability for an individual or family to provide for its basic needs (food, shelter, water, energy) due to a lack of or low income (Namibia Statistics Agency [NSA], 2012). In this case, poverty is manifested in living below the poverty line of N\$377.96 (NSA, 2012). For example, according to the 2011 census, 80 per cent of rural households in Omusati region do not have access to toilet facilities compared to 31 per cent of those in Omusati urban areas without access to flush toilets; 88 per cent of rural households do not have access to electricity compared to more than 50 per cent of those in urban settings with access to electricity. Additionally, over 48 per cent of those in rural areas of Omusati region do not have access to safe drinking water compared to less than 92 per cent of urban households in the same region who have access to safe drinking water (NSA, 2012).

Like in South Africa and due to the legacy of Apartheid, schools in rural areas of Namibia, especially in Omusati region experience various challenges which have negative repercussions on learner academic achievement. These include, but are not limited to, inadequate resources, poorly prepared teachers, poor and insufficient school facilities including textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, poor working conditions, lack of and improper utilization of resources, poor nutrition and sanitation, lack of parental involvement in education, poor English language proficiency (English is not a mother tongue but a medium of instruction), long walking distances to school and lack of services (Namibia. National Institute for

Educational Development (NIED), 2010; Jauch et al., 2009; Boissier, 2004; Makuwa, 2005; Wolfwaardt, 2005; Namibia. MEC, 1993; Zeichner and Ndimande, 2008). In addition, the scourge of poverty and HIV and AIDS are exerting further pressure on rural communities (Namibia, 2007). Many homesteads in rural areas do not have basic amenities and facilities such as clean water, electricity which would enhance a favourable atmosphere for learning (Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ II), 2004).

Mendelsohn, Sixwameni and Nakamhela (2012, 1) in their abstract characterized the rural areas of Namibia in the following way:

Incentives for investment are limited by several factors, including complex procedures commercial? Land rights; land rights not being tradable; most residents not being able to use their land for commercial enterprises; and land rights not being suitable for collateral to generate capital. In addition, commonage land used by local residents has been appropriated to a large extent because ‘ownership’ of commonages is vested in the state and traditional authorities.

This means that lack of incentives and land rights impose constraints on the development of the rural areas in Namibia. The Land Act of 1913 prohibited African people in Namibia to occupy land in areas designated for commercial farming and instead gave them the right to communal areas in designated homelands which formed the backbone of the Black rural economy (Pendleton, Crush & Nickanor, 2014). Allocating Africans to homelands was significant to the enforcement of the Apartheid Policy of ‘Separate Development’ which prohibited the intermingling of different races. The Apartheid ‘Homeland’ Policy tendentiously maintained rural poverty to foster the flow of cheap migrant labour (Namibia, MRLGHRD, 2011). As a result women remained in the rural areas to work on the land for subsistence purposes while men went to work for a meagre income in towns and mines (Namibia. MRLGHRD, 2011). Today, rural areas in Namibia are unchanged and are characterized by migrant workers who work in towns far away and travel back frequently to their rural homes while women continue to engage in subsistence farming (Namibia. MRLGHRD, 2011). The rural context of Namibia, as is the case with other formerly colonized nations of Africa should thus be understood within the historical, economic and the overall functioning of the political economy which existed during the colonial era that have produced and reproduced the rural realities that currently exist in the country.

The link between social disadvantage, rurality and learner (under)achievement in Namibia is traceable in several studies such as Lee, Zuze and Ross (2004); Marope (2005); Makuwa (2005) and Spaul (2013). For example, Lee et al. (2004) and Makuwa (2005) analysed the Southern Africa Consortium for Management of Education Quality (SACMEQ II) data and concluded that (a) there are variations in literacy scores between urban and rural schools in sub-Saharan Africa (including Namibia); (b) that the majority of learners in rural settings are failing; and (c) that failure is related to their family socioeconomic conditions. Dominant explanations as to why the phenomenon persists have to do with the second perspectives already briefly outlined earlier, namely, that social context factors mostly account for learner underachievement. Examples of factors within the Namibian context include poverty, long distances to school, poor nutrition and sanitation (Makuwa, 2005; Lee et al., 2005).

Such findings are juxtaposed with those that compare learners from socially advantaged contexts. In his analysis of SACMEQ III data, Spaul (2011) for example, found that Namibian learners from socially advantaged families performed better in reading and mathematics than those from socially disadvantaged families. This trend is also observed in the examination results of Grade 12 learners by region in Namibia as depicted in Table 1:

Table 1: Percentage of fulltime Grade 12 learners attaining an A* - D grade in the Namibia Secondary School Certificate (NSSC) examinations by region

Region	2008	Learners	2009	Learners	2010	Learners	2011	Learners	2012	Learners
Erongo	47%	5295	47%	5602	53%	5381	47%	6040	47%	5909
Hardap	51%	2938	47%	2722	48%	2704	44%	3102	46%	2848
Karas	45%	3010	48%	2668	42%	2826	42%	2686	36%	2766
Kavango	37%	78281	33%	7458	35%	8884	41%	7599	37%	7715
Khomas	46%	15230	46%	15213	45%	16695	44%	16876	41%	15719
Kunene	30%	1305	28%	1545	29%	1834	29%	2125	32%	1722
Ohangwena	43%	8629	43%	10240	40%	12807	38%	12931	41%	13037
Omaheke	34%	1251	41%	1256	40%	1276	35%	1631	34%	1567
Omusati	36%	11803	35%	11602	36%	14215	35%	15441	38%	14228
Oshana	38%	12151	40%	14672	38%	17793	36%	14929	33%	12399
Oshikoto	42%	9240	44%	9949	42%	11299	42%	12648	43%	11210
Otjozondjupa	43%	3790	50%	3998	45%	4290	47%	4795	42%	4094
Zambezi	37%	5567	39%	5282	37%	6919	43%	6212	38%	5876

Source: Namibia. Education Management Information Systems 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012.

This Table depicts the total number of Grade 12 learners who achieved grades between an A* and D in the NSSC national examinations between 2008 and 2012, 2012 being the year when the fieldwork of the current study was undertaken¹. The results show lower percentages in the pass rate of learners from predominantly rural regions. With the exception of Oshikoto Region where learners have performed slightly above 41%, approximately 30% of Grade 12 learners from the predominantly rural regions of Omusati, Oshana, Kavango, Kunene and Zambezi achieved grades between an A* and D in the national examination over the last 6 years compared to urbanized centres such as Erongo (47%). In Omusati region in particular, a maximum of 38% of Grade 12 learners were able to achieve an A* to D grade in the NSSC national examination between 2008 and 2012. A similar trend continues in the years 2013-2014 academic years, with a slight improvement in the achievement of Grade 12 learners in Ohangwena region as portrayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Grade 12 learners receiving A* to D in the National examinations 2013-2016

Region	2013		2014	
	Learners	Percentage	Learners	Percentage
//Kharas	2943	31%	2545	20%
Hardap	3050	38%	2529	45%
Khomas	13116	44%	14056	41%
Omaheke	1206	34%	1441	35%
Erongo	5699	38%	5700	47%
Otjozondjupa	3241	59%	4280	21%
Ohangwena	13199	41%	12309	42%
Kunene	1838	32%	1691	34%
Omusati	14058	27%	14075	36%
Oshana	10749	23%	12834	35%
Oshikoto	11223	29%	11635	45%
Kavango	7054	35%	11875	37%

Source: Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA, 2013-2016).

In support of the information in Tables 1 and 2, the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA, 2012) shows that overall 42% of the rural secondary school age children completed secondary education compared to 64% in urban areas in 2012. In Omusati region, where this study was conducted, an overall of 49% completed secondary school in comparison to 72% of their

¹ The results for 2015 -2016 are not available due to the revamp of the EMIS system

urbanized counterparts regions such as Erongo in the same year (NSA, 2012). While many learners in disadvantaged and rural settings of Omusati region appear to underachieve and as a consequence do not complete school, there are some learners who are succeeding despite the odds. It is this group of learners which is of concern to this study.

Research that seeks to understand reasons for underachievement in socially disadvantaged contexts in Namibia points to structural inequality (or the biases that are built into the structure for example education to disadvantage some people and advantage others), poverty, inadequate resources, and poorly prepared teachers (Namibia. MEC, 1993; Amukugo, 1993; Cohen, 1994). Inadequate resources refer to insufficient school facilities including lack of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, poor working conditions, lack of proper utilization of resources, poor nutrition and sanitation (SACMEQ II, 2004; SACMEQ III, 2007). Other research points to lack of parental involvement in education, poor English language proficiency, distances to school, and lack of services as key factors influencing learner (under)achievement (Du Pisani, Kössler & Lindeke, 2010).

Despite this bleak picture my observation as an educator for 25 years in the northern rural regions of Namibia where I lived, taught and interacted with learners, is that some transcend their immediate circumstances and are successful. The data from the Namibia Education Management Information System (Namibia. EMIS, 2012) as reflected in Tables 27 and 32 confirm this, showing that the accumulative percentage of learners at MLSS who received A* and C is approximately 28% while an accumulative of 81% received an F grade. Similarly, at ALSS, 11% of the learners who sat the Grade 12 examination in all nine subjects achieved grades A*- C while 84% failed. This is in line with research by Lee, Zuze & Ross (2005) who in their review of the SACMEQ II data concluded that few learners in the rural areas of Namibia succeed while the majority fail. To put this another way, while the majority are not flourishing, there are a few learners who do succeed in disadvantaged settings. This conclusion implies that dominant research explanations for learner achievement (whether biological or social context) do not tell the story about those learners who are succeeding in social disadvantaged and rural circumstances and the role of agency in the achievement debate. Put differently, both biological and social context arguments presuppose a learner who is constrained by internal or external factors and whose achievement is pre-determined and without agency. Such explanations do not provide insight into why it is that despite familial (genetic) and social circumstances (social disadvantage), some children succeed and/or are

able to act outside expectations of failure. As Radulescu and Vessey (2008, p. 11) point out, “both agency and context are indispensable and therefore must be accounted for in social analysis.” In other words, a more nuanced explanation of a phenomenon should take the role of agency into account.

Shortcomings in the biological and social context explanations for learner achievement briefly highlighted earlier led to the question raised in this study, namely: how some learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts achieve in circumstances where the majority seem to subscribe to the dominant expectation of failure. As one alternative explanation, this study draws on Archer’s social realist theory, particularly the concept of morphogenesis to examine the complex interplay between structure, culture and agency in explaining learner achievement. The morphogenetic approach is a method that uses complex transactions or interchanges to bring about change (morphogenesis) to the structure or culture or reproduce it (morphostasis) (Archer, 2004) as clarified in Chapter 4. As a social realist methodology, the morphogenetic approach uses ‘analytical dualism’ to separate “structure” (social/cultural) and “agency” for analytical purposes (Archer, 1995). Analytical dualism is a methodology which allows the separation of structure, culture and action for analytic purposes while retaining their interrelationships (Archer, 1995). The main role of analytic dualism is to facilitate the investigation of the interplay between structure and agency, an undertaking which has been underplayed in biological and social context lenses used in the existing achievement literature. By employing Archer’s (1995, 2004) concept of analytical dualism, this study analyses structure/culture and learner agency separately for a better understanding of their interface. Such an analysis helps us understand why some learners succeed beyond expectations. By doing so, this study add to a growing body of research on learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts beyond the biological and social context explanations reflected in the learner achievement literature.

1.3 The problem statement

The plethora of research on achievement internationally (Galton, 1869; Nichollas, 1984; Machin, 2006; Khattri et al., 1997; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001; Hirsch, 2007; Howley & Howley, 2004; Lubienski, Lubienski & Crane, 2008; Pritchard, 2010; Martinez & Rury, 2012; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Spaul, 2011;) and in Namibia (Makuwa, 2005; Lee et al., 2005; Marope, 2005; Jauch et al., 2009; Du Pisani, Kossler and Lindeke, 2009) portray learners from

social disadvantaged and rural circumstances as underachievers. The theoretical lenses used to explain learner failure in this debate do not allow for an explanation of difference, where despite circumstances in which they find themselves, some learners achieve and even surpass their urban and socially advantaged counterparts. As Garnezy (1991 cited in Floyd, 1996, p. 181) points out, “the study of success is just as important as the study of failure ...” The goal of this study is therefore to explain and understand the factors shaping the achievement of a few learners from a socially disadvantaged and rural context in Omusati region.

The current study differs from previous investigations on learner achievement in that it does not only take account of structures whether social or cultural, rather, it acknowledges and recognizes the complex interrelationships between structure, culture and agency in understanding the achievement phenomenon. The main assumption this study makes is that learners have independent “causal properties and powers” which they can use to exercise control over and provide direction to the courses of their lives while navigating home and school structural and cultural conditions (Archer, 2003; Biesta & Tedder, 2006). By causal powers I mean that structures have independent powers to influence agency through constraints and enablement, while agency has independent powers to cause structural change or reproduction (Archer, 2000). Hence, both structure and agency are intertwined (but not conflated) and are examined to help understand learner achievement.

1.4 Aim of the study

This study aims to examine factors that shape learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts of Omusati region. Drawing on Archer’s (1995, 1996) morphogenetic theory, the study examines how a selected number of learners navigate structural (both social and cultural) constraints and enablement in two rural schools in Omusati region to shape their achievement despite circumstances considered as limiting and militating against their achievement. The study contributes to the continued debate on learner achievement in general, and the emerging body of literature that seeks to provide more nuanced explanations of this by drawing on theories that do not give ascendancy to structures, culture or agency, but rather begin to explore the complex interrelationship between them.

1.5 Research question

The overriding question of this research is: What factors shape the academic achievement of some learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances in selected Senior Secondary Schools in Omusati region?

Specifically, the study responds to the following sub-questions:

- What familial and school structural conditions shape learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural settings?
- What strategies do learners use to interact with familial and school structural and cultural conditions to achieve success in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts?

1.6 Outline of the study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the context and aim of the study. The chapter highlights the gap that exists in the achievement literature where the theoretical lenses used to explain learner failure does not allow for an explanation of difference, where despite circumstances in which they find themselves, some learners achieve and even surpass their urban and socially advantaged counterparts. An alternative approach to studying learner achievement is briefly highlighted and the key research question provided.

Chapter 2 provides the conceptual framework of the study, focusing on biological explanations for learner achievement and revealing their limitations. The chapter first highlights how achievement in general and learner achievement in particular have been conceptualised from the biological perspective. Thereafter it highlights how such conceptualisation has shaped thinking in relation to differences in cognitive ability and learner achievement based on gender, race and social class. The last part of the chapter provides a critique of the biological explanation and suggests that such an explanation for learner achievement is limited.

Chapter 3 extends the debate on prevailing explanations for learner achievement. It highlights the social context explanation, showing that the argument that achievement is determined by social context is equally flawed. The ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations of both the biological and social context explanations for learner achievement are

highlighted and the rationale for an alternative lens based on Archer's social realist theory is provided.

Chapter 4 describes the theoretical framework of the study. It outlines the key aspects of Archer's social realist theory, how it differs from other theoretical lenses, and mainly Bourdieu's theory of social practice and Giddens's structuration theory. Its value in this study to explain and analyse the factors shaping achievement of some learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances in Omusati region, Namibia is highlighted.

Chapter 5 presents the research design employed in this research. It highlights ethical methodological tools for sampling strategies used in the study, selection of research sites; the rationale for using a qualitative case study framework; and for generating data through semistructured interviews, documentary evidence and classroom observation. The chapter also explains how data was processed, analysed and validated to ensure reliability.

Chapter 6 presents an outline of the regional and familial structural and cultural conditions shaping learners' lives. The regional context in which the study took place is provided. A narrative of learners' backgrounds and the structural and cultural factors that serve to constrain and enable their familial and schooling lives from the perspective of their parents and guardians is described.

Chapter 7 focuses on the structural and cultural conditions shaping learners' lives at school. Both constraining and enabling structural and cultural factors at the two identified schools are highlighted. Observed conditions in the two schools during data generation are also described.

Chapter 8 presents learners' narratives of their subjective experiences of structural and cultural conditions at home and at school. It reveals the actual lived experiences of the learners as depicted in their narratives.

Chapter 9 provides a social realist analysis of the strategies that learners used to achieve academic success. It draws on learners' narratives to highlight their configuration of concerns and ultimate projects, and their reflexive deliberations towards successful academic identities in socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

Chapter 10 concludes the study by recapping key ideas in the study and highlighting the main findings of this research about learners' emerging academic identities.

CHAPTER 2:

THE BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION FOR LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of existing research literature on learner achievement/underachievement is provided from a biological perspective in order to understand how achievement has been understood and the theoretical limitations associated with this view. Such a review is necessary to set the stage for understanding existing debates on learner achievement. This is in line with Boote and Beile (2005, p. 3) who argue that a literature review is important in educational research “to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean.” In terms of this research, exploring the biological explanation for learners’ achievement is crucial for understanding why learners from socially disadvantaged contexts have been portrayed in the achievement research literature as underachievers with little consideration for the learners that do achieve academic success in similar circumstances.

This chapter serves three functions. First, it highlights how achievement in general and learner achievement in particular, has been conceptualized over the years using the biological perspective. Second, the chapter highlights how the biological standpoint has shaped thinking on learner achievement in relation to race, gender and class differences in intelligence and academic achievement. Third, the chapter provides a critique of how biology accounts for learner achievement or underachievement.

2.2 Conceptualizing learner academic achievement from a biological perspective

Over the years, the concept of academic achievement has been theorised in different ways. One of the early explanations for academic achievement provided in the research literature is the biological explanation for intelligence and by implication learner academic achievement or underachievement. The dominant argument of the biological perspective is that an individual’s academic achievement or intelligence and, by implication, academic achievement or underachievement, is determined by the genes that people inherit from their families (Galton, 1869; 1876, 1883). In other words, the biological perspective stresses the importance of the

influences of genetic factors. The term intelligence is highly contested and different scholars understand it differently, thus there is no single standardised definition in literature on intelligence (Kaya, Juntune & Stough, 2015; Plomin & Spinath, 2004). As Plomin and Spinath (2004, p. 112) point out, the problem with the concept intelligence is that “it means different things to different people.” The early definition of intelligence was based on Spearman’s (1904) theory of general intelligence which postulates that intelligence is a general ability also known as the ‘g’ factor. This ‘g’ factor is viewed as involving mental relationships where if the ‘g’ combines with a specific mental ability, that entails an intelligent activity (Spearman, 1904). This conception portrays intelligence as a unitary concept.

For Gottfredson (1997), intelligence is “a very general mental capability that among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience.” This broad conceptualization of intelligence also defines an individual’s cognitive ability as an innate trait necessary for an individual to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in order to achieve. Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchard, Boykin, Brody, Ceci and Urbina (1996) argue that individuals’ innate cognitive abilities or level of intelligence predicts their academic achievement. Since learner achievement is assumed to be determined genetically, no amount of effort was believed to make a difference (Wiggan, 2007). This contention has been a topic of controversy for centuries as becomes clearer in this chapter.

It seems to me, learner achievement cannot be understood outside general conceptions of achievement. In the 1800s, achievement was explained in terms of cognitive ability (Galton, 1869; Nicholls, 1984; Pritchard, 2010). Pritchard (2010) conceptualized achievement as involving relevant cognitive abilities. Ability refers to the capacity of an individual to achieve a task where others fail (Nicholls, 1984). This definition of achievement implies that the ability to do something is measured relative to others where ability is equated with achievement, while inability is associated with failure or academic underachievement (Nicholls, 1984). Pritchard (2010) argues that for academic achievement to occur a great amount of natural skills should be exercised and the achievement should be valuable. He explains his conceptualisation of academic achievement in general by drawing an example from sport stating that an athlete would be considered as having achieved by winning an international race due to his ability rather than luck. He additionally argues that despite an individual possibly succeeding due to

luck, success resulting from luck is not considered an achievement because for the most part, achievement implies innate cognitive abilities that an individual possesses (Pritchard, 2010).

Another conception of intelligence reduces it to a score obtained from an IQ test. That means the focus of intelligence is seen as a mental process engaged in information processing. For example, Lynn and Kanazawa (2011) and Fagan (2000) understand intelligence as an individual's cognitive ability or a score as measured by IQ. This idea addressed brain functions such as problem solving so intelligence was defined in terms of how the brain processes information (Sternberg, Grigorenko and Kidd, 2005; Shearer, 2004). The implication of this conception is that intelligence, like achievement, is fixed, measurable and can be quantified. That means that an individual's cognitive ability as measured by IQ test is understood as determining an individual's acquisition of knowledge and skills that are not only related to academic work but also to learning in general. This conceptualisation of learner achievement positions an individual as being at the mercy of nature or hereditary.

As is the case with achievement in general, educational achievement is also explained as a cognitive ability that can be measured. Nielsen and Roos (2011) understand academic achievement in terms of the measurement of cognitive ability. They view educational achievement as the highest degree or qualification earned by an individual or the number of years of education completed. For Nielsen (2006) educational achievement is a grade point average which is based on materials related to the school curriculum or scores on standardised aptitudes tests. Similarly, Algarabel and Dasi (2001) understand educational achievement in terms of individual cognitive ability as measured by mental ability or IQ tests. Like previous scholars, they link educational achievement to an internal cognitive ability associated with the ability to recall facts. In addition, Algarabel and Dasi (2001) view achievement as measured using the same principles of test construction which are designed for assessing mental ability. The nature of these tests constitute closed multiple choice test items (Algarabel and Dasi, 2001) so items designed to measure cognitive ability require individuals to recall facts. This conceptualisation of educational achievement assumes that intelligence is a single universal entity which can be measured by multiple choice tests based on the predetermined content in the school curriculum.

Using the same argument, Schoenfeld (1992) defines learner academic achievement as an individual's cognitive ability to learn facts and concepts at school. This definition is similar to

that of Good (1959 as cited by Mirmot, 2016, p. 2351) who defines learner achievement as knowledge that learners obtain or the skills they develop in the school subjects usually in the form of test scores or marks assigned by the teacher. Likewise, Mudasir and Yatu (2012, p. 76) understand learner achievement as the “knowledge attained and skills developed in school subjects”. The assumption here is that, for learners to gain knowledge and skills, they must have innate cognitive abilities. These conceptions of learner achievement emanate from the fields of education and psychometric testing and view achievement as an internal cognitive state necessary to “master basic facts” as exemplified by an individual’s ability to read, write and do arithmetic (Schoenfeld, 1992, p. 46). Since learner achievement is linked to heritable mental ability, it then follows cited by Algarabel & Dasi, 2001 that those considered as possessing high intelligence are expected to achieve educational success while those who fail are considered to be of low mental ability or intelligence so whether a learner achieves educational success or not is pre-determined by the genes they inherited from their families. The biological perspective links learner achievement or underachievement with innate traits with little regard for factors external to the individual because no amount of effort is believed to make a difference (Wiggan, 2007).

These conceptions of learner achievement as an innate mental ability to recall basic facts are rooted in positivism, a research approach which associates the achievement phenomenon with hereditary traits (Galton, 1865, 1883; 1892; Plomin & Spinath, 2004; Jensen, 1969; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Bouchard, 2009). Positivism is the belief that uses empirical methods to show reality as it is. The term heredity is prominently used in the genetic and achievement literature. Galton (1869) and Mehler (1996) understand the term heritability to mean the genetic transfer of innate characteristics from parents to their off-spring. Plomin and DeFries (1998, p. 63) define heritability as “a statistical measure of the genetic contribution to differences among individuals.” In other words, it is a measure that was used to show the contribution of genes to individual mental traits which some researchers attribute to individual differences in achievement. This view implies a single reality which is hereditary, observable and measurable (Bush, 2006). In other words, only reality which can be observed and measured is worth studying using scientific methods such as IQ tests which have been used since the early 1900s to measure mental ability.

In the 1950s, scholars and researchers, particularly in the fields of cognitive psychology and philosophy began to question the way learner achievement was conceptualized and measured

using a positivist orientation and they advanced a conception that stressed cognitive processes (Cole, 1990). A shift from a positivist to a cognitivist perception that views learner achievement as a cognitive process followed. While the underlying principle that genes determine achievement remained constant, learner achievement was now viewed in terms of the ability of the mind to process information, for example how information is organised, stored and received by the mind (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). This work on mental functioning was exemplified by studies on short term memory (Baddeley & Hitch 1974; Baddeley, 2012) and research that focused on changes in memory over time which concluded that memory plays a significant role both in terms of acquiring knowledge and in how people reason and achieve educationally (Ericsson and Charness, 1994). According to Lynn (2006) all cognitive abilities are interconnected to such an extent that a person who performs badly at a task is considered to have low intelligence which is attributable to hereditary traits. In spite of the shift to cognitive processes, the view of intelligence as a function of factors internal to the individual persisted, thus undermining both factors external to the individual and individual agency.

In the 1980s, there was a move from the conception of intelligence as a unitary concept to intelligence as a broad multi-dimensional concept encompassing a variety of intelligences. For example, Gardner (1983) in his book *Frames of Mind* comes up with a much broader conceptualisation of intelligence. He introduces the multiple intelligence theory which postulates that people possess eight types of intelligences, namely, linguistic, logical, spatial, musical, motor ability, inter-personal, intrapersonal and naturalistic intelligence (refer to Gardner, 1983 for an elaborated explanation of these intelligences). This conception also views intelligence as an innate trait or something with which people are born, but does not see it as a single entity. Instead everyone is viewed as having the ability to be intelligent in some way. This means that individuals are born with the potential to develop multiple intelligences which can be drawn upon to increase their competence (Gardner, 1983).

Deary, Penke and Johnson (2010) offer the most agreed upon general definition of intelligence which prominent researchers on intelligence defined as “the general capability to reason, plan, solve problems, think in abstract terms, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience.” They postulate that this ability to comprehend is not confined to what individuals learn in school but also includes cognitive abilities to reflect on their surroundings (Deary et al., 2010). This finding still supported the notion that such intelligence is presented as measurable through IQ tests (Boring, 1923).

The supposition that achievement reflects innate traits which individuals inherit from their families was reached using quantitative methods. One test based on this supposition is the Binet test, which was developed to identify Parisian students who experienced cognitive disabilities (Wasserman and Tulsky, 2005). The test focused on measuring language, learning and memory, judgement and problem solving, auditory processing and visual processes (Kaya, Juncture and Stough, 2015). Since then, the Binet test has been reviewed and adapted to different situations to measure intelligence. For example, Terman (1916) adapted the scale while working at Stanford University, using it on students and renaming it the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Wasserman and Tulsky, 2005). Goddard (1910) introduced the Binet test to America while Otis adapted the scale and administered it on groups of people. This in turn prompted the wide use of the scale in different settings such as schools, colleges, industry and the military (Wasserman & Tulsky, 2005). These tests were all used to measure intelligence based on the assumption that intelligence is innate.

However, some researchers claim that IQ tests are not necessarily accurate instruments for measuring intelligence. In this connection, Neisser et al. (1996) state that although IQ tests are useful in measuring certain learning skills, obtaining a high score in a test does not necessarily mean the individual is very bright and obtaining a low score in a test does not necessarily mean the individual is less intelligent as implied by the genetic explanation. They affirm that intelligence depends on many other factors some of which are not necessarily heritable such as persistence, school interest, willingness to study, encouragement from peer and family, general cultural conditions (Neisser et al., 1996) and individual effort (Singh, 1996).

In general, the claim that intelligence is heritable connotes that it occurs naturally regardless of the influence of any environmental factors. Such a conception portrays individuals as having no control over their lives as all behaviours are characterised as a function of inheritance which is evolutionary as heritable. The implication is that people are unique because of inheritance which is determinist as will be clarified later in this chapter.

2.3 Biological explanation for intelligence

This section explores the literature on heredity and cognitive ability to understand how the biological perspective has been employed to explain intelligence and by intention achievement or underachievement. Although the biological explanation for learner achievement has been criticised and branded elitist and racist internationally, its remnants still exist in many societies. Namibia, being first a former German and later a South African colony was governed in line with Calvinism. Calvinism is a religious doctrine that uses biological attributes such as skin color to justify differences between people. In particular, South Africa used Calvinist ideals selectively to promote ‘separate development’ including separate education systems for black and white which they justified as ‘God-given’ (Lebeloane and Madise, 2009). The Afrikaners regarded themselves as superior and God’s chosen people and other races and ethnic groups as biologically inferior and thus expected to obey the rules without questioning (Lebeloane and Madise, 2009). In line with the biological explanation, racial segregation in both South Africa and Namibia was justified with Biblical verses that some people are predestinated by God to receive salvation while others are not (Lebeloane and Madise, 2009). This belief was used to justify racial discrimination. Although Namibia attained her independence in 1990, and the voices that advocated Apartheid or racial separateness seemed to be silent now, racial sentiments have not disappeared completely. Racist undercurrents continue to be experienced in Namibia and elsewhere. Often, differences between people are explained as genetic. I personally experienced racial segregation as I was growing up in Namibia where both schools and churches were separate for black and white. Explanations based on the hereditary thesis do not recognise difference between individuals and within groups but rather lump them together as either achievers or underachievers based on race, gender and social class. Hence, the review of the biological explanation literature is important to the Namibian context to enlighten educationists and researchers about its limitations, recognise difference and to signal the need to explore other avenues for explaining the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts, regardless of their race, class or gender. This section provides a general overview of the biological explanation, the hereditary thesis and the methodology used to reach such conclusions.

The hereditary thesis was first championed by Charles Darwin (1859) and later extended by his cousin Francis Galton (1869, 1883) and other scholars such as Stetson (1897); Jensen (1969), Herrnstein and Murray (1994); Rushton and Jensen (2005) amongst others. Galton’s

(1874) conception of nature in particular (which he understood to mean all natural traits that emanate from genetic influences) is prominent in the research literature from the 1800s on intelligence, and focused on factors internal to the individual as accounting for human cognitive ability. In his 1874 book titled *The English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture*, Galton concluded that human natural traits or human innate qualities that cannot be altered, determine people's intellectual abilities. His belief was that genius runs in families with the suggestion that certain families are born with the desired cognitive traits and for that reason they were expected to achieve academic success while others do not have the same traits and were expected to underachieve. In the context of this study, this notion is crucial to engage with because Galton (1865, 1883) based this contention on his idea of eugenics (the science of racial purity) that claimed that there was a need to improve the human race through selective breeding. He reasoned that if nature determines human cognitive ability, then there is no need to invest in resources to educate people who are less intelligent and who are destined for failure (Galton, 1883). This conclusion assumes that some people are born with low levels of intellectual ability and nothing can be done to improve their circumstances. His proponents such as Jensen (1969) and Herrnstein and Murray (1994) fiercely defended this thesis in their work which sparked a controversy in the US and the rest of the world.

By the 1920s, supporters of Galton's theory defended the idea that intelligence is inherited from generation to generation and that factors outside the individual have little impact on human cognitive ability (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal & Tellegen, 1990). The implication was that people should look for explanations for learner achievement in the genes and not in the social conditions in which they find themselves.

As alluded to earlier, most research conducted at the time was quantitative using IQ tests as a measure and designed to support the hereditary thesis at all costs. One commonly used technique was the twin study method believed to be a viable method for determining correlations between heredity and intelligence and personality (Galton, 1883). The twin method was used to compare Monozygotic (MZ) and Dizygotic (DZ) twins reared together or apart in order to determine if particular traits correlated with genetics. Monozygotic twins refer to those twins that share the same egg and are identical while dizygotic twins grow from separate eggs and are fraternal (Hughes & Cuttings, 1999). Similarities in genes between MZ twins reared together and same-sex DZ twins were compared without measuring the genes that might account for the differences (Bouchard Jr. & McGue, 1981). The twin method was used

on the assumption that since twins share similar environments, they would explain the influence of natural traits on differences in mental ability between people (Galton, 1876).

Galton (1876) conducted the first twin studies in which he investigated similarities in physical features such as the colour of the hair, eyes, height and strength and even illnesses from 35 pairs of identical and 23 pairs of fraternal twins and concluded that twins who resembled each other at birth were similar throughout their lives in terms of appearance, personality, interests and even ailments. Even though he did not directly measure individual cognitive ability, Galton (1875, p. 576) claimed that “there is no escape from the conclusion that nature prevails enormously over nurture when the differences of nurture do not exceed what is commonly to be found among persons of the same rank of society and in the same country.” This means that differences between individual cognitive abilities are a function of factors internal to the individual which cannot be altered.

Since then, twin and kinship studies have been used to justify the position that heredity determines both human cognitive ability and human intelligence (Merriman, 1924; Scarr & Weinberg, 1978; Bouchard Jr. & McGue, 1981; Plomin, DeFries, McClean & Rutter, 1997; Rijdsdijk, Vernon & Boomsma, 2002; Richardson and Norgate, 2006) and to explore the influence of genetics and environment on intelligence (Bratko, Butkovic and Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010). In twin studies, Plomin and Spinath (2004) found the average correlation in intelligence between monozygotic twins to be .86 while correlations for dizygotic twins were lower at .60. Merriman (1924) carried out a classical twin study in the US and concluded that correlations between them ranged from 88% - 98%. Deary, Spinath and Bates (2006) suggest that the existence of greater correlations between twins raised together is an indication of environmental influence on intelligence.

Other researchers claim correlations between identical twins brought up in separate environments. For example, Nisbett (2005) asserts that the IQs of monozygotic twins who are raised apart in similar environments ranged from .83 to .91 while correlations between twins reared in dissimilar environments ranged from .26 to .67. Additionally, adoption studies claim the IQs of adopted children correlated with those of their biological parents rather than with that of their adopted parents although they did not have any contact with them during infancy (Bouchard et al., 1990). Research on kinship studies claim resemblance with biological relatives. For example, Bouchard (1997) reported that correlations were highest for close

kinships and lower for lesser degrees of kinship. For example, correlations of IQs between monozygotic and dizygotic twins are said to be greater than between persons of the same kinship reared together or separately.

While some researchers claimed to have found correlations between heredity and intelligence as expounded previously, the conclusion that heredity determines human intelligence has sparked controversy. Neisser et al. (1996) postulate that concluding that heredity determines individual cognitive ability does not mean that if there is a high degree of heredity influences on a particular trait, factors external to the individual do not play a part in the development of that trait. In this regard, Sternberg (1996) offers an example by stating that traits such as weight and height are inherited but can also be modified by the effects of the environment.

Many researchers seeking correlations between heredity and intelligence did not find any supporting evidence. For example, Plomin and Spinath (2004) in their study of twin and adoption children between the age of 2 and 4 found a relatively lower heritability of mental ability of 25-30 percent while shared environments accounted for 61-65 percent of the variance. Similarly, Turkheimer, Haley, Waldron, D'Onofrio and Gottesman (2003) in their study found the environment, rather than genes determined twin IQs. They used data from the National Collaborative Perinatal Project in the US to analyse a sample of 7 year old twins, a substantial number of whom were raised in families living near or below the poverty line. The study found that in impoverished families, 60 percent of the differences in IQ were accounted for by the shared environment while the contribution of genes was close to zero.

Similar results were found in research that focused on shared environments. For example, Petrill, Pike, Price and Plomin (2004) found that the environment played a major role and that the effects of a shared environment were mediated by parental socioeconomic status and disorder in the home while most environmental effects on the IQ of infants were unexplained. Thompson, Detterman and Plomin (1991) tested data on the academic performance of children between the ages of 6 and 12 in which 278 pairs of twins participated. They found that a modest 20% of the discrepancy in test performance was due to heritability while 60 % was attributed to the shared environment. However, when age correction was done, the results suggested an equal contribution of 40% variance for genetics and environment (Thompson, 2006 cited by Kovas, Haworth, Dale and Plomin, 2007, p. 6). In other words, the results after age was

accounted for revealed that both heredity and environment contributed equally to individual achievement.

In a recent study of siblings, Nielsen and Roos (2011) analysed data from AddHealth involving 1576 pairs of siblings within the age range of 24 and 32 who lived in the same households at the time of the survey. The siblings were classified into six types according to how they were related. The purpose of the survey was to estimate the relative role of genes and family environment on educational achievement. They found family environment to be a strong determinant of educational attainment among these adults while heredity played an insignificant role. Conversely, Turkheimer et al. (2003) found that heritability was more pronounced in affluent families while the effect of the shared environment was insignificant.

Plomin, DeFries & McClean (1990) argue that drawing conclusions based on similarities in environment as justification for hereditary similarity in twins does not take cognisance of the fact that twins are often treated similarly because they are similar. They argue that if twins are treated identically as in the way they are dressed for instance, it increases the similarity over fraternal twins and that could be mistakenly interpreted as the effects of genes while differential treatment might be the cause.

In their Dutch twin studies, Bartels, Rietveld, Van Baal and Boomsma (2002a) used a structural modelling technique to investigate the influence of genetic and the environment on the development of full-scale IQ at ages 5, 7, 10 and 12. They found that there was a marked increase on IQ scores from age 5 to 10 but a 41% regression of test scores at the age of 12.

They concluded that environmental factors accounted for the remainder of the association. The implication of this perspective is that individuals become more intelligent during the course of development which could be attributed to an increase in cognitive functioning as influenced by environmental factors.

Some critics question the results of studies on twins reared apart. In this regard, Joseph (2001) in his critique analysed the findings and conclusions of separated twins with emphasis on the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart (MISTRA) which started in 1979 in the US and focused on cognitive ability and personality. Joseph (2001) in his analysis was limited to personality and behavioural differences. The initial conclusion of the Minnesota twin project

was that human behaviour and personality have their origin in genetics. However Joseph (2001), in his analysis of the results of the same study found that early researchers on twins reared apart were biased in favour of greater twin similarities and that the environment in which twins were reared together or apart was not considered. He concluded that the evidence from studies of twins reared apart does not support the genetic claim as accounting for personality and behavioural differences. This conclusion is similar to that of Rutter (1983), who argues that adoption studies do not necessarily explain the heredity justification in human cognitive ability because the IQs of adopted children whose adoptive parents are of high IQ or who attend special education programmes are reported as having an increase in intellectual ability which signals environmental influences. In addition, studies Clarke (1984) and Rutter (1985) indicate that the IQs of adopted children increased when placed with higher IQ adoptive parents or when they are placed in special education programmes, thus implying the role of the environment. Miller and Halpern (2014) postulate that effects on cognitive ability whether spatial or otherwise remain controversial and unclear. Additionally, Miller (2011) criticised conclusions from twin and family studies for giving the impression that cognitive abilities are predetermined and that people have little control over their lives.

In general, biological research on correlations between heredity and intelligence has produced mixed results. These diverse conclusions apply to both identical twins reared together or apart and to adoption and family studies. Hence, the overall conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that the biological explanation for human intelligence and by implication achievement or underachievement is inconclusive. In addition, the contention whether intelligence is hereditary or not remains controversial.

2.4 Biological explanation for individual differences in achievement

In the previous section, attention was focused on the biological perspective using twin and family studies to explain correlations between heredity and intelligence. This section draws on biological research to highlight how racial, gender and social class differences in achievement have been conceptualised and the implications arising from this. Exploring biological explanations are relevant to Namibia, having emerged in recent years from colonialism which explained racial differences in cognitive ability as hereditary. Reviewing the biological research literature for learner achievement helps us understand why another perspective, which

is not deterministic, is paramount for explaining difference in the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts in Omusati region, Namibia.

The question whether there are genetically based gender, social class and racial differences in intelligence and by implication achievement or underachievement has been an ongoing argument (Jensen, 1969). The European Commission (EC, 2010) understands the concept of gender as “the economic, social, political and cultural attributes associated with being male or female.” In other words, gender is a social construct defining differences in behaviour between men and women. Conversely, sex is a biological construct which defines physiological differences between males and females (EC, 2010). The focus here is on biological explanations of gender differences in achievement.

The biological perspective explains gender differences in intelligence and by implication achievement as hereditary. Galton back in (1907) characterised women as naturally intellectually deficient and motivated principally by maternal instincts. In other words, women were perceived as innately lacking in cognitive ability. Similarly, Buss (1989) described both men and women as having inherited dispositions that account for gender differences in cognitive ability saying that men inherit traits that are favourable for high intelligence.

Penner (2008) classified biological theories for gender differences into three types – genetic, hormonal and cerebral. For the purpose of this research, the focus is on the review of the literature on genetic differences. Genetic research literature has made three claims regarding gender differences in achievement, that females have higher verbal ability than males (Burton, Henninger and Hafets, 2005; Mildner, 2008; Lynn and Mikk, 2009); that females are more advanced in language development than males (Berglund, Erikson and Westerlund, 2005); and that males outperform females in spatial and mathematical ability (Roselli, Ardila, Matute and Inozemtsewa, 2009). Lynn and Mikk (2009) analysed the reading achievement of 10 and 15 year olds in international studies of the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA 2000, 2003, and 2006) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2001 and 2006). A total of 55 education systems participated in these studies and they found raw scores showing girls outperformed boys in all PISA countries and obtaining higher average scores in comparison to boys.

Gender differences in achievement were attributed to a number of factors. Some researchers attribute gender differences to variations in brain size (Jensen & Johnson, 1994; Penner, 2008). In the 19th century, the biological explanation claimed that differences in brain size accounted for differences in intelligence between males and females, with males having the larger brain therefore higher intelligence (Jensen & Johnson, 1994; Penner, 2008). In support of the brain size thesis, Penner, (2008) argued that the males brains are 10-15% larger than that of females, a difference associated with increased cortical grey matter in males, which is attributed to differences in spatial ability between males and females. Similarly, Jensen and Johnson (1994) reported correlation between head size and IQ. McDaniel's (2005) research found that the opposite was true where brain volume correlation with intelligence was higher in females than in males and in adults in comparison to children.

Other researchers associate sex differences and intellectual ability with the process of maturation. Mildner (2008) claims that females attain a higher performance in verbal tests, learn the language faster than males, have a broader vocabulary, and speak the language more accurately and fluently. In their meta-analysis of 57 studies of sex differences on Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) and Advanced Progressive Matrices (APM), Lynn and Irwing (2004) found males gained an advantage from the age of 15 to old age. They argued that men acquired higher scores on the matrices which was equivalent to 5 IQ points although they found no differences between 6-14 years old. They additionally claim that a meta-analysis of 15 studies of child samples on the Raven Coloured Progressive Matrices showed that boys between the ages of 5-11 years had an advantage of 3.2 IQ points over the girls. Geary (1996) found that men achieved better at arithmetic while women were better at verbal tests. Loehlin, Sharan & Jacoby (1978) found no support for explanations that linked male and female differences in spatial visualization of learning tasks to heredity.

Similarly Court (1983), in his summary of 118 studies of sex differences on progressive matrices concluded that there were no significant differences in mean scores which were gender based. Based on the accumulated evidence, Court (1983) argued that sex differences could not be demonstrated at all levels of tests on the Raven's Progressive Matrices, and that claims of sex differences must have been based on sampling bias.

A large body of the research literature on gender shows that existing differences are both small and insignificant, or have disappeared altogether. The general consensus in studies of sex

differences on progressive matrices is that there are no gender based differences. The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that gender based differences in intellectual ability and by implication achievement or underachievement does not conclusively exist and there is no evidence to prove that there is a gender difference in achievement which is solely hereditary.

Another area of controversy that has been the subject of biological research is racial differences in intellectual ability. The biological explanation also claims that racial differences in achievement are a function of heredity (Galton, 1869; Jensen, 1969; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). This strand of research claims that racial differences in intellectual ability are part of human biological make up and thus coded in the genes (Lewontin, 1982). Such characterization of intelligence differences between racial groups implies that intelligence is genetically racially biased and that some races are destined to underachieve while others are destined to achieve success due to the nature of cognitive ability inherited from their racial groups.

Galton (1883) was the first to suggest racial differences in human intelligence which he attributed to heredity. Galton (1883) further argued that differences in intelligence account for differences in achievement between individuals, nations and races. In other words, racial groups vary in innate cognitive ability which in turn account for differences in academic achievement.

In the US in particular, Jensen (1969) in his article *How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement* summarized the findings from psychological literature on individual and group differences in IQ and the extent to which genetics play a role in shaping these differences. He claimed that intelligence is heritable, that differences in IQ between racial groups are genetic and that individual achievement is determined by human genetic traits. Similarly, the *Bell Curve* of 1994 was published which supported the conclusion reached by Jensen in 1969.

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) claim that IQ tests are an accurate measure of intelligence, that IQ strongly predicts educational and career achievements, that IQ is highly heritable, that the environment only has a minor influence on IQ, that racial differences in IQ are heritable and that education interventions will make little difference. The publication of the *Bell Curve* supported the view that genes determine human mental ability and that there is nothing anyone can do to change that. In contradiction, Neisser et al., (1996) in their reassessment of the

conclusion of the *Bell Curve* did not find the genetic link to racial differences in mental ability saying that genetic differences in IQ appear to increase with age for no discernible reason, that environmental factors also play a role and that mean scores on IQ tests are rising steadily. Their finding was derived from participating in the American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force which was constituted to find out whether average IQ was social, socioeconomic or genetic and to evaluate the conclusion of *The Bell Curve*.

Early biological research focused on physical traits such as brain size (Galton, 1969, Morton, 1849; Lynn, 2006), brain volume (Broca, 1873 cited by Lynn, 2006) to determine racial differences in cognitive ability. The conclusion from this research was challenged on claims of researcher bias in conducting experiments. For example, in Gould's (1978) reanalysis of Morton's data, he found that there is no significant differences between measured cranial samples and that the conclusion that racial differences in intelligence exists as measured by head size is a reflection of the researchers' biases and misinterpretations in the findings based on the way crania were selected and how calculations were done using tape.

Another factor associated with racial differences in intelligence is response time. Research on reaction time claims that individuals with higher IQs scores perform faster than those with lower IQ scores (Rushton, 2002). The reaction time explanation is said to measure the neurophysiological efficiency of the capacity of an individual's brain to process information efficiently, the same ability which is measured by IQ tests (Rushton, 2002). The argument is that since individuals are not trained to perform on reaction time tasks, higher IQ scores on such tasks are associated with genetics rather than environmental factors. Lynn and Owen (1994) conducted a series of reaction time studies on over 1 000 children at the age of nine from East Asia, Japan, Hong Kong, Britain, Island and South Africa and claimed that they found racial differences in reaction time with Asians and Whites attaining higher IQ scores while Blacks attained lower scores. They attributed these findings to heredity. Conversely, Nisbett (2009) attributed racial variations in IQ to the existence of environmental factors where people live and make meaning of their lives account for racial differences.

Other researchers like Fryer & Levitt (2006) in their analysis of the mental functions of children between the ages of 5 to 12 months in the US found only minor racial differences across races with test outcomes of 0.06 standard deviation units between blacks and whites scores which

eventually disappeared when limited control was applied. Their conclusion challenged the notion that intelligence is heritable.

As indicated earlier, test scores have been used to account for racial differences in intelligence, particularly between black and white people living in America where most of the research on this subject was conducted. While such research alluded to the discrepancy in achievement between blacks and whites which is attributed to genetics, other researchers dismissed its link to genetics citing a significant reduction in the discrepancy over the years. For example, Jenks and Phillips (1998 cited by Kao & Thompson, 2003, p. 420) in the analysis of test results of African Americans conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from 1971 to 1996 in the US found that the black-white reading difference shrank by almost one half and by one third in mathematics. Kao and Thompson (2003) contend that genetic research has been unable to account for the existence of the discrepancy in achievement between race groups. Hence, the shrink in racial achievement differences serves as evidence that the genetic explanation does not hold. Fagan and Holland in their 2002 and 2007 studies in the US found similar results when they investigated whether racial differences in IQ scores were genetic or environmental. The study involved 620 whites and 305 African Americans. The results of the study indicate that racial differences in IQ scores were caused by unequal opportunity of exposure to information. Fagan and Holland (2002, 2007) further asserted that when African Americans were given an equal opportunity to learn, they performed equally well on assessments and that there were no differences in the abilities of African Americans to process information. Hence the conclusion that differences in IQ scores should not be attributed to genetic differences between races (Fagan, 2008).

Biological explanations further linked social class to race and gender and claim that differences in social class is hereditary (Galton 1865). Research based on the biological perspective thus explains differences in social class in relation to supposed variation in innate abilities between males and females and between racial groups. Put differently, class differences are the consequences of low innate cognitive ability of those who find themselves in low social classes (Lewontin, 1982). In other words, the biological explanation assumes that some people are genetically predisposed to lower classes because they have inherited genes for low intelligence (by belonging to a certain gender or race) which they pass on to their offspring. This perspective assumes that an individual's social status is fixed and unchanging because of genetic differences in intelligence.

The impact of Galton's (1883) eugenics movement created strong racial overtones with long term consequences. For example during the late 1930s where the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany led to sterilization, death camps, and breeding farms for those considered to be the ideal race (Mehler, 1996). The biological explanation thus had long-lasting repercussions resulting in the Holocaust of the 1940s that shifted debate away from physical traits explanations of racial differences in intelligence to internal traits such as cognitive processes, but which are also rooted in biology.

2.5 Limitations of the biological explanation

This section focuses on some of the limitations of the biological explanation for intelligence and achievement or underachievement. The conclusion that human intelligence is genetically determined brought condemnation to the behavioural genetic research fraternity (Kamin, 1974 cited by Plomin & Spinath, 2004, p. 113). In this connection, Fagan and Holland (2007) argued that these views led to the unfair misclassification of individuals as intellectually deficient. Sacerdote (2010) asserts that the heredity explanation of IQ overstates the significance of the genes in explaining achievement. Similarly, Wiggan (2007) argues that attributing intelligence to inborn traits does not consider the effects of the environment on individuals. In other words, the genetic argument positions learners as if they are not part of the context in which they reside. Hilliard III (1996, p. 6) supports this view contending that the genetic argument has positioned the learner as a "decontextualized individual" operating in a vacuum as though their social contexts do not play a role in shaping their academic trajectories.

Central to the limitations of biological explanations are fundamental beliefs about how reality is viewed. To start with, the way the biological perspective conceptualises key concepts such as intelligence and achievement as unitary, assumes that reality is fixed and unchanging. Hence, the contention that human behaviour and characteristics are hereditary implies that heredity determines people's uniqueness including their cognitive abilities (Lewontin, 1982). This conception of intelligence as hereditary is based on biological determinism. Biological determinism refers to a world view that heredity determines people behaviour including their cognitive abilities (Lewontin, 1982). From the reviewed research literature, biological determinism is manifested in the view that inheritance is coded in the human genes which determine who we are (in terms of gender, race or social class) and what we can or cannot do.

The implication is that differences, whether in terms of gender, race, social class or cognitive ability are fixed and cannot be changed. This also implies that low social class learners have inherited genes that predispose them to low achievement in school and consequently the social position they occupy in society which cannot be changed.

The influence of external factors on the individual is undermined. Instead the individual is reduced to the genes that constitute them (Lewontin, 1982). Sternberg (2005) argues that the social context is important and should be considered in studies of intelligence and achievement. He further asserts that it is not only innate traits which account for learners' performance, but also the fact that many individuals grow up in environments in which they find it difficult to escape such as a destructive home life, low economic status and poor schools. While one's level of intelligence plays a role, contextual factors also influence achievement and should be taken into consideration in order to understand the complexities of learner achievement.

In addition, the biological perspective on intelligence and achievement treats people as homogenous and thus does not recognise difference. As Uttal (1996) points out, generalised conceptions that heredity accounts for intelligence and by implication achievement does not take account of the existence of difference within populations. As it becomes clearer in this research, there are always some learners who succeed where the majority fail or do not succeed where the majority are succeeding. The research on heredity did not acknowledge this fact. Hence, the conception that intellectual ability is an inborn trait which people inherit from their parents is inadequate for explaining difference in learner achievement as it underplays the impact of the social factors on individual mental ability and by implication learner achievement.

Furthermore, the biological explanation relies on quantitative methods, in particular the use of intelligence test scores and the g factor expounded by Spearman to reach their conclusion (Ceci, 1991; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Gardner, 1983; Gould, 1978). Neisser et al. (1996) argue that using tests scores alone to measure intelligence undervalues other important aspects of mental ability. Gardner (1983) criticises genetic research for portraying conceptions of intelligence based on children who are considered 'normal' with no consideration for different domains and that psychometric tests only focus on linguistic, logical and some aspects of spatial intelligence while ignoring other forms. In addition, Gardner (1983) claims that the stability and validity of such tests have not been clarified.

2.6 Conclusion

In general, the biological explanation for intelligence and achievement which is rooted in deterministic ideologies is limited for the following reasons: First, it is based on biological determinism which views reality as fixed and unchangeable and which reduces individuals to the genes. Second, the biological explanation does not acknowledge the role of social contexts and human agency in the achievement debate and thus considers individuals as already determined by hereditary traits. Such conceptions do not provide optimism in the lives of those condemned to not having the 'right' genes to improve their lives. Third, people are treated as a homogenous group and thus the biological lens does not recognise difference even within a group that is classified as similar or having the same characteristic or traits. Fourth, the methodology used is quantitative in nature which only favours objective knowledge to the detriment of human subjectivity. Finally, research based on biological determinist ideologies had serious consequences for humanity as exemplified by the rise of the Nazis. These limitations led to a shift in thinking in favour of the role of social context in explaining academic achievement which is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL CONTEXT EXPLANATIONS FOR LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

3.1. Introduction

Discussion in the previous chapter focused on the biological explanations for achievement. As concluded, the biological perspective proved inadequate to justify the factors responsible for learners' achievement. Therefore, it is necessary to look at other possible explanations that account for learner achievement. After the Second World War in the 1940s and its impact, people began to question biological determinants of race and intelligence and to explore instead the influence of the environment on people's lives. Another factor was the Great Depression of the 1930s where many people were made to believe that there was nothing they could do to alter their situation due to genetic limitations beyond their control (Miller, 2011). Due to the inadequacies of biological explanations, researchers then shifted their gaze to factors external to the individual as determining the variance in intelligence and academic achievement (Deutsch, 1967; Hunt, 1969; Gill, Jardine & Martin, 1985; Bartels, Rietveld, Van Baal & Boomsma, 2002a). Already in the 1700s John Locke advanced the idea that the mind is a *tabula rasa* or a blank slate at birth (Mehler, 1996). Although this theory also has its roots in biology, it contested that human beings are not born with knowledge but acquire it as they interact with their environments. Despite this shift, both explanations (biological and social context) remain inadequate in explaining the phenomenon of achievement due to limitations in their philosophical assumptions as it becomes clearer later in this chapter.

This chapter explores the second wave of explanation for learner achievement that views achievement as determined by the social contexts in which learners make meaning of their lives. Three strands of research on learner achievement from a social context perspective are explored here, namely, social capital, socioeconomic status, school and social disadvantage. The learners who are participants in this research experience the aforementioned factors in their lives as it becomes clearer in the data chapters and reviewing this research literature thus helps us gain insight into how the social context lens has been used to explain learner achievement. The implication of how people used the social context lens to explain the intersection between achievement, social disadvantage and rurality is highlighted. The chapter

further highlights the ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations of both biological and social context perspectives for learner achievement and why both views are inadequate for investigating the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts. The last part of the chapter provides the rationale for an alternative lens based on Archer's social realist theory to understand the interplay between structure, culture and agency.

3.2 Social capital explanation for learner achievement

This section focuses on how social capital has been conceptualised in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) and the implications for learner achievement. The review of this literature is important to this research as many rural families in Omusati region depend on the extended families for economic and social support as highlighted in the data chapters. Bourdieu (1986) understands the concept of social capital as a combination of resources that are related to social networks and institutions that can be used to achieve personal goals. In Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 119), social capital is defined as:

... The sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrues to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Hence, social capital is concerned with the benefits that an individual can gain by participating in social network connections. Social capital then is seen as a tool which the elite use to ensure that people from the lower class remain excluded from their circles (Bourdieu, 1986). That means that social capital according to Bourdieu denotes the realities of social inequalities and how the middle and upper classes network to secure their positions in society while the lower class remains in its position. Bourdieu (1986) links his conception of social capital to other capitals, namely, cultural and economic capital. He describes cultural capital as the ways in which people use information and knowledge about their cultural beliefs, traditions and ways of behaving which they learn from their families to succeed in life (Bourdieu, 1986). This notion of cultural capital denotes being in possession of the cognitive competencies and dispositions of the dominant culture that is required to succeed. For Bourdieu cultural capital can exist in the form of cultural goods such books, pictures, dictionaries, and so on; cognitive dispositions of the habitus in the mind of an individual or in an institutionalised form such as educational qualification.

As indicated earlier, Bourdieu (1986) uses the concepts of social and cultural capital to explain inequalities in society. The main argument pertaining to cultural capital has been that children from low class families do not achieve because they lack the requisite cultural and linguistic capital to mediate school knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This means that children with low socioeconomic status are viewed as not being in possession of the knowledge of the dominant culture and not being equipped through socialization with the right language, skills and attitudes which they need to achieve educational success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This conception depicts low class children as lacking the values and linguistic competencies that are necessary for them to achieve in school. The implication is that by virtue of the lack of cultural and linguistic capital which is implicit in school, children from the lower class have little to draw on to succeed in school (Dika & Singh, 2002). Conversely, children from the middle and upper classes are expected to achieve academic success because their parents inculcate the required cultural values necessary to succeed in school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Related to cultural capital is linguistic capital which some scholars have linked to learner achievement or underachievement. Bernstein's (1971) early work on language and social class cited in (Wiggan, 2007, p. 315) suggests that the achievement of learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds is restricted by their family social environments which pass on restricted language codes to their children, thus negatively affecting their academic performance. Linguistic codes relate to how meaning is transmitted and regulated within the family and at school (Bernstein, 1975). Bernstein (1971) claims that a child who has no knowledge about the formal language has to learn it at school and thus starts by focusing on understanding the language spoken by the teacher before he learns the subject. This implies that children from middle class families are socialised to achieve in school ahead of those who do not have the required linguistic competency.

Bourdieu (1986) understands economic capital as the material resources which form the basis on which network connections are built. In other words, economic capital refers to real capital (wealth, money or assets) which form the basis for social capital. Bourdieu (1986) argues that how much social capital can be possessed depends on the size of network of connections (e.g. family, kinship, neighbours and so on) that one can mobilise and the volume of possessed capital. Such a network of connections can arguably be reproduced through an increased effort

of sociability, economic capital, continuous exchange or reciprocity and trust within the network.

Expanding on Bourdieu's notion, Coleman (1988) conceptualised social capital as resources that are built-in social relationships in families such as between the children and their parents that facilitate the development and the wellbeing of the children. He argues social capital is not something tangible but appears in the form of trust as demonstrated by obligations and expectations; how information is communicated and through norms and sanctions in families and communities (Coleman, 1988). These norms and sanctions are used to promote collective rather than individual interests among community members. That means that the norms and sanctions are applied to safeguard the interest of the group. As such the relationship that people have is inherent in how people relate to each other and the functions that such relationships serve. As Coleman (1988, p. 98) puts it:

[S]ocial capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to actors. Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common; they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors ...

As indicated above it is the social structure that facilitates the actions of individuals in family or community. What is important in Coleman's (1988) notion of social capital is the levels of connection that exist between a child and family, friends, community and school. This he said is as important as the influence of socioeconomic status and stresses that social capital is not like other capital that can be created and destroyed as it is not dependent on one's decision but it is a result of the social interaction within a group. It is through social involvement and social interactions and relationships that social capital in Coleman's view is generated and thus can only be observed when people in the group use it. To exemplify his point, Coleman (1988) uses the example of a diamond market where a merchant's exchange does not primarily depend on the quality of the diamond for example, but because of the trust that they have in each other.

Bourdieu's conception of social capital differs from that of Coleman in the sense that he is interested in how society reproduces itself through education and in particular on how education is used to reproduce dominant classes. Coleman (1988) expanded on Bourdieu's concept of social capital, focusing on social networks and their influence on community members. Gauntlett (2011) criticised Bourdieu's notion of social capital, arguing that he

assigns too much power to the social context and renders people powerless. Additionally, he states that Bourdieu's conception portrays a pessimistic picture of the world in which people lack the agency to intervene to bring about social change (Gauntlett, 2007, 2011).

Research shows there is a link between social capital as social relationships and student academic achievement. Meier (1999) investigated the influence of social capital among adolescence in the US and found that the quality of social relationships and assistance influenced the educational achievement of adolescence positively. Huang (2009) investigated social capital generated from social relations with parents, teachers and peers and found that it significantly influenced student achievement in Norwegian secondary schools. In Malaysia, Yusuff (2014) studied the relationship between a form of social capital (social bond and social link) on educational achievement and found that students who have strong social bonds and social links attain higher educational achievement than those who do not have those bonds.

By way of concluding this section, social capital as expounded by Bourdieu targets social inequality while Coleman conceptualised it as a resource that learners can capitalise on to achieve academic success. However, both explain social capital in relation to families. Bourdieu views the amount of resources (material and mental) available in family as accounting for inequality between classes while Coleman views family as a source of support for its members to achieve. With respect to the influence of social capital, Bourdieu's focus is on social reproduction and symbolic power and as such has been elaborated in terms of norms and access to institutional resources (Dika & Singh, 2002). Like other explanations highlighted earlier, social capital portrays learners as products of social factors related to their homes, and social networks unable to make choices and influence their lives. In the next section, I turn to the socioeconomic status explanation.

3.3. Socioeconomic status explanation for learner achievement

Another social context explanation for learner achievement is socioeconomic status. The relationship between socioeconomic background and learner achievement has long been a topic of debate (White, 1982; Sirin, 2005). There are similarities in the way researchers use the terms socioeconomic status and class, these concepts have often been used interchangeably to refer to the position of an individual or group in society measured in terms of income, level of education, occupation, place of residence in society and ethnic origin (Bradley & Corwyn,

2002; Sirin, 2005). Time and again, the concept of socioeconomic status has been operationalised in relation to the level of parents' education, employment status and wealth (Hauser, 1994). In this study, I use socioeconomic status and class interchangeably to refer to the social positions that people occupy in society as characterised by their level of education, employment/unemployment status and socioeconomic conditions.

Research on socioeconomic status and learner achievement dates back to the mid-1960s, when Coleman et al. (1966) conducted a study to determine the extent of the educational inequalities that existed between varying racial and ethnic groups, mainly, Blacks, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Mexican American, Oriental Americans, and White Americans in the United States (US). Using the production function or input output model, Coleman et al. (1966) studied the data gathered from a national sample of over 570 000 students, 60 000 teachers and 4 000 principals in the US. Their study was intended to show the extent to which learners' ethnic and social backgrounds accounted for their academic achievement. Coleman et al. (1966) concluded that schools accounted for only approximately 10 percent of the variances in achievement while 90 percent was determined by learners' family background characteristic which was defined as socioeconomic status. In other words, whether learners achieve or underachieve in school depends on the resources available within their families.

Since the Coleman et al. (1966) conclusion, the debate on learner achievement shifted to family context in which individuals make meaning of their lives. Coleman (1966, p. 349) suggests that families with "strong educational resources" or "strong economic resources" are able to supplement what their children learn at school and thus the educational achievement of children from well-to-do families would be "largely determined by the differential educational resources provided by their families." Such resources as Sattes (1985) elaborates includes educational toys, books, access to the internet, newspapers and a suitable place to study which enable middle class children to perform in school. Conversely, lower class children do not have access to additional resources due to financial and other pressure and are thus expected to underachieve. Singh & Choudhary (2015) confirm that a lack of resources in the home affects achievement at school.

Since Coleman et al.'s (1966) research, various studies have been conducted on the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement. In the US, Sirin (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of the research literature on SES and academic achievement

involving a sample of 101 157 students, 6 871 schools and 128 school districts collected from 74 autonomous samples and found a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement. In India, Singh and Choudhary (2015) investigated the impact of socioeconomic status and secondary school student achievement and came to the same conclusions. In Pakistan, Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq and Berhanu (2011) examined different factors influencing academic achievement of 10th grade students and found that socioeconomic status and education of the parents were related to the overall students' academic performance particularly in Mathematics and English. Eagle (1989) in his study found that the attainment of students was strongly associated with their family socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status in this study was defined in terms of mother's education, father's education, family income, father's occupation and the number of family possessions. Both Coleman et al. (1966) and subsequent studies presented socioeconomic status as key determinant of learners' achievement.

The idea that school makes little difference to learning had a negative effect on people's perceptions about the role of school in learner achievement in the sense that it gave the impression that school has little or no relationship with learner academic achievement (Madaus, Airasian & Kellaghan, 1980 cited by Marzano, 2000, p. 1). Peterson and Llaudet (2006) criticised the Coleman et al. (1966) conclusion arguing that it only provides information from a single battery of tests and does not measure the growth in student performance over the years which constitute the functions of schools. In addition, research that views socioeconomic status as determining learners' achievement has contributed to the cynicism that nothing works to improve the performance of children from poor backgrounds (Jacob & Ludwig, 2009). Furthermore, a socioeconomic explanation assumes that learners are simply products of their family circumstances with no ability to shape their academic achievement. However people play a significant role in shaping the contexts in which they find themselves. Bandura (2006, p. 167) affirms this point contending that people "create" their environment, "preserve it, transform it and even destroy it." This means that people have the agentic capacity to shape their environments to produce desired effects, including their academic achievement.

3.4 The school explanation for learner achievement

Controversies surrounding Coleman et al.'s (1966) conclusion that school makes little difference to learning prompted another wave of research that emerged in the 1970s with a

focus on school as accounting for learner achievement. This movement was spearheaded by researchers who looked at school effectiveness. They did not discount the impact of socioeconomic background on learner achievement; they believed however that schools control sufficient factors necessary to enable learners to attain mastery of the core curriculum (Lezotte, 2009). Even though this research was carried out in a different era, the basic tenet remained the same, namely, that the social context accounts for learner achievement. This section draws on school effectiveness research to review the literature on school as a variable attributed to learner achievement. I start with the general overview of research on school effectiveness, highlighting the main argument and then homing in on some of the specific school factors identified as affecting learner achievement. Such factors are school resources, type of school (private vs public), school size and teacher qualifications. Thereafter, I provide a critique of the research literature on schools as a factor in learner achievement.

Research on the effective school sought to address the question does school makes a difference to learner achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009). The concept of the effective school was originally conceptualized to refer to the mastery of basic skills but evolved to focus on analytical skills and problem solving (Sadovnik, Gordon, Lew, Barr, Butterfield & Tractenberg, 2005). Other researchers provided a value-added definition of the concept of effective schools to refer to student progress. For example, Sammons and Bakkum (2011, p. 11) and Sammons (2007, p. 4) defined an effective school as a school in which “students’ progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake.” This definition implies that the performance of learners from one school is compared to other schools serving learners with similar backgrounds to see how much they have progressed compared to expectation. Other scholars understood effective schools as those that close the achievement gap between low and high socioeconomic background learners (Edmonds, 1979). Such conceptualisations of an effective school are again rooted in a positivist paradigm like the biological and social context explanations discussed earlier.

The main conclusion that may be drawn from research into effective schools is that school makes a difference to learners’ achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2009). Much research on school in the 1970s focused on identifying outlier schools which were attended by the urban poor. Marzano (2000, p. 16) defines a positive outlier school as a school in which the observed average achievement is greater than its predicted average achievement. If a school’s average observed achievement is less than its average predicted achievement, it is considered a

“negative outlier.” In his outlier study of *Effective Schools for the Urban Poor* in the United States (US), Edmonds (1979) found that school makes a difference, that all learners can learn and that learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds can achieve academic success. His findings identified five correlates of effective schools which are: strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student achievement, orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, emphasis on basic skill acquisition, and frequent monitoring of student progress (refer to Edmonds, 1979 for a discussion of correlates).

Edmonds’s study (1979) opened up new avenues which researchers explored to refute the Coleman et al. (1966) finding that school made no difference to learning. Some of the factors investigated in different countries include school-level input variables such as school resources (Hanushek, 1986, 1989, 1997); type of school (private versus public), school size (Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder, 2004) school climate (Brookover, Beady, Flood & Schweitzer, 1977 1979); and school leadership (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

One of the most debated and controversial topics that emerged from the Coleman et al. (1966) report was whether school resources correlate with student achievement. School resources in this context are seen as including teaching and learning resources such as books, facilities such as a school library, human resource (teachers, their qualifications and years of teaching experience), type of school (public or private) and school spending and other learning outputs. Hanushek (1986, 1997), in his production functions analysis of available studies on school resources concluded that there is no correlation between resources and learner achievement.

While Hanushek (1986) concluded that school resources do not impact achievement, other researchers claim that they found correlations between school resources and achievement. Greenwald, Hedges and Lane, (1996) reviewed 60 primary research study aggregated data in Chicago and found that a broad range of resources were correlated to student outcome. Fuller and Clarke (1994) in their review of 100 Third World production functions studies since 1987 found consistent correlations between school resources and learner achievement. Cobb-Clark and Jha (2016) investigated the relationship between school budget allocation and student achievement and found budget allocation across categories matters for student achievement especially those in grade 7. Lee et al. (2005) found a positive correlation between learner achievement and school resources in Namibia and other sub-Saharan African countries when they examined cross sectional data from the second Southern Africa Consortium for

Monitoring Quality (SACMEQ II) research to identify characteristics linked to Grade 6 student literacy and mathematics achievement in 14 sub-Saharan African countries.

Some scholars investigated learner achievement in relation to private and public schools. Research on whether learners in private schools perform better than those in public schools presented contradictory findings with some researchers arguing that learners in private schools perform better than those in public schools while others did not find any difference. Studies such as those by Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1981); Neal (1997); Evans and Schwab (1995) and Dronkers and Robert (2008) concluded that learners who attend private schools, especially Catholic private schools, perform better than those in public schools. The reasons given for this conclusion include a positive school climate (Dronkers & Robert, 2008), more teaching, orderly and demanding environments (Coleman et al., 1981; Neal, 1995; Evans & Schwab, 1995); 'social capital' which is defined as a sense of community or community participation (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987 cited by Peterson & Viarengo, 2009); and social status associated with private education (Grimes, 1994). Social status associated with private schools here connotes the perceptions that people have about private schools as effective schools.

Other researchers found that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances achieve better success in private Catholic schools than in public schools. Often, achievement in private schools is attributed to the selection criteria where private schools select the best learners for their schools. Coleman et al. (1981) found that selection criteria that targeted superior students in private schools did not explain the achievement of learners in those schools. According to them, learner success particularly in Catholic private schools is explained by the orderly school environments and community involvement. Some researchers found private schools producing better results for children from disadvantaged circumstances. In this regard, Hill, Forster and Gendler (1990) found that 82 percent of minority and socially disadvantaged students who enter Catholic schools with grades below the level of performance graduate from high school. Similarly, Neal (1997) examined the effects of Catholic schools on the achievement of learners from minority groups in the US and suggested that those who attend urban Catholic secondary schools attain a 26 percent increase in their chances of graduating from high school.

In Namibia, the effects of Roman Catholic Church schools can be traced back to the arrival of the Dutch missionaries from Europe and during the colonial era where it made significant stride in providing education to the African population. In the northern rural areas of Namibia

in particular, there is a perception that children from socially disadvantaged and rural settings who attend Catholic Schools achieved academically than those in public school (Mwinga, 2011). As indicated earlier, I was one of the children from socially disadvantaged and rural families who benefitted from the Roman Catholic schools during my early years of schooling. To date, Catholic Church schools have a reputation of high performance compared to government schools, with some of the top performing schools in Grade 12 each year such as St. Boniface in Kavango Region; St. Paul's College in Windhoek and Canisianum Secondary School in Ombalantu belonging to the Catholic Church (EMIS, 2012). Such performance is attributed to strong leadership and good school administration (Mwinga, 2011).

The opposing view is that there are no differences in learner performance between private and public schools. Researchers such as Neal (1997) and Sanders (1997) found insignificant effects on graduation rates of students from rural areas who attended Catholic private schools in the United States. In another study, Lubienski and Lubienski (2006) used a multi regression model and NAEP data to assess the effects of private schools, including Catholic schools on the mathematics achievement of primary school students in grades 4 and 8 and found that grade 4 students in private Catholic schools score was a .50 standard deviation below the grade 4 learners in similar public schools and .20 lower for those in the 8th grade.

Another controversy surrounds the question whether the size of a school impacts learner achievement. School size as used here refers to the number of learner population attending a specific school. Research literature on school size postulates that schools with a smaller population yield higher graduation rates, fewer dropouts, improved attendance and a better school climate (Lee & Smith, 2000; Cotton, 1996; Howley, 2001; Barnett, Glass, Snowden, and Stringer, 2002) compared to schools with a high learner population. In particular, Lee and Smith (2000) investigated how school size impacts student achievement and found that students in schools with fewer than 400 students achieved better on standardised tests and their teachers portrayed a positive attitude about taking responsibility for student learning. Their study explored how the size of elementary inner city schools in the US influenced the performance of teachers and learners. These findings are similar to an earlier conclusion where Lee and Smith (1993) established that schools with a smaller population of learners who are considered low-achieving produced high achievement while Howley (2001) found that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds performed better in smaller schools but those from middle class families tend to perform better in larger schools. Lindahl (2005)

in a study in Sweden reported that some small groups from low socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from small-size classrooms. Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005) claim that while learner achievement depends on the nature of lessons, the level and type of education, there is no ideal class size although the fewer the number of learners in a class the higher their academic achievement.

The opposite has been portrayed by some of the research literature where studies did not find any relationship between school size and learners' achievement. Lindsay (1984) analysed a large dataset of approximately 14 000 high school students based on 4 standardised tests that focused on vocabulary, reading, inductive reasoning and mathematics skills in the US and found no meaningful correlation between school size and learner achievement. In recent studies, Demir (2009) in Turkey, and Tanner and West (2011) in the US did not find correlation between school size and learner academic achievement either.

Another strand of research focused on teachers. Like previous research, research literature on the effects of teachers on learner academic achievement has been inconsistent (Wei, Clifton & Roberts, 2012). Wei et al. (2012) estimated the impact of physical resources and teachers' emphasis on academic excellence in Canada and found that both resources and teachers do not have a significant influence on student performance. Similarly, Musau and Abere (2015) investigated the performance of students in mathematics, science and technology in Kenya and did not find any significant difference between the teachers' qualification and student performance in those subjects at form four level. Conversely, some researchers claim that teacher qualification affects learner achievement. For example, Rivkin et al. (2005) found that the number of years of professional experiences of teachers does influence students' mathematic achievement. Similarly, Demir (2009) found the level of education that teachers possess, duration of teaching service, and participation in in-service training as having significant effects of learners' academic achievement.

In general, research on school as a variable accounting for learners' achievement is contentious. Jansen (1995) and Mace-Matluck (1987) criticised the effective school research for the list of correlates arguing that they assume the 'one-size-fits-all' remedy for all low-performing schools. Similarly, Arnold (2000) took issue with the one-size-fits-all solution for not accounting for the differences between rural and urban or between rural schools themselves. In addition, studies into effective schools were primarily conducted in poor urban

schools but the one-size-fits-all remedy is assumed to apply to all schools. As Ryan (1997) argues, the use of uniform variables in different school settings to promote effective schools neglects the internal dynamics of each school which vary depending on the group of learners served. Similarly, McLaughlin (1998) states that the one-size fits all solution is not able to improve school performance, rather, there is a need to consider the impact of site or place.

Pertinent to the “effective schools” explanation is the methodology used. The studies primarily employ a quantitative methodology, based on the production functions model such as correlational and regression which require analysis of statistical data. Marzano (2000) argues that correlation studies downplay the within-school differences between individual students while Scheerens and Creemers (1989) question the causal models which were used to determine the correlates of effective schools. They argue that using such models makes it difficult to demonstrate the relationship between expectations and achievement. Evans and Schwab (1995) used regression models to determine variations in learner achievement between private and public schools which Goldberger and Cain (1982) criticised as not allowing proper control for prior achievement and unobserved selection mechanisms which then results in biased estimations in some private schools.

Additionally, Purkey and Smith (1983) criticised the methodology used in school effectiveness research for using small samples which lacks representation. Others such as Good and Brophy (1986) argue that conclusions drawn on the effect of school are based on the assumption that all learners are advantaged in terms of exposure to good teachers, textbooks and curriculum assignments but do not account for differences in how schools operate in terms of effective teaching and access to resources. As is the case with biological research, the school explanation does not account for learner difference in achievement. In this connection, Mace-Matluck (1986) probed why outlier studies have not been used to analyse achievement data for different subsets of learners within given schools such as those that are achieving and those not achieving. Furthermore, the use of quantitative methods implies that learners are homogenous so universal remedies could be applied to influence their achievement. Such methodology assumes a single objective reality exists which can be measured. Hence, researchers found it fit to employ quantitative methods in order to legitimise their claims.

Overall, the social context explanations highlighted here, whether focused on family or school, positions learners as determined by their social environments and are thus socially

deterministic. Social determinism is the view that learners' achievement as a social phenomenon is controlled by social factors. This position has been contested by among others Uttal (1996, 1997) who criticised such explanations as deficient as they position learners as determined by their family or school circumstances and assume that they do not have agency to take charge of their lives. Similarly, Moletsane (2012) affirms that social context explanations rarely take cognisance of the dynamic interactions of the people or the role they play in shaping their own lives. So the social context explanations do not acknowledge the agentic powers that individuals have to shape their social contexts to their own advantage. In addition, research literature on social capital, socioeconomic status and even schools does not acknowledge the existence of difference in achievement between learners despite their family circumstances. This makes this research limited in scope. The next section discusses the link between learner achievement to social disadvantage and rurality.

3.5 Social context explanations for social disadvantage, rurality and achievement

In this section, I turn to another growing body of the research literature which focuses on learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts. Research evidence show that children from disadvantaged and rural circumstances underachieve in comparison to those from wealthier families and that social disadvantage and rurality influence learning. In this section, I examine the concept of disadvantage and how it has changed over the years. I begin with how disadvantage as a phenomenon has been conceptualized over the years and its influence on people's thinking and understanding in relation to learner academic achievement. Next, I highlight the nature of disadvantage and its link to rurality and learner academic achievement. I conclude by showing these conceptions are limited by the use of a deficiency model to explain achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged settings.

3.5.1 Conceptualizing disadvantage

The concept of disadvantage is not easy to define because of its many wide interpretations. As a result, the concepts of disadvantage, poverty and socioeconomic status are linked in the sense that low socioeconomic status often explains poverty and social disadvantage. According to Mechanic and Tanner (2007), due to the complexity of the concept, research literature on disadvantage focuses on poverty, deprivation, social exclusion, class and specified difficulties

as a way of explaining disadvantage. In this section, I confine my discussion to the concept of poverty and its relation to conceptualisations of social disadvantage and rurality which are the concerns for this section. The last part of the section highlights how research has used the concepts of social disadvantage and rurality to explain learner achievement and its subsequent limitations.

In the 1920s, disadvantage was described in terms of poverty. The term poverty is derived from the Latin word “pauper which refers to a lack of possession, particularly money” (Pirrie & Hockings, 2012, p. 9). So poverty was explained in terms of lack of income and other resources (Townsend, 2006), a lack of materials which essentially reflected the socioeconomic conditions in which people lived. This definition of poverty today is limited in that it does not describe how poverty differs from inequality but treats the two concepts the same. For example, in Australia, poverty is measured by low income (Kellaghan, 2001; Saunders, Naidoo & Griffiths, 2007) while the US measures it by student eligibility to Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS) (Wool, Fermanich & Reichardt, 2015). This measure is used as a substitute for low income or those who are living in poverty and/or ‘at risk’ (Wool, Fermanich and Reichardt, 2015). Being at risk means there is a chance that a learner will not achieve in school (Kaufman, Bradbury & Owings, 1992). According to Wool et al. (2015), Free and Reduced-Price Meals is not only used as a measure for classifying students who come from low income families but also to group together families experiencing many other challenges. In other words, it serves as a classificatory system for those considered to be experiencing disadvantage. In Namibia and as indicated earlier, poverty is generally taken to mean an inability for an individual or family to provide for its basic needs (food, shelter, water, energy) due to a lack of or low income (Namibia Statistics Agency [NSA], 2012). In this case, poverty is manifested in living below the poverty line of N\$377.96 (NSA, 2012). Children from these families are considered as being at risk, meaning there is a chance that an at risk learner will not achieve in school (Kaufman, Bradbury & Owings, 1992).

In the 1960s, the concept disadvantage was used to denote groups of people rather than structures or socioeconomic circumstances (Crow, 1966), as well as those who experienced hardships because of low income (Saunders et al., 2007). Since people were defined in relation to their income, the concept of disadvantage was then associated with the “poor, uninsured, homeless, elderly and frail; and those suffering from a range of chronic diseases, or those belonging to special populations [certain ethnic groups considered to be in need of support],

such as Native Americans and low-income veterans” (Mechanic & Tanner, 2007, p. 37). In other words, the concept of disadvantage was used to define groups of people who were considered different from the dominant groups in society because of their low socioeconomic status.

In the 1970s, disadvantage was still viewed as “poverty” but the definition was extended to include minority racial and ethnic groups, people who were living in poverty, those living in a single parent family, those with a mother with a low level of education, and having a home language that differs from the dominant language used in schools (Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989). However due to the work of the Civil Rights Movement at that time, which worked to address issues of poverty in both the US and Europe, there was a shift in how disadvantage was conceptualised. Poverty was described as the inability of a family to cater for basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, furniture and equipment; and essential services such as utilities - water, sanitation, transport and so on (Townsend, 2006). What this means is that people began to see disadvantage in terms of income poverty or the absence of material resources at home necessary to meet family basic needs due to low or absence of income (Saunders et al., 2007). However, this idea suggests that human basic needs are primarily physical and neglects the fact that people are social and emotional beings who perform social roles in society (Saunders et al., 2007).

According to McLoyd (1998), income poverty affects the quality of the child’s home environment as well as aspects of the child’s mental ability such as verbal, scholastic and socioemotional functioning. This conception of disadvantage as income poverty assumes whatever challenges a child experiences is determined by the economic situation at home. For example, a child’s experiences of hunger, malnutrition and ill-health or the effects of circumstances in their surroundings such as crime, gangsters and drug problems which are associated with being excluded from societal activities (Kellaghan, 2001). This definition of disadvantage as income poverty has economic connotations, perceiving those who do not have the economic means or income necessary to lead acceptable ways of lives as being disadvantaged.

Some researchers argue that using income alone as a measure of disadvantage is insufficient because low income does not necessarily establish disadvantage or poverty but can be used as a measure at a particular point in time (Saunders et al., 2007). Similarly, Saunders (2006)

argues that by focusing on income alone, research on poverty or disadvantage has become delinked from the realities experienced by those living in poverty. Sen (2000); Saunders (2006, 2008) and Saunders & Wong (2011) contend that income measures have also failed to account for many other factors or circumstances which contribute to the poor quality of life such as poor health, low self-esteem and lack of political freedoms. In particular, Sen (2000, p. 3) stresses that although income influences human lives greatly, what matters is really “impoverished lives” and not “depleted wallets”. In other words, what concerns people the most is not necessarily that they do not have money but their wellbeing. This implies that there is a need to enrich the concept of income poverty to better understand disadvantage and how it affects learner achievement.

Due to the inadequacies of the descriptors for income poverty to serve as explanation for disadvantage, a number of terms were added to the conception of disadvantage such as deprivation (Townsend, 1979), capability approach (Sen, 2000) and social exclusion (Saunders et al., 2007). What this means is that the concept of disadvantage has never been static and while concepts of deprivation, capability approach and social exclusion are relevant to our understanding of disadvantage, I will proceed to a discussion of concepts of educational disadvantage, social disadvantage and rurality which are the subject of the next section.

3.5.2 Social disadvantage, rurality and achievement

This section focuses on the concept of social disadvantage and how it intersects with rurality and achievement. In order to understand the concepts of social disadvantage and rurality and their application to learner achievement, I start the section by highlighting the definition of educational disadvantage. I then describe social disadvantage and rurality showing how research has presented the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts. I end with a review of the research on social disadvantage, rurality and learner achievement.

Educational disadvantage has also been conceptualized in broad and non-specific terms calling the phenomenon complex and influenced by various factors such as economic, social and education (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1992 cited by Kellaghan, 2001, p. 3). In this context, children are considered educationally disadvantaged if they experience discontinuity in terms of the competencies and dispositions which they learn

at home and those required at school for them to succeed (Kellaghan, 2001). Lack of coherence is portrayed in the literature as a reason why learners do not achieve academic success.

Research on educational disadvantage reports that socioeconomic status effects learners' achievement. In their analysis of the US Department of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Lee and Burkam (2002) found the average scores of children in the highest socioeconomic status to be 60% above those of children from the lowest socioeconomic background. Similarly, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) in their review of the literature on the impact of neighbourhood poverty on achievement found that neighbourhood poverty had a negative influence on achievement and school readiness in contrast to the children from high socioeconomic status families. In the United Kingdom (UK), Cooper and Steward (2013) claim that children from the lower class are likely to leave school at an early age and are less likely to proceed to higher education due to poverty. Likewise, Guerin (2014) found that lower class children do not proceed to higher education because they are poorly prepared for formal schooling and their poor results affect their career prospects. He further argues that when children's career prospects are shattered, they become increasingly more disadvantaged and eventually reproduce the cycle of deprivation when they become adults (Guerin, 2014). The Sutton Trust (2008) established that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are most likely to leave school at the age of 16 and thus miss out on education, employment or training compared to children from middle class families while Hernandez (2011) claimed that students from low socioeconomic status have school attendance problems which in turn affects their academic achievement. In this sense, the effect of poverty has negative consequences for the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged circumstances.

Social disadvantage and poverty are linked. Social disadvantage is defined as a combination of poverty or low income, deprivation (missing out) and social exclusion (being left out) (Saunders et al., 2007; Saunders & Wong, 2012). McLachlan, Gilfillan and Gordon (2013) provide examples of social disadvantage as including factors such as individual experiences, family circumstances, the support children receive, the type of communities where they live, life events and their social and economic environments that put children at a disadvantage to achieve academically. For Cassen and Kingdon (2007), learners who are socially disadvantaged experience a combination of factors such as poverty, poor sanitation, poor nutrition and health, poor housing and social class which negatively affect their education.

While all other factors that are associated with social disadvantage are said to influence children's lives, research has identified poverty as the main indicator of social disadvantage (Dearing, McCartney & Taylor, 2001; Kellaghan, 2001; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Levitt, 2013) as indicated earlier. In their study, Dearing et al. (2001) found an association between poverty and learner achievement while West (2007) and Levitt (2013) argue that learners who come from families that experience poverty and are thus socially disadvantaged do not succeed in school. The assumption here is that children who experience poverty are socially disadvantaged and by implication underachieving in school.

Research that focused on the impact of poverty on children's education reported that prolonged poverty has devastating effects on children's education (Coleman et al., 1966; Goodman & Gregg, 2010; Cassen & Kingdon, 2007; Hirsch, 2007; Kerr & West, 2010). For example, Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn and Smith (1998) reported that prolonged exposure to poverty is associated with learning disabilities, delay in development and a limitation on children's life chances. Cunningham and Stanovich (2001) established that children living in poverty have poor reading ability during childhood which negatively affects their future. Goodman and Gregg (2010), drawing on the British Cohort Study, found that differences in learner achievement that are a result of inequalities in life chances emerge early in life and widens the attainment gap significantly when children are in nursery or primary school and continue throughout life.

Social disadvantage has further been associated with rurality. The concept of rural is a contested one thus there is no universal definition (Khattari et al., 1997). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (FAO/UNESCO, 2005) define the term 'rural' as the opposite of 'urban' while others define the term in relation to the population density of an area (Khattari et al., 1997). In Namibia, rural settings are defined as areas outside proclaimed towns and cities while urban areas are understood to be "all proclaimed municipalities and towns" (Namibia. Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2003 / 2004, p. 7). Both social disadvantage and rurality are linked to achievement in the sense that learners who live in rural settings are said to experience poverty (or social disadvantage) which affects their achievement in school (Mayer, 1997). Education is viewed as a primary means to success in adulthood and inability of learners to succeed in school serves as an obstacle to social mobility as learners are unlikely to find well-paying jobs and improve their socioeconomic conditions (Machin, 2010).

The research literature on education in rural settings has associated low achievement with social disadvantage (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). As indicated earlier, social disadvantage has been understood as poverty or inadequate resources or low income (McLachlan et al., 2013). The debate on social disadvantage has been framed around the notion of poverty as a result research on learner achievement positions rural children as socially disadvantaged, poor and being 'at risk' of academic failure (The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1992; Schoon, 2006). Slavin and Madden (1989) define students 'at risk' as those that are in danger of not attaining academic success with an adequate level of skills. Khattri et al. (1997, p. 10) citing The National Institute on the Education of 'At-Risk Students) similarly define 'at risk' in relation to student academic failure or low achievement. Rural learners in particular are said to be at risk of dropping out of school and attaining lower marks and lower academic qualifications (Machin, 2006). This notion attributes learners' achievement to their social disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

Some researchers explain rural learners' achievement in relation to the physical location of the school they attend (Zhang, 2006; Byun, Meece & Irvin, 2012; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Stern, 1994; Arnold, Newman, Gaddy & Dean, 2005; Xu, 2009). The main contention is that schools that are located in rural settings perform poorly in comparison to their urban counterparts (Roscigno & Crowley, 2001; Makuwa, 2005). However, studies conducted to determine the differences in performance between rural and urban schools have presented conflicting results. For example, in the US, Roscigno & Crowley (2001) found that rural students attain lower academic achievement and experience a high dropout rate compared to non-rural students. Cartwright and Allen (2002) used data from the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000) to measure differences in the reading performance of rural and urban students in various provinces of Canada and concluded that there were differences in achievement between rural and urban learners with urban learners outperforming their rural colleagues. In Malaysia, Singh, Rahman and Hoon (2010) found rural learners attaining lower mean scores both with the English and the English/Bahasa Malaysia test combination. In sub-Saharan Africa, Zhang (2006) and Lee, Ross and Zuze (2005) found variations in achievement between rural and urban students which are attributable to the family background characteristics of individual students and to the physical location of schools.

By way of contrast, however, other researchers presented evidence to refute the belief that differences in academic achievement between urban and rural children emanate from the physical location of the school. For example, Cartwright and Allen (2002) found differences between the achievement of rural and urban learners in their Canadian study, but such differences could not be attributed to the physical location of schools. Similarly, Ramos, Dogue and Nieto (2012) found that the differences between rural and urban educational achievement is related to family characteristics and not necessarily to the characteristics of the schools or where the schools are located. Hopkins (2005) sounded a warning to researchers to take care when studying achievement in rural settings arguing that differences in achievement might not necessarily be attributed to school location but to family socioeconomic status.

Lee and McIntire (2000) in their analysis of the 1992 and 1996 research findings from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) based on grade eight mathematics assessments in the US concluded that the attainment of rural and non-rural students was comparable in 1992, but rural students outperformed their urban counterparts by 1996. They attributed this to schooling factors such as resources, the quality of the course offered, progressive instructions, professional training, orderly school environment and joint support and not to the location of the school. Likewise, Reeves and Bylund (2005) found that schools in rural settings attained mean annual gains in performance that are equal or better than their urban counterparts. Similar results were obtained in a recent study conducted in Nigeria where Alokun and Arijesuyo (2013) did not find any differences in the academic achievement of rural and urban students.

Yet again, examining the reviewed research literature on how social context perspectives explain learner achievement, one can see it is dominated by deficit ideologies. According to Gorski (2010), a deficit ideology is that which targets deficits or limitations without considering the root cause of the situation. He gives an example of deficit thinkers who target class inequality without studying the implications emanating from the socio-political context of economic injustices that exists in society (Gorski, 2010). In addition, learners are treated as a homogeneous group of underachievers by virtue of the socioeconomic conditions in which they find themselves without consideration for those who succeed despite their limiting circumstances. Furthermore, nowhere in the reviewed literature on social contexts is learner agency recognised as playing a role in learner achievement. Hence, neither the biological nor the social context perspective provides a theoretical lens for a more nuanced explanation for

the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances that takes cognisance of the complexities of learner achievement. In particular, research on social disadvantage and rurality is marked by controversy and thus has confirmed Hopkins's (2005) claim that research carried out in rural settings has obtained such mixed results that its findings are inconclusive. In the next section, the ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations of biological and social context explanations for learner achievement are described.

3.6 Ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations of biological and social context explanations for learner achievement

This section considers the ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations pertaining to biological and social context explanations for learner achievement. I outline the key tenets of each explanation and highlight why neither biological nor social context explanations provide a satisfactory account of the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances. I also highlight why it is necessary to look elsewhere for an explanation to fill the gap. The last part of this section provides a rationale for an alternative perspective based on Archer's social realist theory.

As indicated earlier, the biological explanation posits that factors internal to the individual account for learners' achievement. Conversely, the social context explanation suggests that learner achievement is a function of the social conditions in which learners find themselves and make meaning of their lives. Neither of these perspectives has focused on the question of difference or the role of learner agency. Although both biological and social context explanations have made immense contributions to the achievement debate, what is at issue here are the fundamental theoretical assumptions underpinning them. These pertain to the nature of reality (ontology), how we get to know or what constitutes acceptable knowledge (epistemology), and the procedures used to establish that knowledge (methodology) (Hussain, Elyas & Nasseef, 2013). Both biological and social context explanations have their roots in deficit paradigms. McGregor and Murnane (2010, p. 1) explain that a paradigm is "a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices" that make up the way we view the world. One such paradigm is positivism. Positivism regards scientific knowledge as the only reliable way to get at the truth (Watson, 2009). According to Watson (2009), positivism makes a division between facts and belief, in terms of which knowledge and facts are seen as measurable and defensible, while beliefs or subjective knowledge are not accepted as true knowledge. The

main tenets of positivism are thus that reality is objective, and that knowledge is empirical and can be accessed through our senses (Moore, 1993). Positivist principles are present everywhere in the literature reviewed, discernible in the use of scientific methods such as IQ tests, quasi experiments, and correlational and production function studies. As Dupre (1993, cited by Watson, 2009, p. 135) asserts, the extent of the influence of scientific methods on the social sciences reflects the high status of scientific research. In both biological and social context research literature on achievement, scientific methods are respected as the only way to get at the truth. This way of thinking is limiting not because it involves an appreciation of science but because it is applicable to only a part of life (Watson, 2009). Put differently, positivism embraces scientific knowledge at the expense of subjective knowledge.

Critics of positivism view it as projecting a deficit ontology, inasmuch as it undermines the power of human subjectivity. For example, Plack (2005) argues that the positivist perspective is deficient because it can account only for natural reality and not social reality. Gorski (2010) postulates that positivism associates difference with deficit. This deficit thinking is reflected in literature that offers a biological explanation for intelligence and achievement. For example, Galton (1883) in his biological explanation for intelligence distinguishes difference in terms of physical traits, gender and cognitive ability. This difference he construes as deficit, not only in individuals but also in groups found innately lacking in cognitive ability, contrasted with those who have allegedly inherited desirable intellectual traits. Similarly, social context explanations embrace deficient thinking by viewing learner achievement as a function of factors associated with their home environments, schools, disadvantage and rurality, without examining the conditions that created these social environments. For example, in Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital, lower-class children are portrayed as not achieving academic success because they are seen as lacking the cultural knowledge and skills associated with the dominant class in society. Similarly, where researchers explain learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts, they portray achievement as a result of social conditions such as poverty, lack of income and rurality. This undifferentiated explanation is seen by Gorski (2010, p. 4) as evidence of deficit thinking, a "blame the victim" mentality which writes off an entire group or class for perceived deficiencies. Such thinking is embedded in a deficit ontology that does not recognise difference in terms of those few learners who are succeeding despite their socially disadvantaged circumstances, nor does it acknowledge that learners have agency to direct the course of their lives.

As indicated in Chapter 2, limitations in biological explanations prompted the emergence of new conceptions of learner achievement which often evolved in line with changes in philosophical perspective. Cognitivists who emerged in the 1950s included scholars such as Piaget and Vygotsky, focusing on cognitive processes as important for understanding human nature and cognitive functioning. Cognitivists are interested in internal mental structures and how they work to process information. Their focus is on complex mental processes such as thinking, language, problem solving, and the formation of concepts, and how information is processed rather than on the simple cognitive ability to recall facts as measures of achievement (Snelbecker, 1983 cited by Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 50). Since cognitivists also believe in an objective reality, the conceptual frameworks in terms of what constitutes reality and the nature of knowledge and how it can be known remained constant (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). On another front were researchers – mainly from Anthropology such as Levi-Strauss (1969) – who posited that structures account for human behaviour. Levi-Strauss (1969) maintained that there is no place for human subjectivity in social theorising because structures determine human behaviour. In opposition, Watson (2009, p. 138) affirms the need to recognise subjectivity:

We can, and must, work towards acquisition of knowledge which is provisional and partial. We need to acknowledge that we know a good many things which are outside the realm of science. Ruling out other ways of knowing is both unnecessary and damaging.

In other words, there is more to human nature than what can be measured as scientific and objective knowledge. In the mid- and late 20th century, challenges to positivism from philosophers such as Popper (1972) and from the field of psychology saw the emergence of anti-positivism. This saw a split between those who followed a positivist path and those who leaned more towards interpretivism (Khun, 1970). Since then, interpretivism has taken centre stage as an alternative paradigm. The interpretivist metatheory refers to a tradition within the social sciences which draws on subjective human experiences to understand and construct meaning (Perkins, 1991; Sharma, 2010). Interpretivism is an umbrella term which includes a number of paradigms advanced by scholars such as Dilthey, Simmel and Weber (cited in Erickson, 1985, 1986). The basic tenet of interpretivism is that knowledge is constructed from individual experience (Jonassen, 1991). This implies that there exist multiple realities and that people can know the world through interpretation and understanding of their sensory

experiences (Kim, 2005; Ritchi and Lewis, 2003). This in turn means that reality and meaning do not exist in the external world but are created by the subject through interaction with the real world (Gray, 2013; Stahl, 2007). This view assumes that different actors interpret a situation differently, which affects how they interact with others. This perspective brought about a major shift in how people understood reality, especially the realisation that individual interpretations and understandings of social phenomena as experienced by the actors are essential (Perkins, 1991).

Interpretivists reject the application of scientific methods that apply the logic of cause and effect to the study of human behaviour (Erickson, 1985, 1986). They argue that human sciences are significantly different and cannot be studied in the same manner as the natural sciences (Erickson, 1985, 1986). The natural scientific method of determining causes and effects thus cannot be applied to classroom settings where teachers and learners engage in the construction of meaning (Mack, 2010). Interpretivists believe in social reality and assume that individuals are active, purposeful and capable of using their life experience to interpret and understand the social world around them. As indicated earlier, the interpretivist epistemology is allied to subjectivism. Subjectivism implies that research knowledge is socially constructed through interaction between the researcher and participants (Stahl, 2007).

Like the positivist and the cognitivist, the interpretivist is limited ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically. To start with, the notion of constructed reality implies that individuals have their own view of reality, a conception that is detrimental to the construction of any universal social reality (Sharma, 2010). Moreover, the subjectivist epistemology does not take into consideration scientific procedures in knowledge creation. Instead, there is an overemphasis on human action in both how reality and knowledge of that reality are constituted (Sharma, 2010). Unlike positivists, who grant ascendancy to structures, interpretivists over-emphasize human agency at the expense of the role of structure in human interaction. Accordingly, Goodsell (2013) observes that interpretivists do not take account of material constraints on human action and thus present individuals as masters of the universe unconstrained by external forces. On the contrary, though, the conditions in which individuals live inevitably impact on how they construct their world.

In sum, neither positivist nor interpretivist accounts of learner achievement recognise the significance of the complex interactions among structure, culture and human agency. For that

reason, this study proposes Archer's social realist theory as an alternative theoretical lens to analyse and explain how such interactions constitute reality.

3.7 The rationale for an alternative lens in research pertaining to learner achievement

The perspectives on learner achievement expounded in the previous sections have placed pre-eminence on either structure or agency and neglected the interaction between the two. Archer (1996, p. xv) affirms that positivists, cognitivists and interpretivists alike have committed what she refers to as the "fallacy of conflation" – downwards and upwards. The fallacy of conflation refers to the theoretical tendency to provide explanations at one level at the expense of other levels (Archer, 1996). In downwards conflation, structures are viewed as more powerful than individuals. The powers of individuals are seen to be the properties of structures that are the real determinants of human action (Archer, 1996).

In line with Archer's notion of downwards conflation, the research literature on learner achievement reviewed continually stresses factors either internal or external to the individual as accounting for whether learners achieve or underachieve. This conceptualization of learner achievement has undermined the power of individuals to shape the course of their lives and granted ascendancy to structures. On the other hand, neither the individual nor social context explanations acknowledge the interaction between them in the shaping of learner achievement, nor does the social context explanation recognize individual difference when the majority are succeeding or failing. By undermining the role of human agency, the positivists and cognitivists treat learners as if they are "systematically programmed robot[s]" (Archer (1996:72).

In contrast, by overemphasising human action, interpretivists have committed "upward conflation" where (learner) agency is accorded priority (Archer, 1996, 25). In this case, structures are seen as "epiphenomena" of agency (Archer, 1996, ivx). In other words, structure and culture are viewed as emanating from agency, resulting in "upward conflation of agency in structure." Archer (1996, p. ivx) states that theories that conflates structure and agency "prevent the interplay between parts and people," making it difficult for researchers to investigate the interaction between structure and agency. It is clear that the fallacy of conflation features prominently in the literature described previously.

Archer's (2004, p. 1) social realist, morphogenetic approach uses the methodology of "analytical dualism." As indicated in Chapter 1, analytical dualism involves separating structure, culture and agency temporarily to analyse their interplay while preserving the interrelationships between them (Archer, 1996). This temporary separation is possible because each factor has an independent power to exert influence, as will become clearer in the next chapter. By using Archer's theory, the researcher is able to unearth the complexities of the learner achievement phenomenon, avoiding a determinist point of view while understanding that structure, culture and agency all have a major role to play in social life and in the matter of achievement.

Although Archer's social realist theory is an ideal explanatory and analytic framework for this study, it is important to note that it was developed and experimented in European contexts that are different from those in Omusati region where this study took place. In other words, social realism is indeed Eurocentric and might not always be successfully applied to African conditions. In addition, Archer's modes of reflexives are not fixed and thus individual learners' reflexive stances might change over time. Healy (1998) finds Archer's account of structure ambiguous arguing that there is no clear explanation of how individuals and society are related to one another. For Luckett (2012), Archer's concepts are not always easy to apply as the theory operates at a high abstract level leading to the possibility that it over-determines the data. Archer's social realist theory will be explicated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ARCHER'S SOCIAL REALIST THEORY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this study that aims to analyse and explain the factors shaping learners' achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts. Archer's social realist theory is relevant to this study because it paves the way for an explanation of learner achievement which does not view learners as determined by their genes or social contexts. As Carter and New (2004) assert, critical realism is able to go beyond the level of happenings to provide explanations of the structures and mechanisms which brought them about. In other words, Archer's theory does not only allow for explanations of events but also for explanation and analysis of underlying structural and cultural mechanisms that cause such events to take place. Through the methodology of analytical dualism, social realism offers both the explanatory and analytic tools to unravel complex underlying mechanisms that enable or constrain a social phenomenon such as the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

I begin the chapter by focusing on critical realism in order to explore the philosophical roots of social realist theory. Understanding the roots of social realism helps us to understand its ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings. Secondly, I focus on Archer's social realist theory by conceptualising and delineating its key concepts and ideas. Thirdly, I explore the morphogenesis/morphostasis cycle and the methodology of analytical dualism. The focus here is on how the morphogenetic cycle works to bring about a social formation. Fourth, I compare and contrast Archer's social realist theory with those of Bourdieu and Giddens in terms of how they explain the social formation and the role of structure and agency in social theorising. The last part of the chapter explores some of the limitations of Archer's theory and the implications of the theory for this study.

4.2 Critical realism

Critical realism (CR) is a philosophy that was developed by Roy Bhaskar. The main tenet of critical realism is that there is a reality that it is possible to know (Bhaskar, 1978). Critical

realism differs from earlier theories, such as that advanced by positivists who assert that reality is only accessible through scientific methods. What differentiates critical realism from other theories is that it suggests ‘depth ontology’ (Bhaskar, 2008). Depth ontology can be explained as the ability of the theory to uncover underlying mechanisms or factors that are responsible for causing events but are not necessarily readily accessible to our awareness. Generative mechanisms are the “ways of acting of things,” the causal properties of objects or structures (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 3). In other words they are the underlying processes that are not visible but that nevertheless cause events or phenomena to occur. For example, the nature of the relationship between learners and their teachers can serve as an underlying mechanism if it influences learners’ lack of motivation to learn which in the end causes them to underachieve. In this example, people do not always apprehend what is causing learners to underachieve because the teacher-learner relationship is not always obvious or easily understood as causing a lack of motivation. Generative mechanisms suggest that reality is stratified and does not only exist at one level.

Bhaskar (2008) argues that reality is stratified into three domains, the empirical, the actual and the real. He explains the domain of the empirical as made up of human experiences such as objects and events which are knowable through our senses. The actual entails events that we can experience but which occur whether we are aware of them or not; and the real refers to anything that exists whether it is natural or social. The latter is also associated with structures and the powers of objects or generative mechanisms which people are not always able to apprehend through their senses but which are nevertheless real. Figure 1 shows the three domains of reality.

Figure 1: CR domains of reality

	Empirical	Actual	Real
Experience	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Mechanism	✓	✓	✓

Source: Bhaskar (2008, p. 2)

Another essential feature of critical realism is the idea of transcendental reasoning. Bhaskar (2008) postulates that people get to understand underlying causal mechanisms through

transcendental arguments, or claims pertaining to the conditions that are necessary for a social world to be known. According to Bhaskar (2008), a transcendental definition of science does not depend on having an agreed upon or universal definition but on whether the universally recognised scientific activity is clear or not. In other words, there is no need to have a consensus on what constitutes reality: what matters is that a scientific exercise which is universally recognised is clear.

In his critical realist theory, Bhaskar (2008) further distinguishes two dimensions of reality, transitive and intransitive. He defines the transitive dimension as pertaining to the accumulated knowledge that individuals have and which they can use to create new knowledge. The transitive dimension includes systems of ideas, concepts and resources that can be used to analyse phenomenon and create knowledge. The intransitive dimension encompasses any phenomenon that can be investigated for knowledge creation (Bhaskar, 2008).

Another distinguishing feature of critical realism is the principle of emergence (Archer, 2003, p. 2). Archer (1996) defines this as the principle according to which new properties are formed or can emerge on the basis of existing ones. She argues that such properties emerge from existing phenomena in time and are relatively autonomous, with independent causal influences. Examples of structural emergent properties are institutional patterns, social organizations and social classes, which are dependent on material resources, both physical and human. Rule-to-rule relations are an example of cultural emergent properties (Archer, 1995). According to Archer (1995, 2003), emergent properties, whether structural, cultural or agential, are characterised by “internal and necessary relations” that relate to resource distribution; their causal powers thus only exist in relation to material resources (Archer, 2000, p. 263). Internal and necessary relations refer to those relations that are internal to the system and which the system cannot do without because they are necessary for it to function. Examples include relations that exist within a system between those who own property and those who do not, or those who have power and those who are powerless (which often relates to resource distribution in society).

The principle of emergence serves as Archer’s ontological point of departure, making it possible to study the interplay between structure and agency (Archer, 1995, 1996). In other words, the principle of emergence makes it possible for new properties (whether structural, cultural or agential) to come into existence on the basis of those properties that are already in

existence. According to Archer (2000), people and structures each have their own independent powers which cannot be reduced to one another. An example of emergence is when the interaction of people within a social structure leads to the emergence of a new social practice with its own properties and powers that cannot be reduced to one another. In other words, the emergent social practice is irreducible to the sum of its parts (Archer, 1995). The concept of emergence thus implies a stratified social world.

Bhaskar (2008) also clarifies the differences between CR and ‘scientific realism’ (also known as naïve realism or positivism). As indicated earlier, positivism claims the existence of a reality independent of human knowledge of it yet knowable through observation. Interpretivists, on the other hand, maintain that our knowledge of the world is influenced by where and how it is constructed (Sayer, 2000). Hence we cannot explain how social phenomena are created nor identify their material effects before we read, understand, and interpret what they mean (Carter & New, 2004). For critical realists, however, if the social world was a mere construction of human knowledge as expounded by interpretivists, then our knowledge would have to be regarded as infallible (Sayer, 2000).

Critical Realism discriminates ontology (what reality is) from epistemology (how we know) and serves as “under-labourer” for the social sciences (Bhaskar, 2008, p. xxxi), clearing the conceptual ground for researchers by providing an ontological and epistemological basis for developing knowledge about the world. Archer (1995, p. 136) affirms that Bhaskar’s “ontological realism” (the idea that there is a real world that exists independent of our knowledge of it) has been used to frame her social realist theory. She argues that her morphogenetic approach (discussed later in this chapter) serves as a “methodological complement” to critical realism (Archer, 2010, p. 274). Social realist theory thus supplements the methodology of critical realism and similarly functions as an underpinning philosophy by offering the tools necessary to critically examine social practices, theories and phenomena.

Critical realism rejects determinism and proposes a combination of naturalist and interpretivist perspectives in order to understand social life. Naturalism refers to the notion that everything should be understood in terms of their physical entities (Sayer, 2000), while, as we have seen, the interpretivist is based on the understanding that reality is subjectively created and its meaning cannot be measured or counted (Sayer, 2000). Critical realism offers an alternative philosophical and methodological lens which helps to bridge the gap between naturalism and

interpretivism, positivism and relativism, while taking cognisance in social investigations of both natural and social reality (Bhaskar, 2008). The critical realist approach brings to light a combination of natural and social realities about a specified phenomenon which other theories are not able to do and it thus serves as a useful perspective for investigating the achievement question which is the object of this study.

4.3 Archer's social realist theory

Archer's social realist theory can be used to clarify how change occurs or does not occur as a result of human interaction. Following Bhaskar, Archer (2004) advocates a stratified view of reality as consisting of the natural, the practical, and the social. The natural layer of reality is a function of human interaction with the natural world. In terms of this theory, natural reality denotes what people can experience and observe through the senses, such as through interview data (sight and hearing). The practical order of reality entails human practical knowledge gained through interaction between the sense of self and artefacts. It involves structures that can be said to be long-lasting and with the potential to activate events facilitated by human agency. The sense of self means the ways in which human beings think about themselves in relation to what they consider most important. This sense of self facilitates the processes through which people make meaning and a sense of who they are and what they want to become. According to Archer (2004), this knowledge is broad and can be derived from a set of ideas that represents the social order. The social order represents human social experiences gained through interaction.

Archer's social realist theory provides a lens through which we can view the social world by analysing the interplay between structure, culture and agency. It is a theory about social reality and social change which is grounded on the premise that structure, culture and agency are ontologically separate but interdependent levels of reality, with independent causal properties and powers, and operating over different time levels (Archer, 2003). That means that both structure and agency have independent influences or powers which if exercised by people can bring about change to structure or agency, or retain the status quo. Hence, the social realist theory offers an explanation of social life and how the subject exercises its powers to navigate its way in the social world.

4.3.1 Structure, culture and agency

Central to Archer's theory of social realism are the roles of structure, culture and agency in the process of social formation. She describes structure as an objective reality that is affected by human agency. For Archer (1995), structure is objective, external to the individual, long-lasting and occupied by real people. She relates structure to material goods and how they are distributed in society, and to human relations insofar as they pertain to social institutions, social practices and to the roles and social positions that the actors occupy in society. Archer (1995) portrays structure as a human product which is shaped by people through interaction over time. It has to be understood that structure exists before its current occupants but has been shaped by the activities of those who lived before. That is why she speaks about structure as "activity dependent" (Archer, 1995, p. 145). The current occupants did not choose the context in which they are born. As Archer puts it: "[W]e are born into and can only live embedded in contexts [social and ideational] which are not of our own making" (Archer, 1996, p. xxv). For example, some people are born into families with meagre material resources or low socioeconomic status, but they did not choose to be born poor. It stands to reason that the contexts into which current occupants are born (whether structural or ideational) have been shaped for them by those who lived before them (e.g. their parents, grandparents and great grandparents), and the current occupants will shape these contexts for future generations. The future generations will then inherit their parents' materials or ideational conditions at the time of their birth, including the social positions which they occupy in society. Hence, structures are pre-existing features of the world in which human beings find themselves.

As mentioned earlier, Archer (2003, p. 2) further explains structures as having their own independent "causal powers which are mediated through agency" and which cannot be reduced to that of the people. She defines causal powers as those powers that make it possible for people to reflect on their social circumstances and act towards them either individually or collectively (Archer, 2003). In other words, causal powers or causal mechanisms are processes within the social world that make people act to shape their circumstances. For example, learners as agents can use causal powers, mediated by agency, to navigate structural (school and home) and ideational enablement and constraint to transform their academic trajectories. Conversely, their teachers and parents, by virtue of the roles they play and the positions they hold in the social structure, can exercise their own causal powers to enable or constrain the learners' ability to exercise agency.

Archer (2000) sees structure as influencing human action through shaping the conditions in which humans find themselves. She said structures possess powers of “constraint and enablement” (Archer, 2007, p. 9), making it possible for humans to act or difficult for them to act.) The independent powers that people have through the positions they occupy in the social structure enable them to make choices and decisions to bring change or stability to the social structure (Archer, 2000). Accordingly, human action depends on “vested interests” (Archer, 2000), interests that are built into the social positions that people occupy. Vested interests are based on material resource distribution, and the action that they authorise is aimed either at preserving or changing the status quo. Although structures and human beings have independent properties and powers, these are irreducibly intertwined (Archer, 2000).

Archer (1995, 2000) understands culture as referring to ideas, theories, doctrines, beliefs, and language knowledge that are stored in a cultural system, a cultural system being a “propositional register of society” which is accessible to social agents when they want to pursue their interests (Archer, 1996, p. xviii). I will expand on this when I highlight Archer’s notions of structural and cultural morphogenesis/morphostasis. As is the case with structure, culture is explained as a product of the activities of past agents (Archer, 1995, 1996). Put in another way, ideational environments have been shaped for current occupants by those who lived before, while the current occupants shape the cultural environment for future generations. According to Archer (1995), culture functions to provide direction for agentic action by presenting agents with ideas or views that make it possible or not possible for them to change their current circumstances.

Another essential component of Archer’s theory is agency. Archer (1995, 2000, 2003) explains agency as the capacity of individuals or groups to act. Agents possess properties and powers that are separate from those pertaining to cultural systems and social structures (Archer, 2003).

These properties and powers include “thinking, deliberating, believing, intending and loving, which are applicable to people, but never to social structures or cultural systems” (Archer, 2003, p. 2). The interaction of agents with structure and culture in different contexts gives rise to Agential Emergent Properties (AEPs). AEPs are often associated with the challenges experienced by agents in the three orders of reality (natural, social and practical) with which people interact (Archer, 1996).

Archer's (2003) concept of agency is related to identity formation. She views identity formation as a function of the interaction between structure, culture and agency. For Archer (2003), identity formation develops across three layers – the self, personal identity and social identity. Archer (2004, p. 255) suggests that the self or the continuous sense of being one and the same person emerges early in life and is the source of the “reflexive self-consciousness” or the ability to reflect on oneself which lasts throughout one's life. In other words, the self emerges before we are able to take part in the daily social interaction in which people engage.

Archer (2003, p. 256) views the continuous sense of self as a “reflexive project” through which individuals identify and practice what concerns them most, such as beliefs, attitudes and making evaluations of their circumstances. The continuous sense of self is natural and derives from human interaction with the natural world, a part of human survival. Archer (2007, p. 7) defines a project as “any course of action intentionally engaged upon by a human being.” The sense of self facilitates the ability of people to pursue their reflexive projects which are a reflection of what concerns them most (Archer, 2003). In other words, the sense of self facilitates the processes through which agents make meaning of their lives and forge a sense of who they are and what they want to become. It is through the sense of self that agents get to know themselves over time, and form a personal identity (Archer, 2003, 2004).

Archer (2004) suggests that personal identity is formed at maturity as a result of interaction with the natural, social and practical orders of reality. Personal identity is a unique characteristic of individual agents that only emerges when the self has navigated or explored the three orders of reality (natural, social and practical). According to Archer (2004), individuals with personal identities are able to identify their own concerns and understand how to accommodate the concerns of others. Personal identity is wider in scope than the sense of self because it regulates the relationship between the subject and the orders of reality, although it is dependent on the sense of self (Archer, 2000). Personal identity entails intentional accounts of emotions which result from the relationship between what the self is concerned about most and various features of the natural, practical and social orders of reality (Archer, 2003, 2004). Because the orders of reality are varied, human emotions come from individual priorities and actions achieved through what Archer calls “internal conversation,” “self-talk” or “internal dialogue” (Archer, 2003, p. 7). As people engage with structure and culture, they use their emergent agential powers to acquire emotional and reasoning skills, competence, resilience,

etc., that are essential to the development of a personal identity (Archer, 2003). Personal identity is the basis on which social identity is formed.

Archer (2003, 2004) explains social identity as interpersonal, requiring both structure and agents to exercise their independent properties and powers. For Archer (2004), social identity emerges at the interface of structure and agency and it is only assumed through social interaction in society. The emergence of social identity is co-dependent with the emergence of personal identity on the prior existence of the continuous sense of self (Archer, 2000). As Archer (1995, p. 175) puts it, the independent powers that are granted at this stage are those of “structural and cultural emergent properties (SEPs and CEPs)” as well as “agential emergent properties (PEPs)” or those pertaining to people. By emergent properties Archer means unexpected behaviour that emerges as a result of human interaction. Archer (1995, 1996) differentiates between structural (SEP), cultural (CEP) and agential emergent properties (PEPs). For her, what differentiates an emergent property from a combination of factors is that its components consist of relations that are “necessary and external” or “internal and logically necessary” for a system to operate (Archer, 1995, p. 179). These relations are essential because they account for the dynamics that take place within a system. Archer (1995, p. 179) explains that structural emergent properties are “external and necessary relations,” meaning that their existence depends on material resources (both human and physical) and their distribution. Examples of structural emergent properties are systems, “roles” and “institutions” [also class, status and power], which are dependent on how material resources are distributed (Archer, 1995, p. 179).

Similarly, Archer (1995) argues that cultural emergent properties (CEPs) entail how theories, ideas, beliefs, values and norms are distributed within a cultural system. She argues that such ideologies or theories could be contained in a particular dialogue and exhibit “necessary logical relations,” referring to relations that are within the system, logically necessary for the system to function and inseparable because they are dependent on each other. Cultural emergent properties thus operate in a similar manner to structural emergent properties, but in relation to necessary logical relations as opposed to necessary material relations (Archer, 1995). In other words, their existence depends on how people holding different or similar ideas relate to one another within a structural system.

Agential emergent properties (PEPs) are personal powers or capacity that emerges from the practical order of reality and which determine one's decision to act in one way and not the other. The implication is that agential emergent powers involve the ability to reflect on what one is most concerned about, and make choices to act in a certain manner within a given sociocultural context. According to Archer (2003), such causal powers are exercised in relation to the attainment of personal projects which are related to the objective circumstances in which people find themselves.

For Archer, a social identity denotes "a role" in which actors engage and which they essentially "personify" as a sign of accomplishment (Archer, 2004, p. 153). As a result, Archer (2003) affirms that it is only an actor who can acquire a social identity. While social identity depends on the emergence of a personal identity, Archer (2003) views them as existing in a dialectical relationship. This implies that identity is positioned differently in different social situations, and is a function of the interaction between structures, culture and agency. It is this dynamic, stratified self that is influential in bringing about the transformation or reproduction of society.

Archer (2004, p. 153) claims that as adult human beings "we are three in one," namely, "persons," "agents" and "actors." Persons are biologically defined, for example as men and women, and do not choose to be born into their contexts, whether material or ideational. As Archer (1995, p. 201) puts it, persons are located in the social structure "involuntarily and emerge from, but are not reducible to the material conditions that shaped them". Archer (1995) describes a person as having causal powers (the power to make things happen), to change or reproduce the social conditions in which they find themselves. Through "internal conversation", persons are able to respond to their social conditions.

Archer (2004) divides agents into two categories, primary and corporate agents. She defines primary agents as "collectivities sharing the same life-chances" (Archer, 2000, p. 261). In other words, primary agents are viewed as a group (not individuals) who share common life experiences in the social structure. Archer (2000) argues that everyone begins as primary agent because being an agent only requires one to occupy a place in society's distribution of resources, while being a collectivity means belonging to a group of people who share a common social status or life experience. For example, a collectivity might be a group of people who are underprivileged or poor. Hence, agency in this context is always used to denote the plural as primary agents engage in collective action. Archer (2000) describes primary agents

as not developing systematic collective objectives. For that reason, she argues that they are often unable to act or articulate their interests, and are thus “people to whom things happen” (Archer, 2003, p. 343).

According to Archer (2004), corporate agents differ from primary agents in that they have the power to organize themselves to take collective action. Corporate agents are aware of what they want and can articulate their interests to themselves and others. They organize themselves and act to pursue shared interests and in the process reshape society or retain its structural and cultural features. Through interaction with other agents, they plan and act strategically to bring about outcomes that represent their interests.

Archer (2004) argues that social actors exist in the singular and have a personal identity. She affirms that it is only the “social actors who meet the strict criteria for possessing a unique identity” and “thus exist in the singular” (Archer, 2004, p. 261). Social actors are individuals who have projects which they fight to achieve in the process of social interaction. They do so by carefully considering the objective contexts, and they work through structural constraints and enablements which impact on their project to achieve what they want (Archer, 2004). Social actors are recognizable for the roles they play in society. As role occupants, they have learned to “personify” their roles (Archer, 2004, p. 261).

Central to Archer’s explanation of agency is the idea of reflexivity. Archer (2007, p. 4) defines reflexivity as “the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their social contexts and vice versa”. According to Archer (2007), reflexivity is crucial for serving a mediatory role between structural and cultural powers and thus helps to clarify social outcomes. Stressing this point, Archer (2007, p. 5) suggested that “the subjective powers of reflexivity mediate the role that objective structural and cultural powers play in influencing social action and are thus indispensable to explaining social outcomes”. For Archer (2000), human beings are essentially reflexive beings capable of deliberating on their own circumstances.

As adumbrated above, reflexivity is achieved through what is referred to as “internal conversation” or “internal dialogue” (Archer, 2007, p. 4). Archer (2003, p. 103) defines internal dialogue as the practice through which we “make up our minds by questioning ourselves, clarifying our beliefs and inclinations, diagnosing our situations, deliberating about

our concerns and defining our own projects”. While reflexivity mediates between structure and agency, internal conversation serves as a medium through which agents respond to social circumstances (Archer, 2003). For Archer (2003), internal conversation is a causal power that can transform structure, culture and agency. Through internal conversation people remain active throughout their lives, continually reflecting on their circumstances and acting accordingly to improve their lives (Archer, 2003).

Archer (2007, p. 7) asserts that agents have “ultimate concerns” which they address by creating “projects” that are related to the three orders of reality. For her, an ultimate concern has to do with internal goods or “what [agents] care about most” (Archer, 2007, p. 7). She argues that agents are able to exercise their causal powers through human projects. It is these projects that agents engage in, prioritising, modifying, and outlining their “ultimate concerns” that give them a personal identity (Archer, 2003, p. 41). The process of prioritising involves engaging with oneself through internal conversation (Archer, 2003). What is significant here is that each and every agent endeavours to define a *modus vivendi* (Archer, 2003, p. 149), “a set of practices” that favours what matters most to the agent and takes cognisance of what cannot be avoided. The process of monitoring and prioritising one’s concerns requires that agents undertake to engage in the following steps – Discernment, Deliberation, and Dedication (Archer, 2003, p. 41).

According to Archer (2012), the discernment phase is the stage at which agents consider a number of concerns they have initially identified. She maintains that at this stage, agents generally have more than one concern. Late modernity presents “more problematic situations” that require “agential reflexivity” as a response (Archer, 2010, p. 5), making it necessary for agents to continually engage in the reflexive exercise to be able to make the right choices.

For Archer (2012), the deliberation phase involves prioritising concerns. This is the stage at which agents arrange their concerns in order of importance and accommodate various other concerns. Young people find it particularly difficult to prioritize their concerns because there is a lot going on in their lives such as falling in love, deliberating on their future careers, and so on. She gives the example of a variety of job opportunities available in cities that require young people to move away from their families, which in turn requires them to use their reflexive abilities to make the right decisions for themselves. She also refers to exposure to internet as another occasion for increased reflexivity.

Archer (2012) identifies dedication as the next phase. At this stage the subjects begin to consolidate and commit themselves to their concerns. It is the phase in which subjects decide what they want to pursue out of the many concerns they might have prioritised in the deliberation phase. Making a commitment depends on their objective circumstances, which prompt them to take what they consider to be appropriate courses of action (Archer, 2012).

Archer (2003) contends that agents can only succeed in dedicating themselves to their priorities if they use their personal agentic powers to shape their own lives. They do so by actively using their emergent properties and powers to mediate their own social conditioning (Archer, 2003). Doing so requires constant subjective and reflexive evaluation of their objective circumstances, taking into consideration “objective opportunity costs” that their circumstances assign to their varying courses of action in relation to their ultimate concerns (Archer, 2003, 141).

Archer (2003) argues that as agents reflexively deliberate on their main concerns, they adopt particular stances towards their objective circumstances. She identified four modes of metareflexives, each of which reflects a different position towards societal constraints and enablements (Archer, 2003). How agents are positioned in the various meta-reflexives depends on their reflexive deliberation and actions. “Communicative reflexives” is a mode of mental deliberation whose exercise depends upon turning to similar others (Archer, 2003, p. 209). In other words, agents who fall in this category depend on those who are similar to them such as family members, friends and relatives to make decisions. As Archer (2003, p. 167) puts it, communicative reflexives “share problems” and “discuss decisions” with others about “what to do, how to act” and “who to be.” She says that they contribute to social stability by “evading” constraints and enablement through endorsing their natal contexts (Archer, 2003, p. 202). Communicative reflexives do not engage in social competition because they are not ambitious and rely on family and friends for what they want. They hold on to strong family or community ties and thus endorse “contextual continuity”, although they do not give up opportunities to improve their social circumstances (Archer, 2003, p. 211). In general, Archer says, agents who fall in this stance are pleased with their situations.

“Autonomous reflexives” are different from communicative reflexives in that they do not necessarily hold on to family ties (Archer, 2003). Archer (2003) describes them as independent

thinkers who consider their internal conversation to be sufficient for them not to have to rely on external connections with other people. They take personal responsibility for their lives and do not rely on family and friends to complete their internal thoughts. They invest in “performative achievement” and act purposefully to move up the ladder (Archer, 2003, p. 235). Accordingly, it does not matter for autonomous reflexives which context enables them to achieve their ultimate aims (Archer, 2003). Archer describes them as self-disciplined, hardworking and with the ability to exercise self-restraint. They are also ready to move away from their natal contexts to make a life for themselves elsewhere (Archer, 2003). According to Archer (2003), autonomous reflexives who took part in her projects had sought to leave home at the age of 20 or earlier. This shows their readiness to move out of their natal contexts in favour of “contextual discontinuity” (Archer, 2003, p. 212). Their internal conversation focuses on society, “about the means, the costs and benefits” in the quest to satisfy their ultimate desires (Archer, 2003, p. 12).

According to Archer (2003), “Meta-reflexives” are those constantly striving for selftransformation as a means to complete their ultimate projects. According to Archer (2003), this reflexive stance is common to many people and involves the ability to be reflexive about one’s own acts of reflexivity by asking questions and answering them. Archer (2003, p. 274) maintains that people in this group resist social control and are willing to pay the price for subversion or going astray. Meta-reflexives are idealistic, contextually unsettled and always on the move, seeking for new opportunities, new life and a new self, because their internal dialogue is preoccupied with the relationship between their ideals and who they want to become. Their internal conversation is directed towards critiquing the context and to themselves as they search for an environment in which they can realise their ideals.

Archer (2003, p. 298) also identified a category she calls “fractured reflexives”. She argues that “fractured reflexives” are people who are unable to take purposeful action because their capacity to hold sufficient internal conversation is restricted to primary agency. They never move beyond the position into which they are born. Archer (2003) cautions researchers that these reflexives are not fixed and the description she has provided is just to show how reflexivity might develop.

4.3.2 The morphogenesis/morphostasis process

In this section, I explore how Archer's morphogenesis/morphostasis framework is used to explain social formation. I begin by defining what morphogenesis means so as to explain how the concept is used in Archer's theory. I then describe the process of morphogenesis, structural, cultural and agential, and how structure, culture and agency all serve as conduits for social formation. Thereafter, I compare Archer's theory on social formation with Bourdieu's and Giddens's theories, highlighting similarities and differences. Finally, I highlight the implications of Archer's theory for this research.

Archer (2000, p. 263) asserts that investigating how a phenomenon emerges enables the research to achieve "depth ontology", explicated earlier. Archer (1995, 1996, 2000) draws on Lockwood (1964) to advance the morphogenetic/morphostatic distinction in order to explain how social change or stability occurs as a result of human action. Archer (1982, p. 458) defines morphogenesis as a "process, referring to the complex interchanges that produce change in a system's given form, structure or state (morphostasis being the reverse)", which has an "end product, structural elaboration". In other words, morphogenesis is a process used to explain social change or stability (morphostasis) in a structural or cultural system. Archer (2000) points out that social realism as a meta-theory serves as an underlying philosophy that explains how agents navigate their social world to cause change (morphogenesis) to structure, culture or agency, or to reproduce the status quo (morphostasis).

Archer (1995, p. 66) has recourse to "analytical dualism" to explain how change or stability occurs. She defines analytical dualism as a methodology that can be used to separate structure, culture and agency on a temporary basis in order to analyse their interplay. Analytical dualism thus implies that there are analytical distinctions between structure and agency which makes it possible to examine their interplay. Such distinctions, according to Archer (2000), are made possible by two propositions: a) that structure inevitably "pre-dates" actions that lead to its transformation or stability; and b) that "structural elaboration post-dates the action sequences" that gave rise to it (Archer, 1995, p. 15). Archer (1995) argues that for us to understand the morphogenesis process, we need to understand that structure is not a creation of current occupants but of the actions of those who lived before. For Archer (1995, p. 138), the notion of pre-existence denotes "discontinuity", which makes it possible for researchers to examine a phenomenon in terms of what happened "before, during and after", without denying that

human action is a continuous activity. Archer (1995, p. 138) also introduces the concept of “temporality”, which refers to the time that makes it possible for the morphogenetic process to have a starting point, indicating that society is relatively stable. The implication is that researchers need to engage in both historical and context analysis in order to understand social formation.

In the morphogenetic process, action is not only regarded as continuous but crucial to the continuity and elaboration of structure, culture and agency, although subsequent interaction is different from previous interaction because it is influenced by prior human actions. As Archer (1995) points out, the morphogenesis/morphostasis framework provides a methodology for conceptualising and analysing the interplay between structure, culture and agency over time. The morphogenetic approach enables researchers to understand how people shape society and are shaped by it through examining the interplay of the structural, cultural and agential causal powers. This will be clarified shortly.

In order to analyse the interplay between structure, culture and agency, Archer (1995, p. 12) contends that society is made up of ‘parts’ and ‘people’ whose causal powers cannot be reduced one another. What Archer considers to be the ‘parts’ are the social structures and cultural systems, while ‘people’ are the agents, the people who interact with structural and cultural systems. For Archer (1995, 2000), the parts and the people alike have causal powers that cannot be reduced to one another.

Archer (1995) uses structural and cultural emergent properties to explain social formations based on the power relations within institutions. Such configurations explain the daily experiences and events resulting from differences in power relations which shape the context that people encounter at institutional level. According to Archer (1995, p. 170), structural relations at the institutional level make up complex systems which she refers to as “systems integration”. Systems integration incorporates compatibilities or incompatibilities between structural components or parts of a social system. For example, when an environment in which complementary relations exist between structural and cultural emergent properties at a structural level, “high systems integration” is observed, and that creates an environment that is conducive to social reproduction. Conversely, in circumstances where structural and cultural emergent properties are in conflict, tension arises that paves way for social transformation. As Archer

(1995) puts it, the presence of systemic incompatibility generates conflict and consequently social change, while compatibility results in stability and social reproduction.

Within a cultural system, cultural relations at institutional level make up “social integration” (Archer, 1995, p. 188). Social integration has to do with how people interrelate within a system. For example, when conflicting relations exist between people within a cultural system, change is likely to occur. Similarly, the existence of harmonious relations creates an environment which is favourable for social reproduction. Archer (1995) affirms that consistent or opposing ideas can be “necessary”, that is, they can be internally related to such an extent that they cannot operate separately. For example, some institutional roles such as those of teachers and learners are necessarily related to one another and cannot be separated as they are mutually necessary for the existence of an institution. Other relations are contingent and externally related or based on context and cannot always be predicted. Archer (1995) argues that both systems and social integration relations are significant in helping the researcher analyse the makeup of different institutions. They are also important for understanding how those occupying different institutional positions and roles are shaped differently (or similarly) to defend and promote various vested interests (Archer, 1995).

Archer (1995, 1996, 2000, 2003) describes the morphogenetic process as starting with the conditioning process in which agents are shaped by structural and cultural emergent properties. Conditioning can be defined as a process whereby a particular situation is shaped for its occupants in a certain way which presents them with constraints or enablement. As indicated earlier, Archer understands structural constraints and enablement as the “causal powers of structural emergent properties [SEPs] such as distributions, roles, organizations, or institutions, and cultural emergent properties [CEPs] such as propositions, theories or doctrines” (Archer, 2003, p. 5). While enablement and constraints are important for human action in Archer’s theory, she argues that these are not the same in all circumstances, and they exist objectively and independent of the knowledge of the actors (Archer, 1995). Archer (2003, p. 2) admits that her theory does not provide a clear answer to how structure influences agency, and that her notion of ‘conditioning’ is “vague” and “imprecise” to serve as an underlying mechanism. Examples of underlying mechanisms are historical events that result from social interaction and which account for certain phenomena. In sum, Archer’s morphogenesis implies that people are prone to act on the basis of structural and cultural circumstances which they confront and which their actions either modify or sustain.

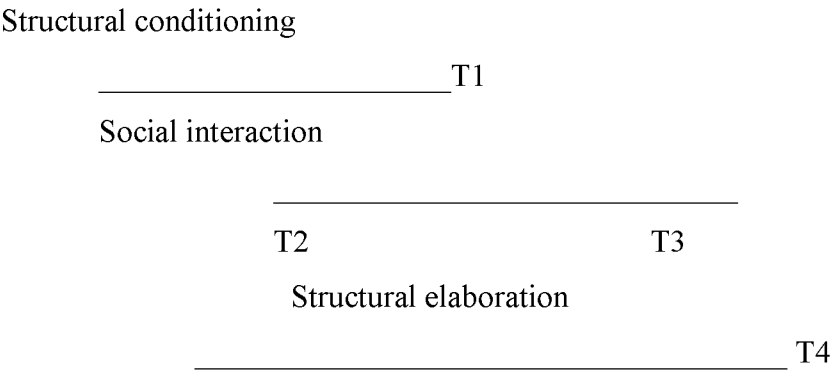
Archer (1995, 1996, 2003) suggests that the morphogenetic process occurs in three cycles – structural conditioning (T1), social interaction (T2-T3) and structural elaboration (T4). As indicated earlier, conditioning refers to the influence that structure exerts on agents by way of constraints and enablement, and which causes them to act to bring about change or not. The starting point of the morphogenetic cycle is thus T1 or structural conditioning, in which structure is conditioned by history (Archer, 1995). ('T' here simply denotes time.) At T1, the focus is on identifying the social structure in which agents have been involuntarily placed, and providing an analytical history of how the structure emerged. Examining the first cycle of structural morphogenesis/morphostasis requires consideration of the consequences of previous human action in order to understand how things came to be the way they are in the structural realm (Archer, 1995, 1996).

The second cycle, 'T2-T3', focuses on how agents interact with structural conditions. In other words, in this cycle, the focus is on how agents (both individually and in groups) respond to constraining and enabling structural contexts (Archer, 1995). Through people's emergent properties (PEPs, i.e. the capacity that they have to act), people act respond to structural enablement and constraints. The ability of agents to respond to enablement and constraints is based on the interests that are vested in the positions that they occupy in the social structure, in terms of, for instance, access to material resources, and the bargaining power at their disposal (Archer, 1995, 1996). Structural conditioning serves as a source of reasons for action by shaping the situations in which agents find themselves, but agents do not always get all the benefits from any situation they confront without incurring losses (Archer, 1995, 1996). The actions they take thus depend on the choices they make from a variety of available options. The choices that agents make and their interaction in the second cycle of the morphogenetic process determines whether change (transformation) occurs or the status quo is maintained. Action in this process is not only continuous but crucial to the continuity and elaboration of structure, although subsequent interaction is always different from previous interaction because it is conditioned by prior actions. In sum, what happens in the second cycle determines whether structural elaboration or transformation occurs or not.

In the third cycle, namely, 'T4', structural elaboration or reproduction takes place. As Archer (1995) affirms, whether structural elaboration or reproduction occurs depends on the actions that agents take. If agential interactions cause morphogenesis, structural elaboration (T4)

ensues, and the current T4 becomes T1 of the next morphogenetic cycle. The morphogenesis of structure is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The morphogenesis of structure (Archer, 1995, p. 157)



As is the case with structural morphogenesis, Archer (1996) argues that there are conditions which prompt agents to seek change or stability at the level of cultural systems. She refers to this process as “socio-cultural integration” (Archer, 1996, p. xviii). In Archer’s theory, sociocultural integration is a process in which actors seek to bring about change or stability within the cultural system. Their motivation derives from the positions they hold in relation to available theories or beliefs. The cultural system does not itself determine the extent of sociocultural integration: actors actively make and re-make culture as they pursue their interests by using their emergent powers through consensus or confrontation (Archer, 1996). Hence, conditioning at the cultural systems level entails socio-cultural interaction in which relations between people determine whether change or reproduction will occur. When groups are internally related (when there are necessary logical relations) within a cultural system, the existence of harmonious relations promotes stability. This is because relations within the system signal correspondence, which in turn promotes stability. Conversely, when actors have different ideas that are conflictual, an environment for social change is created. As is the case with structure, the morphogenesis of culture follows similar cycles, namely, cultural conditioning, socio-cultural interaction, and cultural elaboration, as illustrated in Figure 3:

Figure 3: The morphogenetic cycle of culture (Archer, 1995, p. 157)

Cultural conditioning

T1

Socio-cultural interaction

T2

T3

Cultural elaboration

T4

The first cycle of cultural morphogenesis starts with understanding the present time, which has been conditioned by the past interactions of primary agents. The second cycle (T2-T3) is concerned with how individuals or groups of agents respond to cultural constraints and enablement, depending on their positions in the social structure and the power they possess to exert temporal and/or directional influences (Archer, 1996). This implies that people always act on the basis of structural and cultural situations which their actions essentially attempt to modify or sustain. As in the case of the structural morphogenetic cycle, agents make choices from options (in this case ideational) which are not of their own creation but derived from the achievements of past agents. Through agential interaction within ideational circumstances over time, they alter the system, leading to cultural elaboration (T4) or reinforcement of the status quo. Since the morphogenetic cycle is continuous, T4 of today becomes T1 of the next cycle of cultural morphogenetic action.

Archer (1995, 1996) explains four interactions between the cultural and structural systems that are linked to the reasons that propel actors to act in different ways. She argues that these relations are the conditioning effects of the social formation on groups, and arise from sociocultural or socio-structural actions. They comprise necessary complementarities, necessary incompatibilities, contingent incompatibilities and contingent complementarities. Necessary complementarities refer to harmonious relations between social institutions which creates an environment of mutual support. In other words, when internal relations or linkages between institutions complement each other, institutions become mutually supportive. According to Archer (1995), when an environment of mutual support exists between a structural and cultural system, a situation of protection is created at a structural level which is

favourable for social stability. Conversely, necessary incompatibilities are the opposite and entail the existence of internal ideational inconsistencies between institutions that are internally and necessarily related to one another. This results from conflicting theories that embody internally inconsistent ideas at cultural systems level. If there are inconsistencies of ideas between social systems that are internally and necessarily related, it is unlikely that mutually supportive social formations will occur. When this situation exists, groups work to harmonise by correcting the major differences that exist between them. If their strategy does not work, such relations might lead to social transformation. The presence of contingent complementarity relations, or relations in which groups experience a large degree of freedom, results in stable relationships that provide opportunities for actors to promote their interests. This is because such an environment is stable and free from contradictions. Yet such favourable circumstances that work to the advantage of actors are not long-lasting, because if any other group – especially groups at the margins – discovers that they can benefit from external interference, then what has been protected could be lost. Conversely, when group relations are marked by external influences (contingent incompatibilities), conflict is likely to occur, making groups work to eliminate such external influences in the process of protecting their interests. Such external influences highlight the differences between groups within the system and cause internal contradictions which might lead to a crisis and eventually social change.

In the morphogenesis of agency, Archer (2003, p. 4) states that action is made possible by constraints and enablement. They are not themselves sufficient to cause action, but they regulate if and how agents pursue their interests. This process requires that agents have acquired a personal identity that is rooted in identification of concerns which make it possible for them to pursue personal projects on which they constantly reflect. It is through these personal projects that agents are able to engage with constraints and enablement at both structural and cultural levels. In a nutshell, structural and cultural influences only exert their powers of constraint and enablement when (a) there is a human project; (b) Structural Emergent Properties and Cultural Emergent Properties and powers have consistent or inconsistent relations with agential projects; and (c) agents actually respond to structural or cultural constraints and enablement.

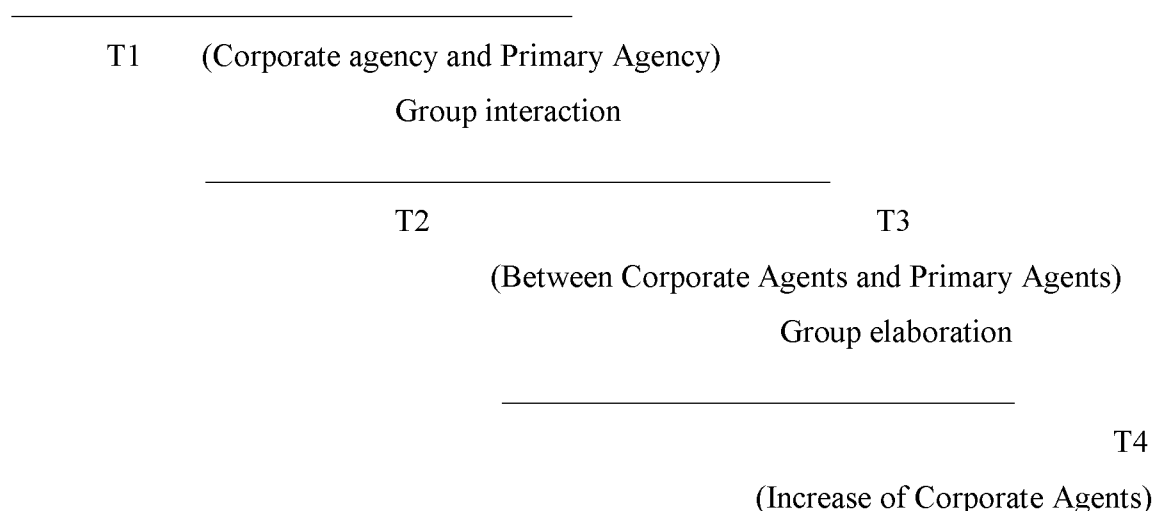
The morphogenetic cycle of agency follows the same pattern as structural and cultural morphogenesis, explicated above. This is made possible by the notion that corporate agents

are 'active' rather than 'passive' beings with vested interests (Archer, 1995, p. 260). As is the case with the morphogenesis of structure and culture, the morphogenesis of agency occurs when there is conflict between corporate agents which result from differences in vested interests at a socio-cultural level. Archer (1995, 1996, 2004) asserts that in order to pursue their interests, corporate agents then mobilise primary agents to join their promotive or common interest group. In the process some primary agents join the promotive interest group, making it possible for the group of corporate agents to grow. The expansion of corporate agents causes a reduction of primary agents. The process in which corporate agents expand is a result of inconsistency in group relations at structural and cultural levels. Such inconsistency at a cultural level happens due to new external ideas that have the potential to cause disagreements amongst actors and work to speed up the process of regrouping. Corporate agents create an environment that is conducive for reshaping the context of primary agents and modifying the conditions in which they find themselves. This situation creates a problem for corporate agents because they no longer work together, and results in interplay between primary and corporate agents. Hence, the morphogenesis of agency occurs.

According to Archer (2004) the morphogenetic process of agency follows the following steps. At T1, primary agents (as a collectivity sharing the same life-chances) are presented with structural emergent properties and cultural emergent properties in their natal contexts. When this happens, some primary agents transform into self-conscious interest groups who are able to articulate their interests and work collectively to achieve them. At T2-T3, social interaction between primary and corporate agents occurs, resulting in a reduction of primary agents and an increase in corporate agents who are an emergent layer. Another layer of social actors who fill particular roles emerges, and through a dialectical relationship with structure they change their personal identity. Through social and cultural interaction, they develop their personal emergent properties (PEPs), leading to the transformation of structure /culture and agency or what Archer (2004, 268) referred to as the "double morphogenesis". Figure 4 outlines the morphogenesis of corporate agency.

Figure 4: The morphogenesis of corporate agency (Archer, 2004, p. 268)

Social-cultural conditioning of groups



In general, whether change or stability of agency occurs depends on the nature of the relationships that exist between vested interest groups and how they interact within the structure. If the relationships are marked by a harmonious environment, reproduction is likely to occur. Conversely, an environment that is marked by conflictual relationships promotes high group integration and the likelihood for change to occur. Change is brought about as some primary agents become conscious of their interests and join the corporate group, causing the elaboration of corporate agency and reduction in primary agency.

4.4 Comparing Archer's theory to Bourdieu's theory of practice and Giddens's structuration theory

In this section, a comparison is made between Bourdieu, Giddens and Archer in terms of how they conceptualise structure, agency and subject formation. This is aimed at explaining the rationale for choosing the social realist theory as the best way of understanding the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts. I first outline the key tenets of Bourdieu's and Giddens's theories before comparing them to Archer's theory. I conclude the chapter by highlighting how Archer's theory is used as both explanatory and analytic tool for this study.

The debate on structure and agency has been a bone of contention for centuries, with some researchers placing emphasis on structure while others stress agency as central to social action. Among the recent theorists to have dominated the debate are Bourdieu (Theory of Practice) and Giddens (Structuration Theory), both of whom have attempted to present a general theory of structure and human agency. In this section, I compare Bourdieu's, Giddens's and Archer's conceptualisations of structure, agency and social formation by highlighting similarities and differences between them. Before comparing them, I first examine the key ideas leading to Bourdieu's and Giddens's theorising. Secondly, I highlight prominent ideas in the theory of Bourdieu and Giddens, indicating how they differ from Archer's theory. Lastly, I spell out the implications of Archer's social realist theory for this study.

The structure-agency debate emanated as a critique of functionalism and structuralism, which have their roots in positivism and thus posit an objective reality that can be measured through scientific methods. Functionalists such as Auguste Comte saw the natural sciences, especially biology, as providing guidelines for conceptualising structure and how social systems function (Giddens, 1984). The structuralist Levi-Strauss (1966) presents individuals as constrained by structure to such an extent that they are unable to affect change to society. Levi-Strauss (1969, p. 12) in the *Raw and Cooked* expresses this sentiment:

I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact ... it would perhaps be better to go still further and, disregarding the thinking subject completely, proceed as if the thinking process were taking place in the myths, in their reflection upon themselves and their interrelation.

Here Levi-Strauss demonstrates the power of structure by claiming that what happens in the human mind is the effect of structure. The implication is that human beings do not have the capacity to make decisions and choices to determine their own destinies but rather operate at the mercy of structure. In *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss (1966, p. 247) affirms that the aim of the human sciences is "not to constitute, but to dissolve man". In other words, structuralism does not recognise the role of human subjectivity or agency in social life and attempts to eliminate the subject all together from this debate. The work of Bourdieu and Giddens can be seen as a response to structuralism and an attempt to restore the role of the subject in social theory, by bridging the gap between objectivism and subjectivism, or structure and agency.

Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) theorises the subject as internalising external structure or objective reality. These external structures constitute the “habitus.” The habitus is a “system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures ...” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). In other words, the habitus is a mental structure, a system of dispositions that consists of individual experiences, perceptions and values acquired during childhood. It is presented as a structuring structure because it is responsible for generating human practices through history. As Bourdieu (1984, p. 82) puts it, the habitus is the system of dispositions “that produces practices in accordance with the schemes engendered by history.” That means that it is a product of the history of individual practices which encompasses all past experiences. Past experience and dispositions are acquired through the process of socialisation (a process by which people acquire norms, values, attitudes, feelings and codes of conduct, primarily from their families) and dispositions such as those stemming from the social class to which they belong, which regulate human thought and action. Bourdieu (1984) argues that the habitus avails opportunities and sets limits to the social actors that is, the habitus guides human practices.

Bourdieu’s (1977, p. 72) explanation of the habitus is developed around the concepts of “social field” and “capital”. Bourdieu (1990) conceptualizes the social fields as objective structures which imply a set of human relations, while the habitus serves as a mental structure that regulates such relations. Bourdieu (1990) considers the habitus as a mediator between structure and practice or action. Accordingly, the habitus is a result of social structure (i.e. social class) and the internalised rules pertaining to this, while at the same time it structures the social practices and reproduces social fields (Bourdieu, 1990). Hence, the habitus is both objective (mental structure) and subjective (action), while the field is considered an objective structure.

Bourdieu (1984) understands society as consisting of various specialised social fields, examples of which include sport, art, science, education, career and religion. In Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 97), Bourdieu defined the social fields as “a network, or configuration of objective relations between positions”. Put in another way, social fields are social spaces where routinized action takes place as people compete for scarce resources, and in the process take social positions based on what resources are at their disposal that influence how power relations are structured. Accordingly, Bourdieu maintains that agents are positioned in social fields in ways that differentiate their positions from one another in terms of economic and cultural capital. As he puts it, “all agents are located in this space in such a way that the closer

they are to one another in terms of those two dimensions [economic and cultural capital], the more they have in common; and the more they are remote from one another, the less they have in common” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 6). The implication of this explanation of the habitus is that people who are positioned in the same field have the same habitus. Bourdieu (1998) understands position taking as determined by the extent of resources that social agents have and agents may accordingly be positioned in various fields such as sport, music or politics. In these social fields, agents and institutions are integrated and interact according to the rules pertaining to specific fields (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu argues that in the social fields, the habitus serves as “the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations”, while setting limits to human behaviour and practices in these fields (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72).

The social field’s idea represents the more structural aspect of Bourdieu’s theory. He explains the participation of actors by citing the “rules of the game” (1998, p. 76). It is a “feel for the game” that gives a sense of direction to those who are participating in it (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66). According to Bourdieu (1984, 1998), the rules that govern the interaction of agents in the social fields are not formalised but rather undefined and internalised by agents.

Bourdieu (1984) spoke of agents as being competitors for positions in social fields, but they compete within the confines of the rules of the game in pursuit of the same objectives. Bourdieu (1975, p. 19) describes the social field as a “locus of struggles”, struggles between agents which have to do with occupation of social positions based on the resources they have. According to Bourdieu (1975), the reasons for the struggles pertain to maximizing capital and attaining symbolic profit such as prestige. Bourdieu (1984) affirms that the social fields have boundaries which are not pre-defined but are marked in terms of where their effects end. In other words, where the effects of one field ends, another field commences.

As indicated earlier, linked to the social fields is the concept of “capital” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu (1977) uses the concept of capital to refer to different types of resources that produce power to guide relations within the social fields. There are four types of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic – which are necessary for actors to enter specific social fields (Bourdieu, 1984). The kinds of capital are related to one another in the sense that they are convertible, for example, economic capital is related to a person’s wealth or income and can be converted into money; cultural capital is transferred by family and

education and can be converted into qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) explains social capital as related to possession of social relations or social networks of family, group or class membership that allow agents access to material and immaterial resources such as information. Bourdieu (1986) views symbolic capital as related to honour and recognition, whose existence depends on other capitals such as economic, social and cultural, which can be converted to symbolic capital depending on the rules of the social fields. This means that for agents to acquire symbolic capital such as recognition or high reputation, they need to abide by the rules of the social fields.

Bourdieu (1990) uses the concept of culture to refer to internalized habits, styles and skills which essentially make up the habitus. It is through routinized interaction that culture is created, acquired and embodied by individuals in society (Bourdieu, 1990). Interaction is regulated by the habitus, which serves to give direction to social life. Bourdieu construes agents as confined by the habitus, only acting when they encounter a “crisis” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131), a situation that prompts them to act in a certain way.

Conversely, Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984, 1991) expounds a theory of “structuration”. His structuration theory is built on the principle of the “duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). The “duality of structure” refers to the idea that “the constitution of agents and structure are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25), two sides of the same coin. The implication is that agency cannot be separated from structure and structure cannot be divorced from agency. According to Giddens (1979, p. 15), “structure is both the medium and the outcome of interactions”. This means that while structure mediates human practices, it is a product of such practices.

Giddens (1984, 1991) understands structure as rules and resources: “structure refers not only to rules implicated in the production and reproduction of social systems but also to resources” (Giddens, 1984, p. 23). In *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens (1984, p. 377) affirms that “structures are rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems”. He argues that such structures exist as “memory traces” in the minds of agents, manifested only when “instantiated in action” (p. 25) by knowledgeable actors. Structure does not exist outside the knowledge that actors have about the daily activities in which they engage, but in the form of “memory traces” it orientates or gives direction to the practices of human agents (Giddens, 1984).

In Giddens's (1984) conceptualisation, practices are an enactment of the rules governing social life. Although he does not offer an example of the rules to which he refers, he defines them as "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life" (Giddens 1984, p. 21). In this sense, actors draw upon the rules and resources either consciously or unconsciously to produce practices, in the process reproducing the circumstances that enable them to act. As Giddens (1984, p. 26) puts it, "in reproducing structural properties ... agents also reproduce the conditions that make such action possible". He defines resources as "the media whereby transformative capacity is employed as power in the routine course of social interaction" (Giddens, 1979, p. 92); that is, resources can be anything from which power can be derived and used in social interaction. Giddens (1979, 100) classifies resources into two types, "authoritative" and "allocative". He explains authoritative resources as human resources that command authority over people, while allocative resources denote material resources such as objects.

Another essential component of Giddens's structuration theory is agency. Giddens (1984, p. 9) defines agency as "not the intentions people have in doing things" but their "capability of doing those things in the first place, which is why agency implies power". In other words, his definition stresses the notion of agency as the exercise of power. According to Giddens (1984, p. 9), the concept of power is used in this context to refer to the idea that the individual could have "acted differently" at any given point in time.

Giddens (1984, p. 3), presents a "stratified model" of human agency, a "stratification model of the acting self". He presents actors as reflexive beings who monitor their own actions and their contexts. Such monitoring takes place on two levels of consciousness, namely, "discursive" and "practical" consciousness (Giddens, 1984, p. 4). Giddens (1984, p. 7) defines discursive consciousness as the capacity of agents to give reasons and rationale for their actions, whereas practical consciousness has to do with the "stock of unarticulated knowledge" that agents use indirectly to acquaint themselves with situations and make sense of other people's actions. He stresses that there are no clear demarcations between discursive and practical consciousness.

Social actors are "knowledgeable" beings, that is, people who know what they are doing and how to do it and who use their knowledge of structure to shape social practices (Giddens, 1984,

p. 11). He argues that it is the “reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices” (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). In other words, human agents use the knowledge they have to shape and reshape social practices. Such knowledge is “practical’ and “directly accessible to the consciousness of actors”, as well as “in-built” in their competency to “go on” with social life (Giddens, 1984, p. 4). This implies that actors are at least partially aware and able to reflect on the motives for their practices. Being able to “go on” with social life involves a certain “ontological security” that comes about when there is a “sense of trust” (Giddens, 1991). If actors do not enjoy this sense of trust and the resultant ontological security, they suffer from anxiety in their social relations (Giddens, 1991).

Giddens (1991) conceptualizes agents as reflexive beings, conscious of what they do and why they do it. For him reflexivity should not be understood as simply a matter of being self-aware but as “the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life” (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). Such reflexivity is grounded in the “continuous monitoring of action” or what people do in “time and space” (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). He sees actors as able to constantly reflect on the motives of their actions (or wants) and those of others, while daily activities are seen as intentional. Reflexivity in this context is seen as constituting self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Hence, in Giddens’s theory, identity is formed at the intersection between structure and agency in which the agent is seen as an active participant. Self-reflexivity is central to identity formation and “practical consciousness” helps to monitor every day actions and enable agents to “go on” with social life in diverse contexts (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Giddens understands practical consciousness as the capacity of agents to follow the rules of convention although they are not able to articulate them. Apart from monitoring their actions, a person’s identity is constituted in narratives and not in one’s position in the social structure. This is why Giddens (1991) affirms that it is the ability of the agent to keep narratives going that sustains their identities.

Bourdieu and Giddens differ in terms of how they conceptualise structure. Bourdieu’s theory refers to two structures, namely the field (social structure) and the habitus (cognitive structure). The main assumption in Bourdieu’s theory is that social structures and cognitive structures are in correspondence. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 13) put it, “there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures.” For Archer (1995), the habitus is long lasting due to the continuous existence of structured positions in the fields which agents occupy, and which through the process of socialization reproduces the social

circumstances from which the habitus has its origin. In other words, the habitus is kept alive by the positioning of agents in the social fields while it serves to limit their actions. The implication of this conceptualisation of the habitus is that agents are presented as constrained by the habitus. In this regard, Bourdieu said the habitus consists of “transposable” characters or a variety of unstated and practical skills which have been shifted between certain contexts which enable agents to “cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 122). The implication is that actors in Bourdieu’s theory are passive and operate at the mercy of the habitus. Archer (2012, p. 7) questions the concept of the embodied habitus by asking whether the “feel for the game” that Bourdieu said guides action can really work in the modern world. She poses this question in relation to whether modern global games such as “external investment” or “foreign exchange dealings” can be played by way of embodied skills. For her, these games need conscious or intentional approaches rather than embodied skills to be played at all (Archer, 2012).

As opposed to Bourdieu, Giddens and Archer understand structure as a product of the unintended consequences of human practices. For Giddens, agency shapes structure through practices and not the other way round. Structure does not shape agency but is rather shaped and reshaped by actions through social practices. Hence he does not speak of a reciprocal relationship between structure and agency, as Bourdieu does. On the other hand, Archer sees both structure and agency as active: both have emergent powers to influence each other (Archer, 1995). She argues that structure has independent powers that exert influence on agents by constraining or enabling their actions in relation to their projects. Similarly, agency has emergent powers that can alter structure or retain the status quo through human interaction which leads to agential elaboration. This conceptualisation of structure differs from that of Giddens, who views structures as rules and resources that are shaped and reshaped by human agents through practices, and which have a virtual existence. The implication is that structure in Giddens’ conceptualisation is inactive. Giddens (1984, p. 181) maintains that “individuals are the only moving objects in social relations.” In other words, agency shapes structure and not the other way around.

Another difference between Bourdieu and Giddens and Archer pertains to the idea of reflexivity. Bourdieu (1984) speaks of a “pre-reflexive habitus” and the unconscious participation of agents in practices as a group, in the fields guided by the habitus. In other words, Bourdieu’s subjects act on the basis of internalised structures and unconscious social

knowledge. For him, reflexivity is exercised in “times of crisis”, such as situations where there is a mismatch between the habitus and the objective context or when an individual finds himself in a new situation for example due to war (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131). This implies that agents in Bourdieu’s theory operate on an unconscious level, operating only on the basis of the dispositions they have embodied as part of their habitus, unless they face a challenging situation.

Conversely, Giddens (1991) presents agents as active or at least always partially aware of what they do and why they do it, and thus able to act against the structures that made them. In other words, he depicts his actors as people who are able to explain their own actions and those of others, which implies consciousness of what they do. Giddens (1984) speaks of the “transformative power” of actors (p.15), or their ability to act upon structure; their “knowledgeability” (p. 11) or the stock of knowledge they have to take action; their “rationalization” (p. 26) or capacity to assess circumstances and set priorities, and their reflexivity or awareness as social actors with the capacity to monitor the actions of others and to know how “to go on” (p. 26). This conceptualization of social actors in Giddens’s theory brings to light their inner motives and their capacity to predict each other’s actions, developing mutual trust and the “ontological security” essential for identity formation (Giddens, 1984, p. 23). Hence according to Giddens (1984), identity is formed at the intersection between structure and agency where the agent is seen as an active participant. Additionally, self-reflexivity is central to identity formation, while “practical consciousness” helps to monitor every day actions and enable agents to ‘go on’ (Giddens, 1984, p. 23).

The problem with Giddens’s theory is that he does not separate structure and agency. Adams (2006) postulates that Giddens has employed a weak notion of structure which has failed to account for constraints on human agency. Archer (1995) criticises both Bourdieu and Giddens for conflating structure and agency. She argues that by not separating structure and agency, Bourdieu’s and Giddens’s theories do not allow for the analysis of the interplay between structure and agency (Archer, 1995; 2000). Archer (1995) further argues that Giddens (1984) in particular views structure and agency as mutually constitutive, which results in a central conflation (Archer, 1995). Structure and agency are held to be inseparable (Giddens, 1984), which makes it impossible for the researcher to analyse their interface (Archer, 1996).

Conversely, Archer (1995, 1996, 2000) seeks to affirm the interrelationships among structure, culture and agency in social theorising, and the role that each plays as a way of addressing the problem of conflation. She argues that for us to examine their interplay we should temporarily separate structure, culture and agency. Archer understands such separation as the only way to explain social formation or social change without conflating structure, culture and agency. In this perspective, agential properties are viewed as emergent properties that develop in each of the three orders of reality, namely, the natural, the practical and the social (Archer, 2004).

In terms of actors, both Giddens and Archer have developed stratified models of actors, while Bourdieu's fields serve as objective structures in which actors compete for capital while the habitus is both objective and subjective, involved in regulating human action in the social fields. As explained earlier, Archer's model of agency is stratified into a "person" or human being, "agents" or "collectivities" with social roles and collective interests; and "social actors" who are "role incumbents" (Archer, 1995, p. 280). The person has a "continuous sense of self" which is important for survival as it enables persons to progress over time (Archer, 1995, p. 282). For both Giddens and Archer, social actors are active and reflexive beings. For Archer (1995, 280), social actors occupy social positions within the social structure whose roles they "personify". They have the capacity for reflexivity and engage in "internal conversation" to deliberate on their own circumstances, which in turn shape their actions (Archer, 2003, p. 16). Social actors also have "projects" which are based on their "ultimate concerns" and which enable them to respond to "structural constraints" and "enablement" (Archer, 2003, 7). These characteristics make Archer's actors active beings who use their agency as a group to interact and alter the social structure or reproduce it. However, she does not clearly explain how the shift occurs from individuals who engage in internal conversation to a collective group that mobilizes action to bring about social change or reproduction (Lacroix, 2012).

Unlike Bourdieu's theory where the habitus is presented as shaping human action, in Archer's (1995) theory, agency is seen as interest-driven. In other words, actors interact in pursuit of vested interests. For her, social change is likely to occur when tension builds up at social and structural levels, for example, if the values that people hold are in contradiction with the economic conditions. She argues that such contradictions set the stage for social change. Archer (1995) argues that change cannot be brought about by individuals but comes about as a result of group or social interaction. She specifically points to corporate agents, whom she describes as an organised group with an awareness of their vested interests. Distinct from

primary agents whom Archer said are an unorganised group with no shared awareness of what they want, corporate agents are the reason for social change. As Archer (1995, p. 259) puts it, “only those who are aware of what they want can articulate it to themselves and to others, and have organised in order to obtain it, can engage in concerted actions to reshape or retain the structural and/or cultural features in question”. In other words, because corporate agents are aware of their interests, they are able to organise themselves and through social interaction bring about change. In the process, agential elaboration can also take place where a group of primary agents join and expand the corporate group.

For Bourdieu, human practices emerge from the interaction between dispositions, capital and the fields. Hence, he speaks of a complex relationship between habitus, capital and fields as accounting for human action. The habitus produces actions which are consistent with previous experiences. Archer (1995, 1996) disagrees with both Bourdieu’s and Giddens’s conceptions of structure. She argues that Bourdieu conflates culture and structure, while Giddens conflates structure and agency and thus neither allows for analysis of the interplay between them.

Archer (2003, 2007) further postulates that reflexivity is exercised through “internal conversation” or “self-talk” where agents are able to question their beliefs and deliberate about their concerns. Conversely, reflexivity in Giddens’ theory is tied to the continuity of practices. Giddens (1984, p. 3) affirms that “continuity of practices presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices that makes them distinctly ‘the same’ across space and time”. Giddens (1984, p. 376) explains that actors use reflexivity in everyday life as a way of monitoring their actions as they produce and reproduce rules and resources in situations he refers to as “co-presence”. Actors reflexively monitor their own conduct and that of others. Such monitoring is influenced by the capacity of actors to give reasons for their actions (discursive consciousness) and by the knowledge that they use implicitly to interpret the acts of others (practical consciousness) (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) sees self-reflexivity as central to identity formation and practical consciousness as helping to monitor everyday actions and allowing agents to “go on” and to achieve “ontological security” (Giddens, 1984, p. 199).

Archer (1995, 1996) makes three arguments in opposition to Giddens’s and Bourdieu’s notions of reflexivity by disassociating herself from (1) theories that dissolve personal identity in social relationships and portray selfhood as a role; (2) any notion that sees agents as passive

determined by their circumstances instead of being conditioned; and (3) any conception of agency that conflates structure and agency and denies the interplay between structure and agency. In a nutshell, Archer does not condone any theory that does not allow examination of the interactions among structure, culture and human agency.

Archer's social realist theory has implications for this study in that it provides both an explanatory and an analytic framework. The analytical dualist methodology is used to: (1) unearth structural and cultural mechanisms that constrain and enable a selected number of successful learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances; (2) analyse how learners interact with structural and cultural conditions to achieve academically, despite circumstances described in the achievement literature as limiting; and (3) account for difference in the academic performance of children from disadvantaged circumstances.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and explicated Archer's social realist theory as the theoretical framework for this research study. Archer's morphogenesis, whether structural, cultural or agential, is characterised by three key stages, namely, the conditioning stage, the stage where action takes place, and the result of the action which is either change or reproduction. Whether change or reproduction occurs depends on how groups interact within the social system. The changes are made possible by the powers accorded to structure (structural emergent properties), culture (cultural emergent properties) and agency (agential emergent properties), which cannot be reduced to one another. Structural and cultural emergent properties present agents with constraints and enablement in relation to their projects, prompting agents to act in certain ways in order to pursue what matters to them. Agents also rely on their reflexivity to determine a way to act so as to achieve their ultimate aims /projects. Archer's theory differs from that of Bourdieu and Giddens in that it does not conflate structure and agency or emphasise structure over agency, but rather recognises the role of both in social reality. For this study, Archer's theory provides perspectives in terms of which to explain and analyse the interplay among structure, culture and agency, in order to understand the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural contexts.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design employed in this study. Burns and Grove (2005) define research design as a blue print which can be used to take control of factors that might interfere with the attainment of desired goals. Similarly, Polit and Beck (2009) affirm that a study design outlines the strategies which the researcher uses to answer the research question (s) and provides an outline of the approaches that a researcher uses to respond to the research questions. Crotty (1998) describes four key features to consider in research design which are the epistemology which informs the study, the philosophical positions of the research methodology, the methodology itself and the techniques and procedures used for data collection. This study is underpinned by a social realist qualitative design. Social realism draws from the critical realist design which assumes that research designs are “real entities” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 71). That means that research design is a real part of the meanings, motives and understandings of the people involved and thus have consequences for how the research is conducted including its philosophical underpinnings. The design and conduct of this research is based on this assumption. The main assumption this study makes is that learners have independent causal properties and powers which they can use to exercise control over and provide direction for the course of their lives while navigating home and school structures (Archer, 2003; Biesta & Tedder, 2006). At the same time, structures and cultural entities have their own causal powers which are both constraining and enabling (Archer, 2004). Hence, both structure and agency are intertwined (but not conflated) and should be examined to help understand the complexities of learner academic achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts.

This chapter provides a description of the research design for this study, including the philosophical positioning of the study, research orientation, research question, sampling, data collection techniques, and approaches to data analysis. The chapter also highlights the validity of the study, provides the reasons for triangulation, and explains the significance of the study, ethical considerations and its limitations.

5.2 Purpose of the study and research question

This study uses a social realist perspective to investigate the factors that allow learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to attain academic success in two rural senior secondary schools in Omusati region of Namibia. The main question I seek to address is: What factors shape the academic achievement of some learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings in selected Senior Secondary Schools in Omusati region? In the next section, I highlight the study orientation by focusing on social realist philosophical assumptions, including its ontology and epistemology

5.3 Research orientation

All research is underpinned by underlying philosophical assumptions pertaining to what is considered valid knowledge and which research methods are appropriate for developing knowledge in a certain area (Maxwell, 2012). As indicated earlier, this study is underpinned by social realist assumptions. The study assumes that the social world exists independently of what we think about it but it can be known by conceptualising and describing it through making a theory (Sayer, 2000; Archer, 2000). The social realist approach assumes that our knowledge of the world is fallible and theory-laden (Sayer, 2000). In other words, it is possible to procure knowledge about the world by examining how people experience the world around them. As Sayer (2000) states, it is possible to subject knowledge to empirical scrutiny for the purpose of informing and explaining practice. Consequently, this study adopts a social realist approach for the purpose of examining and understanding the influence of underlying causal mechanisms on learner achievement in socially disadvantaged rural settings. Mechanisms are “nothing more than the ways of acting of things” (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 14). In other words, mechanisms imply structures. A causal explanation is one that identifies entities and mechanisms that connect them together in ways that they cause events to take place (Sayer, 2000). Explanations of these events are captured through a social realist explanatory approach which can be used to explain events through examining enabling and constraining factors associated with structural and cultural conditions in learners’ lives (Archer, 2000).

Epistemologically, like critical realism, social realism accepts that the world is socially constructed but argues that this is not entirely the case (Easton, 2010). Likewise, social realists like critical realists acknowledge that the social phenomenon is intrinsically meaningful and

that meaning is part of the social phenomenon rather than an external description of it (Easton, 2010). According to Sayer (2000) meaning is interpreted and for that reason there is always an interpretive or a hermeneutic element in social sciences. While interpretivists advocate a subjectivist ontology, social realists promote a stratified ontology consisting of the natural, practical and social orders of reality as highlighted in chapter 4. This is in line with critical realism that advocates a stratified ontology consisting of the empirical (characterize by observations), the real (made up of underlying procedures and mechanisms) and the actual (which entails events) (Bhaskar, 1978).

This study assumes that the world consists of events, objects and structures with powers that are capable of causing events (Sayer, 2000). In other words, structure, culture and agency all have their own independent causal powers that can change a structure or reproduce it (Archer, 1996, 2000, 2003). The study draws from a social realist epistemology to explain how experiences, events and underlying mechanisms are inter-connected (Sayer, 1992) and how they work to influence socially disadvantaged and rural learners' academic achievement against the odds.

5.4 Research methodology

Myers (2009) describes a research method as a strategy of enquiry which entails underlying assumptions to the design of the research and how data is collected. Babbie (2010, p. 4) defines a research methodology as “the science of finding out.” In Archer's (2003) social realist theory, methods are the routines and techniques of research. Sayer (2000) argues that critical realism is tolerant when it comes to different methods of inquiry but the particular method chosen should depend on the purpose of the study.

This study uses qualitative methods in order to make meaning of learners' life histories (Yin, 2009; Olsen, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research refers to a situated activity which locates the observer in the world and which consists of set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. In other words, the use of qualitative methods makes it possible for the world to be turned into representations such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs and so on which makes it possible for the researcher to make meaning of it.

5.4.1 Qualitative approach

As indicated earlier, this study employs a qualitative research method in order to gain insight into the factors influencing the successful academic achievement of socially disadvantaged and rural learners. Baxter and Jack (2008) define qualitative research as a systematic approach necessary for understanding the nature or quality of a phenomenon in a specific context. Similarly, Burns and Grove (2003) define a qualitative method as a systematic but subjective approach which researchers can use to describe participants' life experiences and the circumstances in which they find themselves in order to give them meaning. Holloway and Wheeler (2002) describe qualitative research as a kind of social enquiry with the focus on how people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world around them. According to Richie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2013), there is no single way of conducting qualitative research but how one proceeds with this type of research depends on a range of factors such as one's belief about the nature of the social world (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be known (epistemology) and the purpose(s) the research is striving to achieve. Consequently, this study adopted Archer's (1996, 2000, 2003) social realist theory as highlighted earlier.

The purpose of this study was to carry out an in-depth investigation of the factors shaping disadvantaged and rural learners' academic achievement. In order to understand the complexities of the achievement phenomenon, the study required an in-depth analysis of the structural, cultural and agential conditions which enable or constrain this phenomenon. As Shavelson and Towne (2002, 2003) observed, a qualitative approach assists researchers to answer questions about what is happening and how it is happening. This study describes what occurs in learners' family and school lives by drawing from the views of participants. It is not the purpose of this study to establish correlations or make inferences but rather to explain and understand the prevailing conditions that lead to success in rural settings. As a researcher, I was able to explore the context of 12 learners within a rural setting to understand the aspects of their lives that led to academic success in circumstances where the majority of learners fail.

Another value of the qualitative approach is that it provides detailed descriptions and analysis of the value of human experiences (Marvasti, 2004) as well as focuses on how people make sense of the world around them (Merriam, 2009). This method qualitative method allowed me to generate an in-depth and lively account of the research participants' reality (Holloway &

Wheeler, 1996, p. 8) so the strength of qualitative research is its ability to get closer to reality (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2002) and provide narrative descriptions of settings or people's practices (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011).

Losifides (2011) affirms that qualitative research is a powerful means for studying different kinds of social relations ranging from among individuals, social positions, ideational and discursive elements as well as structural and cultural properties. In this study, qualitative methods were used to understand learners' behaviour, experiences and viewpoints as they interact with structural and cultural conditions to shape their academic achievement in rural settings. The qualitative approach was also used to understand underlying causal mechanisms associated with their academic achievement and the rural context which they traversed on their way to school. As Miles and Huberman (1994) postulate, a qualitative analysis is capable of going beyond mere association to identify generative causal mechanisms at work which indicates ontological depth of the social phenomena and processes being investigated (Archer, 2000; Sayer, 2000). Depth ontology refers to having a conceptual map of the nature of the world which allows for examination of multiple layers, complexity, interrelationships and dynamic interaction of the different components of the world (Archer, 2000; Olsen, 2009).

In broad terms, the qualitative task of this study was to understand, analyse and explain the influences that structural and cultural conditions exerted on the learners and how learners used their agential possibilities to navigate these constraints to achieve academic success. The main assumption is that structures, culture and agency are not conflated but viewed as interrelated (Archer, 2000). As Sayer (2000) points out, realist qualitative research constitutes the 'art' of connecting the perspectives and meanings of individuals rather than conflating them. However, while seeking for causes or influences in the data, what matters to the researcher are the observations and the way the data has been interpreted to make meaning of the phenomenon being investigated (Sayer, 2000). This research uses a qualitative case study approach as highlighted next.

5.4.2 Case study approach

A case study approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for an intensive analysis of an individual person or community stressing developmental factors in relation to their environment. Yin in (2009) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Baxter and Jack (2008) agree that a case study is an approach to research which enables exploration of a phenomenon. While Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998) see case studies as a useful tool for describing a phenomenon for the purpose of developing a theory and providing evidence for a hypothesis. Craib (1992) argues that case studies should be used to explain rather than describe although he noticed that due to scepticism regarding explaining there is more concentration on describing. For Easton (2010), a case study is a research method involved in investigating one or a small number of social entities or situations for which data have been collected using multiple sources and described holistically through an iterative process. According to Yin (2003), a case study design allows an exploration of an individual, organization, relationships, intervention and community.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that in-depth case studies are necessary for investigating complex issues. In this study, I used a case study approach to understand the complexities of the achievement phenomenon and to provide a more nuanced explanation. The idea is to understand how the interaction between structure, culture and agency shape disadvantaged learners' achievement of academic success in rural settings.

Stake (1995) identified three types of case studies – intrinsic, instrumental and collective (multiple). He explained that an intrinsic case study is undertaken when it is seen as unique or because it is marked by a particular trait which is of interest to the researcher. An instrumental case study is undertaken for the purpose of providing insight into an issue or refining a theory. In an instrumental case study, a case study itself is of secondary interest since it is only used to support or facilitate understanding of a specified phenomenon. Multiple or collective case studies refer to a situation where a number of cases are undertaken to understand a certain phenomenon such as a population or a specified condition (Stake, 1995). A multiple case study approach is a strategy used to examine more than one case (Creswell, 2008, 2012; Yin, 2009) for developing understanding or for better theorising (Stake, 1995).

In this study, an instrumental case study is used to gain an “in-depth” understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (i.e. learner achievement) in a real-life context (Yin, 2009). An instrumental case study was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to explore and understand the achievement phenomenon in depth in order to unravel the factors influencing learners’ achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

Sayer (2000) argues that a case study is an intensive research method which is compatible with critical realist depth ontology. The social realist approach differs from positivism which believes in an external objective reality. In line with social realist methodology, an instrumental case study has been used in this study to examine multiple layers of reality pertaining to the underlying mechanisms influencing the achievement of learners from disadvantaged and rural settings.

5.5 Researcher positionality

Researcher positionality during the research process is significant. The term positionality is understood to mean the position that individual researchers adopt during the research process and their world views (Foote and Bartell, 2011). What is important here is that researchers acknowledge their own beliefs, values and dispositions that they bring to the study (Maxwell, 2012). According to Cohen et al (2011, p. 225), researchers should reflexively “acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence in the research. While this study adopts a social realist perspective, I personally believe that truth is relative and not fixed, and that knowledge is value-laden as the researcher is involved in the research process including the interpretation and analysis of the data. Hence, research might have been subjected to my own unintentional subjectivism as a person who was born and grew up in Omusati Region and is familiar with the beliefs, values and cultural practices and expectations of the Omusati people. I had easier access to learners’ families and was accepted as being “one of us” (Songera and Thapar-Bjorkert, 2008, p. 556). Familiarity with participants’ culture, beliefs and language made it possible for me to ask insightful questions to produce ‘thick descriptions’ and might have been more trusted to secure honest answers from participants. However, familiarity with the culture of the participants has an inherent disadvantage of unknowingly being biased and sympathetic to the culture and perhaps unable

to bring an external perspective to the research process. Additionally, being part of the Omusati community, participants might have assumed that I have better insight as one of them. In order to minimise partiality and influence of personal assumptions, I took the stance of a “non-participant observer” (Flick, 2006, p. 216), taking a low profile so as not to influence events. This does not mean I was not involved in the research process. As Maxwell (2012, p. 97) states, “the researcher is inevitably involved in, and interacts with, the data that are collected.” The stance I took was to minimise the influence of my own subjectivity and to better enhance my perceptions of what I observe and understanding of what I hear. In addition, the position as a non-participant observer helped me step outside of my own cultural beliefs, assumptions and perspectives and enabled me to look at the subject of enquiry from the perspectives of the learners, teachers and parents / guardians.

5.6 Research approach

In this section, I discuss the research site, sampling procedures which were used and the research population.

5.6.1 Research site

Omusati region was purposively selected as a site for this research for its geographical accessibility to the researcher (since the researcher is from this region) (Yin, 2009) and for being an example of a “typical” region in socially disadvantaged and rural settings in the northern part of the country (Flick, 2006). It is here that learners achieve academic success despite common conceptions that socially disadvantaged and rural children cannot do so. Although the unit of analysis in this study is the learner, I understood that learners do not operate outside structural and cultural constraints and enablements. For that reason, both the school and learners’ families were involved in the study.

Two senior secondary schools were identified. The two schools met the requirements of being rural, low achieving (as it becomes clearer later in this study) and catering for the majority of rural learners. In fact, the two schools are listed by government as rural secondary schools (Namibia. Education Management Information System [EMIS], 2011). Both schools are boarding establishments.

Learners' homes were also sites for this study. The involvement of selected learners in the study determined which homes became the study site. In other words, by virtue of their children's involvement in the study, the parents or guardians became participants and their homes, with their consent, became research sites.

5.6.2 Research participants

Parahoo (1997, p. 218) describes the research population as the "total number of units from which data can be collected." Hanacek (2010) considers a population as a collection of people, animals, or things from which a sample is selected for the study. Burns and Grove (2003, p. 218) describe a population as "all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study." In other words, a population could be a group of people or things from which a sample is selected for data collection purposes. This study targeted three population groups - Grade 12 learners, Grade 12 teachers from the two selected rural schools and learners' parents or guardians.

5.6.3 Sampling procedures

A sample is defined as a section of a population selected to participate in a research study (Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg, 2006), in other words, a sample is a subset of a larger population which the researcher has selected to take part in the research study. According to Holloway and Wheeler (1996), in qualitative research, the sample size of a study does not necessarily influence the quality of the study. Purposive sampling was therefore used to select all participants in this study. Parahoo (1997) defines purposive sampling as a method whereby the researcher intentionally chooses who to take part in the study because of their perceived ability to provide the necessary information.

Three stages were used to purposely sample the population. Firstly, all Grade 12 learners in the two senior secondary schools selected were asked to complete a contextual questionnaire to get demographic information about their backgrounds (such as household income, piped water, electricity, number of siblings in the house, educational level of their parents or guardians, place of residence and any other factors that served as indicators of their socioeconomic status). Cohen, Manion and Mirrison (2007) defines a questionnaire as a set of questions contained on a form and which participants are asked to complete regarding a

research project. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2005), a questionnaire is a useful data collection method for learning something about the larger population from which a sample has been drawn. In this study the questionnaire was used for the purpose of understanding the context in which the learners lived and how the context shaped their success.

A total of 372 learners from the two schools completed the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire included both closed and open questions. Closed questions included dichotomous questions that required learners to select from given options such as yes or no questions and items where options are provided from which learners were asked to choose. These types of questions were used to obtain clear and unambiguous answers from the learners (Cohen et al., 2007). Open questions were used to solicit learners' views. This questionnaire served partly as the basis from which 12 learners were selected to become participants in the study.

The second stage was to identify twelve learners from the survey who “best exhibit the characteristics of the phenomenon of interest” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 94). In order to select a population, there is a need for eligibility criteria. Burns and Grove (2003) define eligibility criteria as a list of characteristics desirable for members to be part of the study population. In this study, of the 372 learners who completed the questionnaire survey, 6 learners from each school making a total of 12 learners were selected using a combination of the following criteria, namely, a) high academic achiever; b) from a rural location (rural dweller); c) low socioeconomic background (indicated by family income or absence of income); d) being an orphan; e) living with an elderly grandparent; f) from a child-headed household or from single parent household; and g) walking long distances to school (anywhere between ten kilometres and longer each day).

The third component was to work with the School Principals and Heads of Departments to verify the academic performance of 12 selected learners from the two schools. Using school records, the academic achievement of 12 learners was traced back to grade seven. Since grade 10 learners normally write a national examination and their results are published in the local newspaper, I used the newspaper for 2010 to confirm selected learners' grade 10 results. Learners' results were also confirmed with their certificates during initial home visits. Learners grade 10 results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Profile of 12 learners' achievement in Grade 10

Subjects	Learner's names and grades per subject in Grade 10											
	MLSS						ALSS					
	Magano	Nangula	Angula	Nelago	Elago	Kaoti	Meke	Ndapanda	Kema	Shikongo	Ndeumona	Shiwa
English 2 nd language	C	C	D	D	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	C
Oshindonga 1st language	A	A+	A	A	B	A	B	A	A	A+	B	A
Mathematics	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	A	A	A	A	A
Physical Science	A	A	A	A	A	B	C	A	A	A	B	A
History	B	B	B	C	C	B	C	A	A	B	B	B
Geography	B	A	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	B	B	B
Life Science	A	A	B	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	B	B
Design and Technology		C	C			B						
Accounting			C	C	C		C	B	C	C	B	C
Fashion and Fabrics						A						
Agriculture	C						B	A	B	A	B	C
Entrepreneurship	C	B		C	C							

Source: Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA, 2010).

Table 3 shows the performance of the 12 learners in Grade 10 national examinations. One of the challenging subjects indicated on the table is English in which some learners received D grades while they performed well in content subjects as indicated in Table 3.

The fourth component was the initial meeting with selected learners at their respective schools. At this meeting with the learners, the purpose of the study was explained and consent was sought from the learners to take part in the study. Each learner was asked to sign a consent form at this meeting. Ethical issues were also discussed and learners were given the opportunity to opt out at any stage of the research process.

Twelve parents and/or guardians of the selected learners were identified to take part in the study for the purpose of providing the material and cultural that influenced their lives. The parents/guardians became participants due to the involvement of their children in the study. Initial visits were conducted at the learners' homes where I introduced myself to the parents/guardians and explained the purpose of the study. I also explained to them how many home visits I planned to do. At this meeting, consent was sought from the parents/guardians to take part in the study. I also explained the ethical considerations to them and their right to withdraw from the process at any point in time.

A total of six teachers (three from each school) also took part in focus group discussions of the study. The teachers were selected on the basis of having taught the learners for a minimum of three years and for their willingness to partake. The purpose of engaging teachers in the study was to shed light on the extent to which learners engage in deliberate actions to shape their academic success at school.

5.7. Research process and data collection

Burns and Grove (2003) define data collection as the concise and systematic collection of data deemed relevant to achieve the research purpose. Brink et al. (2006) suggest that the researcher should ensure that the data they collect serves the purpose of the study and answers the research question (Maxwell, 2012).

5.7.1. Pilot study

Polit and Beck (2009) define a pilot study as a trial run or a smaller version of a study carried out in preparation for the study itself. As De Vos et al. (2005) point out, conducting a pilot study before the main one can help to develop and refine research instruments or the data

collection process. Piloting helps the researcher find out how well the instruments or data collection guides are working and how to respond to unexpected issues or circumstances which might arise during data collection (Ritchi & Lewis, 2003).

The purpose of a pilot study was to test the “methods and explore their implications” for the study (Maxwell, 2012, p. 87). One rural secondary school was purposively selected to test research instruments. The school was identified as it was a rural senior secondary school catering for the majority of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings and because it was under-achieving. In other words, the school identified for the pilot study exhibited similar characteristics to the two schools identified for the main study in terms of geographic location, learner population and academic achievement. This was to ensure that questions were pitched at the learners’ level of comprehension. In other words, I wanted a group of learners and a setting that best presented the features of the phenomenon I was studying (Maxwell, 2012).

A single class attended by 35 Grade 12 learners was selected for this purpose. A survey questionnaire was administered to all learners and thirty questionnaires were returned. Upon analysis of the questionnaires, the best three learners in the class were identified for one-to-one interviews. The performance of the learners was verified through school records.

Two teachers involved in teaching this class were asked to take part in the focus interview regarding their experiences of the extent to which successful learners go out of their way to shape their academic success. The focus interview was analysed and the interview guide was adjusted accordingly.

An analysis of data from the piloted instruments was done and some questions were re-worded to clarify their meaning. For example, one of the core questions that asked learners to indicate whether they were boarders was left unanswered by many learners during the pilot study. I realized that the concept ‘boarder’ is rarely used in Namibia but instead the concept hostel was common. So, I changed some of the wording to simplify some of the questions before administering the survey to the two study schools.

5.7.2 Interviews

Polit and Beck (2009) define an interview as a tool for collecting data during which the interviewer asks questions to participants either on a face-to-face basis or by telephone or via the internet. According to Kvale (2006, p. 281), interviews help researchers to understand the world from the perspective of the subjects and to “unfold the meaning of their lived world.” The disadvantages of interviews are that they are time consuming, financially costly and the interview process is complex and sometimes difficult to follow (Akbayrak, 2000; Alshenqueeti, 2014). In order to get this point of view, interviews were carried out with learners, teachers and parents/ guardians to attain in-depth responses and on the spot clarification where necessary (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2006). In particular, interviews were used to give a voice to learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings “who do not ordinarily participate in public debates” (Kvale, 2005, p. 90). The 12 identified learners were asked to tell their life histories. As Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007, p. 461) affirm “human beings are storytelling organisms who lead storied lives.” I used interviews to allow access to the interviewee’s social world experiences in a broad way (Flick, 2006); their life histories and the strategies they used to navigate their structural and cultural constraints.. Each interview took approximately one and a half to two hours depending on the interviewee’s responses..

5.7.2.1 Interviews with learners

All interviews were semi-structured and allowed further probing where deemed necessary. A semi-structured interview refers to responsive, flexible and interactive questioning for in-depth data collection (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). An interview guide was prepared in advance and key themes and questions to be explored during the interview were listed. The purpose of the interview guide is to ensure that key issues are explored consistently and thus act as an *aidememoire* which guide the researcher during fieldwork (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 136).

The interviews of all 12 learners were conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on learners’ family background and history to explore their life histories to unearth the structural and cultural conditions that shaped their family lives. The focus was on childhood and family background covering facets such as their place of birth, family composition, family

circumstances (emotional, economic), extended families and the nature of relationships and family life experiences.

The second phase focused on aspects of learners' schooling; where they attended school, school experiences or memories, strategies for coping with schoolwork, friendships, relationships with teachers, school structural influences and use of resources, time spent on learning tasks and so on. The second interview had the same motivation which was to unearth the structural and cultural conditions at school that influenced their schooling lives and the strategies they used to navigate structural and cultural constraints and enablement at school to achieve academic success.

Learners' narratives were also used to capture moments of their agency (both collective and individual) and reflexivity by focusing on educational and life experiences, perceptions such as those related to their academic achievement; how they positioned themselves (who they are and who they wanted to be); educational and career aspirations; their current and ultimate concerns; what mattered most to them; their strengths and weaknesses; the decisions and choices they made; disputes (with peers, teachers, parents, etc.); evidence of concerted efforts, sustained and strategic practices, important influences in their lives and their life projects. All interviews were tape-recorded. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), a tape-recorded interview allows for a comprehensive record of information without the interruption of note taking. In this study, using a tape recorder afforded the researcher a chance to focus on facilitating the interview while note-taking was kept at the minimum during the interview. However, the researcher did write down notes of what was observed during each of the interviews to complement the tape recordings (Creswell, 2003).

5.7.2.2 Interview with parents/guardians

Interviews with parents were conducted in the local language at their family homes in the village. The purpose of the interviews with parents or guardians was to understand the background histories of the learners and to animate structural and cultural conditions at learners' homes that have influence on their lives. Like with the interview of the learners, semi-structured interviews were used to allow further probing (Yin, 2009).

The interview protocol was translated into the vernacular with the assistance of a vernacular lecturer from the University of Namibia (UNAM). Only the parents or with whom learners lived were identified to participate in the study. As a researcher, I speak and understand the language spoken in the area and was aware of the cultural values of the people in Omusati region. In order to minimise the influence of personal values on the interview, I avoided making judgements or pre-empting what the participants said. Instead, I posed as an active listener (Flick, 2006), probing where necessary to encourage the participants to tell their stories. Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews and I made a summary of each interview. All data was kept in a data base on a computer hard drive and on at least two flash sticks.

5.7.2.3 Focus group interviews with teachers

Morgan (1996) defines a focus group interview as a technique which researchers use to collect information from participants through group interactive discussions on a specified topic facilitated by an interviewer. Although they are time consuming, during focus group interview, the researcher directs the discussion towards their interest (Morgan, 1996). Dilshad and Latif (2013), drawing on Morgan (1996), stress that focused group interviews help to reveal the viewpoints and practices of the participants and are also useful for triangulation purposes. In this study, focus group interviews were conducted in the natural settings of the schools with 6 teachers to animate the structural and cultural conditions at school which they perceived as impinging on or facilitating learners' academic success. As Morgan and Krueger (1993 cited by Morgan, 1996, p. 139) pointed out, focus group interviews provide insights in exploring the sources of complex behaviour and incentives. In this study, I assumed that, since teachers play a crucial role in learners' lives, they are in a good position to shed further light on the experiences, feelings and aspirations of the learners and that they are able to provide their own perspectives on contexts that enable or constrain learners' achievement within school settings.

Teachers were selected for the purpose of enlivening structural and cultural conditions at school that influence learners' academic lives. Ideally, two English teachers were to be selected per school. English teachers were preferred because each learner took English regardless of the subject areas of their choice. Teaching English to selected learners in Grade 12 and familiarity with their background would be used as criteria for their selection. If in a selected school only one teacher was responsible for teaching English to all Grade 12 learners,

that particular teacher was asked to participate. In schools where there were more than one English teacher, only teachers who were teaching the selected learners were asked to participate in the research.

Although English teachers were to be selected for interview, some were unwilling to take part in the study. Hence, one Mathematics and one Physical Science teacher who showed interest and willingness to participate were co-opted. To sum up, in one school, two English and a Mathematics teacher took part in the focus group interview while in the other school two English and one Physical Science teacher took part. In total, 6 teachers of the selected learners participated in the study.

5.7.3 Observations

Cohen et al. (2007) describes two types of observations – participant observation and nonparticipant observation. They argue that in participant observations, the researcher takes an active part in the very same activities that have been set out to be observed. In other words, researchers immerse themselves in observational activities to the extent that they become part of the group (Cohen et al., 2007). As a non-participant participant observer, the researcher is detached from the group activities they are investigating (Cohen et al., 2007). The purpose of observations is to gain a “holistic”, “within context” view (Lincoln (1992) as cited in Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 460). In this study, the main purpose of observation was to “enrich and enhance [the] data base” of the study (Simpson & Tucson, 2003, p. 16). I operated as a non-participant observer by distancing myself from taking an active part in the activities in which learners engaged in the natural environments at school and at home while observing their interactions during lessons, outside their class and at their family homes.

Observations took place in natural settings – at school and learners’ homes. At school, I observed selected learners’ actions (including postures and gestures) as they participated in classroom activities, social interactions outside the classroom (e.g. play), asking and responding to questions, managing time and resources and way of dress and took field notes. The initial idea was to video record each lesson but the teachers would not allow their lessons to be recorded. Instead, the researcher observed students’ persistence in completing tasks during lessons, reading independently and the efforts they made as indicated in their class work books, assignments, and assessments. The idea was to discern ongoing behaviour of the

learners as it occurs in the school natural environment (Cohen et al., 2007) and to observe how learner agency was manifested in the way they positioned themselves in relation to curriculum content, achievement or cultural norms and habits (Vangalis-Macrow, 2005).

At home, I observed how learners interacted with parents/guardians, siblings, friends and significant others and constantly took field notes. Initially, I planned to visit learners' homes four times but due to limited resources, long distances, lack of road infrastructure into rural areas and the fact that some learners were boarders, I visited each learner's family three times. I went to the homes when learners were home for weekends or during the holiday. I observed domestic activities in which learners engaged as well as the strategies they used to do their school work which are discussed in Chapter 6. Unstructured observations of learners also occurred when the researcher went to interview the parents/guardians.

Observations also focused on materials or resources (human and materials) to understand learners' social and material conditions at home. I observed the structures of their homes, availability of piped water, electricity, television, computer, and so on. In addition, I focused attention on artefacts and other objects that helped me explain learners' social and material conditions at home. Observations also have limitations. They are time consuming, subjective and prone to interviewer bias i.e. the way the interviewer word the questions, the tone of voice used or interviewer appearance, dress and accent might give a clue of his/her expectations (Akbarak, 2000; Simpson & Tucson, 2003).

5.7.4 Field notes

According to De Vos et al. (2005), field notes are written accounts of what researchers have observed. These notes entail accounts of experiences and observations which the researcher has made during data collection (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). As indicated earlier, I took field notes during and immediately after each interview or observation to document interviewees' key answers and after the narrative interviews (Flick, 2006).

Field notes are essential for recording what researchers see and hear outside the immediate context of the interview such as thoughts about the dynamic encounter of participants, and any issue that might be relevant to the data analysis stage (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this study, field notes included observed behaviour and resources (human and material) and other items

at home and school, which were considered helpful in explaining the structural and cultural conditions of the learners such as the structure of their homes, items in the home (e.g. telephone, television, cell phone, tapped water, electricity, presence of an educated family member or sibling and so on) and their home surroundings. Field notes were deemed important because they provided further details and moments of the inquiry and enabled me as a researcher to tell a story of my own field experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, observations were time-consuming, required effort and financial resources since learners' homes were far apart. It should be noted that field notes are subjective and are thus susceptible to observer bias (Simpson & Tucson, 2003).

5.7.5 Documents

Another data collection method that I used was document studies such as school records (e.g. learner profiles, grade schedules), school policies, school codes, minutes of meetings and hostel rules. Bogopane (2013) postulates that study documents represent different non-personal sources of information such as agendas of meetings, school records, internal office memos and minutes of meeting which are written to ensure continued functioning of an organization. I read and re-read the documents critically, taking into consideration emerging themes so as to understand the school policies, school structures and how policies are implemented in the two study schools. I paid careful attention to the wording, meanings and implications of the documents to the daily schooling lives of the learners in the two schools. In other words, documents formed an important part of my research because they enabled me to understand school structural and ideational influences on learners' schooling lives and academic performance. In addition, documents are significant because they have a "narrative sequence and 'tell a story'" of their own (Gillham, 2000, p. 22). Nonetheless, I took cognisance that documents may be incomplete, inaccurate and that they did not necessarily provide full answers to my research questions.

5.7.6 The role of the researcher during interviews

My role during data collection was that of a “non-participant observer” (Flick, 2006, p. 216). For that reason, I assumed a low profile so I did not influence events. My duty was to ask the participants to tell their stories. During interviews, I used the steps suggested in Flick (2006, p. 173). The interview started with a broad “generative question” about the topic to inspire the main story. For example, “Tell me about your childhood life.” I then followed up using probes; (“stage narrative probing” in which aspects which were not detailed are completed and finally I asked learners to describe what happened (the “balancing phase”) with the aim of bringing the story to the end. In this process, I adopted the role of an “active listener” (Flick, 2006, p. 174), listening attentively and encouraging the participants to proceed until the end.

In order to get the most accurate information, interviews were conducted in the vernacular but learners could cross to English at any time. All interviews were tape-recorded (with permission from participants).

5.8 Data analysis process

Data analysis has been defined as a mechanism which researchers employ to reduce and organise data for the purpose of producing findings and making interpretations of them (Burns & Grove, 2005). Data analysis in this study was based on social realism (Archer, 1996, 2000). Social realism was used as both an explanatory and analytic tool for the study as this study assumes that there are no independent units to which we can compare our explanations because we do not have direct knowledge of the objects of our accounts (Maxwell, 1992). Hence, explanations in this study are based on the data from the experiences of the participants.

Although data analysis in this study started the moment the first data was collected, actual data analysis commenced with contextual data or learners’ background information obtained from the questionnaire survey which was completed by 372 Grade 12 learners from the chosen two rural schools in Omusati region. The contextual survey data was analysed by using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results were presented in frequency tables which corresponded to each survey question. The contextual data was deemed important for understanding the background information and experiences of the learners. Nonetheless, before I analysed my data, I started the process of getting to know the data by listening to the

tapes and transcribing interviews verbatim (Yin, 2009). I also read over the written transcripts to get a general sense of what participants were saying and what the results revealed (Miles & Huberman, 2002; Creswell, 2008). Essentially, due to the large amount of data from both the contextual survey and interviews, I engaged in data reduction i.e. deciding which data to include in the study and which to leave out based on the research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Namey, Quest, Thairu & Johnson, 2007). In the following section, I highlight the process followed to analyse data.

5.8.1 Data coding

Creswell (2008) defines coding as a process of segmenting data (text or images) obtained during data collection into categories and placing labels on those categories with a term derived from the language of the participants. Coding involves segmenting and grouping data as well as arranging it systematically to create categories. According to Brink (2006, p. 178) and Brink et al (2006, p. 113), data analysis involves “categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising the data.” Categorising refers to a stage where parts of the data that are related/similar or different and the frequency at which a category occurs in the data are identified (Maxwell, 2012). Data can be categorised into themes while ordering involves creating coherence between categories. Manipulating has to do with resorting or rearranging the data without changing it while summarising entails providing a summary of the main themes in the data. Categorising is considered as a fundamental activity in qualitative data analysis (Maxwell, 2012). This process was crucial in this study for identifying segments of the data which relates to one another (Maxwell, 2012). Before I coded transcribed data, I translated the interviews of the parents or guardians into English as transcription was first done in the vernacular. The translation was double checked with the lecturer at the University of Namibia to ensure accuracy.

Following Maxwell’s (2012) guideline on coding and categorizing large amounts of narratives, I hand-coded transcribed data from interviews (both one-on-one and focus groups) and observations and created categories and themes. Kalpla (1964 cited by Maxwell, 2012, p. 123) warns against using computers for categorising data due to their inability to connect the data. Coding data was deemed necessary for generating themes which were significant for creating headings in the findings of the study (Maxwell, 2012). During this process, I derived categories from the data collected rather than imposing them on the data (McMillan & Schumacher,

1993). I marked each category with a different colour to make it easier for me to match the data with each theme. I searched for commonalities, contradictory evidence, and evidence that qualified or complicated the emerging explanations (Gillham, 2000). This process was laborious and time-consuming, however, the idea was to develop a “rich and full explanation” of the data as part of the analysis process (Yin, 2009, p. 128).

I used Archer’s (1995, 1996, 2000, 2003) social realist framework to animate, explain and analyse the structural and cultural conditions which influence learners’ lives at home and school from the data. The idea was to identify and ask questions about how the conditions which were not of learners’ choosing have shaped their academic lives (Archer, 1996, 2000, 2012). An examination of the structural and cultural systems enabled me to understand the conditioning that occurred and how it may have influenced learners’ actions towards academic success. It also helped me explain and analyse the strategies that learners employed to navigate structural and cultural constraints and enablements at home and school to succeed with the view to understanding the complexities of the interplay between structure, culture and agency. Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson, (2002) affirm that structures are responsible for laying down conditions for human existence while human action (agency) serves as reasons for what transpires in society. In other words, structures condition human experiences and give people reasons to act in certain ways. Hence, an understanding of the interaction between structure, culture and agency helped me understand the complexities of the achievement phenomenon in relation to learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

I drew on multiple data collection methods (questionnaire survey, interviews, observations and documents) to provide ‘thick descriptions’ of participants’ experiences (Yin, 2009). I used excerpts of verbatim expressions of the participants from the data as a way of offering rich narrative descriptions to present learners’ life experiences and actions (Lincoln & Guba, 2002). An analysis of learners’ actions and strategies to navigate structural constraints and enablement was crucial for understanding the context in which learners live. Geertz, (1973), as quoted in Lincoln and Guba, 2002, p. 206) affirms that “case study reports provide an appropriate vehicle for the “thick description” which is significant for “understanding context and situation” in which the study has been carried out.

As indicated earlier, this study employed a social realist lens. Employing a social realist ontology and epistemology requires that retroduction arguments are presented (Danermark et

al., 2002). Retroduction refers to transcendental arguments in which the researcher asks ‘why things appear as they do’ (Bhaskar, 1978) which is why we start from what is experienced to the knowledge of what really exists. Retroduction can be used to find the basic conditions for the existence of a phenomenon under investigation (Danermark et al., 2002). This is different from abduction which re-describes a phenomenon in terms of starting with a theory, coherent ideas or concepts and then giving meaning to events (Danermark et al., 2002). That means that while retroduction entails starting from the experience of a phenomenon, abduction is the opposite; starting from theory to making sense of events. In this study, the analysis of data moved from learners’ experiences (not theory) to find out why things exist the way they do in order to uncover the knowledge that is already there (Olsen, 2009). So the researcher derives explanatory claims from learners’ experiences to understand the underlying causal mechanisms that have influence on their academic lives and then move to an explanation of why they achieve in socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances.

5.8.2 Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers prefer to use the concept of trustworthiness instead of validity and reliability which are considered positivist in nature (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to considerations for research credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). Credibility has to do with how the qualitative researcher know that the findings are true and accurate (Shenton, 2004). It establishes whether or not the findings represents genuine information drawn from participants and that it represents participants’ original views (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Dependability concerns whether the findings are consistent over time (Billups, 2014). Transferability refers to the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that the research findings are comparable and can be applied to similar situations (Shenton, 2004), while confirmability refers to whether the findings are accurate and can be corroborated (Billups, 2014).

In order to ensure trustworthiness of the results in this study, I used triangulation. Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke (2004) and Yin (2009) define triangulation as the use of more than two methodological approaches for collecting data. Deriving information from multiple data sources is crucial for presenting “convincing and accurate” findings or conclusions (Yin, 2009, P. 116). This study used multiple data collection methods to authenticate the findings, namely, survey, observations, narrative interviews, field notes and documents. Using triangulation

entails combining data from different sources, at different times and from different people to guard against one-sidedness or distortion that may come about as a result of using a single method (Flick et al., 2004). Using multiple methods was essential to this study to “secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon” under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 7) and was seen as a strategy for justifying knowledge gained from the research (Flick et al., 2004). In addition, I used multiple methods to enhance rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Flick, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Member checking is another method I used to ensure credibility of the data collected. Member checking refers to a process of checking for data accuracy with participants to ensure that they correct possible errors and misinterpretations of what was said or observed (Lewis, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking as a crucial technique for establishing credibility which every qualitative researcher should undergo. In this study, I used member checking during my visits to learners’ homes. While interviewing their parents I asked learners who participated in the interviews to go through the transcriptions of the interviews I conducted with them to make any corrections or endorse the information in the interview transcripts. Member checking with parents and guardians was done on the last visit to their homes. I particularly wanted them to confirm information which they provided about their socioeconomic status and their life histories. Since some of the parents or guardians cannot read and write, I read out from the verbatim transcripts of their interviews and asked them to confirm that the information was correct.

5.9 Ethical considerations

Gallagher (2005, citing Marshall (1998) defines ethics as the concern with what is right or wrong. Similarly, the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT, 2004) describes ethics as concerns about human conduct with the fundamental purpose of protecting the rights of participants. Yin (2009) echoes a similar sentiment expressing that ethical considerations are important in research for the protection of the rights and integrity of all the participants and for ensuring a sense of responsibility and accountability on the part of the researcher (Yin, 2009). In this study, ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. As Maxwell (2012) pointed out, the researcher should observe ethics right from the beginning of the research project until the stage when data is presented and shared.

5.9.1 Gaining access

Before I collected data, permission was sought from the Ministry of Education Head Office in Windhoek and the Omusati regional Office to conduct research in schools. The Circuit Inspector's Offices within whose jurisdiction the schools reside was also consulted. Permission to conduct research was also sought from the Principals of the two identified secondary schools. Access to learners was also negotiated with the school Principals who together with the researcher organized a group of prospective participants from whom 12 learners were selected and permission was sought from them to take part in the study.

Access was also negotiated with the parents and guardians of the 12 learners who were identified for the study to visit their family homes. In this case, contact numbers were obtained from the learners who agreed to take part in the study, and I called each parent or guardian for an appointment to meet at their respective homes. Since some of the homes were deep in the rural areas, I arranged with the School Principals that the learners who were boarders would take me to their homes over the weekend and I would return them to the schools. The first visits were intended to make initial contact with the parents, to explain the purpose of the study and to introduce myself to them and make arrangements for subsequent visits to their homes.

5.9.2 Informed consent

Hewitt (2007) and Flick (2006) define informed consent as an explicit agreement by participants to take part in the study upon receipt of the necessary information regarding the nature of research. Armiger (1997) defines informed consent as when an individual knowingly, intelligibly and on a voluntary basis consents to take part in a study. In this study, I sought informed consent from all participants before any data was collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Yin, 2009). Informed consent is necessary to protect the rights and privacy of participants (Yin, 2009). Consent sought included permission to: conduct research in the two identified schools, tape-record the interviews, visit learners' family homes, and interview the parents and teachers during the course of data collection. I also sought permission to conduct classroom observations and tape-record lessons from individual teachers which they did not accept and thus no tape-recording of lessons took place. As Capron (1989 cited by Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001, p. 95) argues, any kind of research should be underlined by "principles of

respect for people, beneficence and justice.” By not tape-recording observed class lessons, I respected the wishes, rights and dignity of participants. I explained to all participants that they could decide to opt out of the research at any point in time if they so wished. By doing so, participants were given the opportunity to exercise their rights as autonomous individuals and to accept or refuse to take part in the study.

5.9.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) defines confidentiality as pertaining to the treatment of information that participants have disclosed in a relationship of trust and which it is not expected to be disclosed to other people in a manner that is inconsistent with the original agreement of disclosure without permission. In other words, confidentiality entails keeping information obtained from participants undisclosed unless otherwise permitted. Anonymity refers to protecting the identities of the participants (Yin, 2009). In this study, the researcher also protected the “privacy and confidentiality” of all participants to ensure that they were not affected in future (Yin, 2009, p. 73). This was done by not linking the real names of participants or the research sites to the data. Anonymity was assured by assigning pseudonyms (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to conceal participants’ identities. Richards and Schwartz (2002) recommend that pseudonyms be assigned to protect the identity of participants but also recognize that some participants might not want their identities concealed. In this study, none of the participants wanted their identity revealed so it was imperative to conceal their identities including the identity of the schools in which the study took place.

During the contextual survey, anonymity of learners was ensured by assigning codes to each questionnaire. The codes were assigned on the basis of a class list and the way learners sat to enable the researcher to match the survey with the real names of the learners. This was necessary at the initial stage where I needed to identify high achievers. Only the researcher could access this list. Throughout the data collection process for this study, the researcher exercised respect for the integrity of the participants by ensuring that no harm was done to them. The researcher also avoided being dishonest in handling the data, “including avoiding the use of deception in the study” (Yin, 2009 p. 73).

5.10 Limitations of the study

Any research study has limitations. Limitations are occurrences that emanate from the research process and which the researcher has no control over. According to Burns and Grove (2005), limitations are restrictions in a study which make it difficult to generalize the findings to other contexts. Maxwell (2012) defines generalizability as the extent to which one can replicate the findings to a particular population or situation other than what was directly studied. This case study cannot be generalised to other situations because it is based on a small sample drawn from only two rural schools. However, as Flyvbjerg (2006) affirms, “[t]hat knowledge cannot be generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in society.” In other words, a case study can still contribute to knowledge or scientific innovation.

While observations enabled me to gather valuable information, learners were at times aware that they were being observed and might have altered their behaviours to provide information which they thought I wanted to know. In addition, classroom observations could not be recorded because the teachers did not want their lessons recorded. Hence, the researcher has no way of going back to any of the lessons observed to closely examine what happened.

Finally, the questionnaire survey produced a large amount of data which was time consuming during the coding and categorisation process.

5.11 Significance of the study

This study seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature and new avenues of inquiry which recognize that in any situation there are learners who succeed and those who fail and for that reason attempts to offer a perspective that takes cognisance of difference. Unlike previous research on achievement/underachievement which viewed learners as determined by internal traits or contexts, this study is significant in that it provides more distinctive explanations to account for the complex intersection between the individual and the context in explaining the achievement of socially disadvantaged and rural learners. Archer (2003, 2004) underlines the significance of studying the interplay between structure, culture and agency using analytical dualism.

As indicated earlier, analytical dualism is a social realist methodology which allows the separation of the individual and context for analytic purposes. Using analytic dualism marks a shift from deterministic explanations and those that conflate the individual and the context (which are discussed in Chapter 2) to an analysis of the role that each play and the on-going interrelationships between them (Archer, 2004). Radulescu and Vessey (2008, p. 11) support Archer's view, arguing that "both agency and context are indispensable and therefore must be accounted for in social analysis." This study is also significant in that it contributes to a shift from a positivist lens that does not acknowledge difference to a social realist perspective which allows for the study of difference in conversations pertaining to learner achievement and by implication underachievement.

5.12 Summary

This chapter provides an outline of the research paradigm, research methodologies and the research design used in the research procedures, participants, data collection instruments, how the data was collected and analysed and ethical considerations. The research design for this study is a qualitative case study which draws from social realism to explain and analyse the data collected. This chapter also highlighted the stages followed in the research design and development process of the study. The next Chapter 6 presents the context of the study and animates the structural and cultural conditions shaping learners' lives at regional, family and school levels.

CHAPTER 6

STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS AT REGIONAL AND FAMILIAL LEVELS

6.1 Introduction

Archer's (2000) social realist theory suggests the use of the methodology of analytical dualism which separate structure, culture and agency for analytic purposes. In line with Archer's methodology of analytical dualism, the data for this study is presented in three chapters. This is the first of the three data chapters which provides the context of the research and brings to life the structural and cultural conditions influencing learners' lives at regional and familial levels. Archer (1995, 1996) states that it is important to consider the context in which people are involuntarily placed which conditions their lives. The conditioning contexts in this chapter pertain to the broad regional and familial structural and cultural milieus which influence the lives of people of Omusati region in which the families of learners featured in this study live. Understanding the context is important to situate the learners and how they navigated their way to school. Chapter 7 highlights the structural and cultural conditions shaping learners' lives at school level while Chapter 8 presents the narratives of learners' subjective experiences of these structural and cultural conditions.

In the current chapter, I draw on data from the Namibia Housing Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010 under the auspices of Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA, 2012), the 2011 Population and Housing Census Omusati Regional Profile (NSA, 2014), learners' questionnaire, interviews with parents and field notes to present the structural and cultural conditions in the region and learners' families. I begin with a description of the regional context focusing on geographic location and the rural landscape, and then move to regional socioeconomic conditions. Consideration for structural conditions at regional level helps to explain the broad conditioning factors at play in shaping learners' lives. Next, I move to structural conditions in learners' families to understand how they have shaped learners' lives. The last part of the chapter talks about the cultural conditions in the region and in the family with particular attention on communalism, traditional values and religion. In the next section, the regional context is provided.

6.2 The regional context

Before I highlight the context which has shaped learners' lives, it is essential to note that human interaction occurs within structural and cultural contexts. This section provides the context in which the participating learners were born and still live. According to Archer (2000), the context in which interaction occurs has been conditioned for agents by structural and cultural properties. Conditioning refers to the ways in which structural and cultural properties enable or constrain human action (Archer, 2003). The conditioning process, as used by Archer does not mean determinism as reflected in biological and social context explanations highlighted in chapters 2 and 3, but rather entails the interaction between the powers of structure and human agency. In this chapter, the conditioning effects of structural and cultural properties at regional and familial levels are explored to understand the factors that shaped learners' lives and how their schooling has been shaped. I highlight the conditions that have shaped learners' lives at regional level. Using information from the Namibia Household Income and expenditure Survey 2009/2010 and the 2011 Namibia Population and Housing Census, and learner survey I present the geographic location, the rural landscape and weather conditions.

6.2.1 Geographic location

Covering an area of 26 551 square kilometres, Omusati region is located in the north-central part of Namibia, formerly known as Owamboland (NSA, 2012). As one of the fourteen regionsⁱ in Namibia, Omusati region is bordered by Oshana Region to the east, Ohangwena Region to the north-east, Angola to the north and Kunene Region in the south-west. According to the latest Namibia Population and Housing Census of 2011, Omusati region is the third most populated region in Namibia with 243 166 people making up 11.5% of the Namibian population of 2 113 077 people as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: Population characteristics

Population						Head of household		Household size
Region	Total	%	M	F	Average Household	F	M	
Erongo	150809	7.0%	79823 (53%)	70986 (47%)	44900	34%	66%	3.5
Hardap	79507	4.0%	40572 (51%)	38935 (49%)	19700	36%	54%	4.2
//karas	77421	3.7%	39407 (51%)	38014 (49%)	21300	44%	56%	3.7
Kavango	223352	10.6%	104761 (47%)	118591 (53%)	36400	43%	57%	6.5
Khomas	342141	16.2%	169672 (50%)	172469 (50%)	89900	39%	61%	4.1
Kunene	86856	4.1%	43603 (50%)	43253 (50%)	18700	40%	60%	4.4
Ohangwena	245446	11.6%	112130 (46%)	133316 (54%)	43500	57%	43 %	6.1
Omaheke	71233	3.0%	37217 (52%)	34016 (48%)	16100	34%	66%	4.1
Omusati	243166	11.5%	109545 (45%)	133621 (55%)	46700	55%	45%	5.2
Oshana	174674	8.3%	80115 (45%)	96559 (55%)	36800	54%	46%	4.9
Oshikoto	181973	8.2%	87066 (48%)	94907 (52%)	37400	51%	49%	5.0
Otjozondjupa	143903	6.8%	73902 (51%)	70001 (49%)	32000	34%	66%	4.1
Zambezi	90 596	4.2%	44099 (49%)	46497 (51%)	22000	44%	56%	4.7
Namibia	2113077	100%	1021600 (48%)	1091165 (52%)	464839	44%	56%	4.4
Rural	1204454	57%	1021300 (48%)	1083600 (52%)	235884	45%	55. %	5.2
Urban	908623	43%	1021300 (49%)	1219400 (51%)	228955	39%	61%	4.1

Source: Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA, 2012) Namibia 2011 Population and housing census.

Table 3 also shows that there are more (55%) females than males (45%) with the second highest percentage (55%) of female headed households.

According to NSA (2012), Omusati region comprises a relatively young population consisting of more than 40% who are under 15 years of age. Of the young people who are below the age of 15 years, 41% live in rural areas, compared to 28% in urban areas. The majority (55%) of the people in Omusati region are females while 45% are males. There are 46 700 households in Omusati region with an average size of 5.2 people per household and an average density of nine persons per square kilometre. The more densely populated areas of the region have a population density of 16 people per square metre compared to the national average of approximately two people per square metre (NSA, 2014).

6.2.2 The rural landscape

The Omusati regional landscape is characterised by mopani, makalani, baobab and marula trees and shrubs. Palm and marula trees are found mostly in the eastern part of the region where people harvest palm fruits for consumption and use palm leaves to construct their dwellings. Marula trees provide the rural communities with marula juice and kernel for family consumption and for sale on a small scale. The northern areas of the region are covered with deep sand set apart by waterways better known as *oshanas* or flood plains. The south western direction of the region is desert-like and dominated by the *oshanas* (flood plains) with short grass and few palm trees in some areas while other areas are barren (Personal field notes, 15/06/2012). There is lack of infrastructural development in the rural areas such as roads and services such as public transport. Dusty footpaths criss-cross the rural landscape in all directions. It will be shown later that four of the 12 learners who took part in this study endured these geographic elements as they traversed their way from home to school each day facing both the rural landscape and the weather conditions.

Rain, floods, deep sand and heat are some of the conditions which learners endure on their way to school. During the rainy season, Omusati region receives between 300 and 600 millimetres of rain each year (Namibia. Omusati Regional Council [ORC], 2012). The flood plains get flooded during the rainy season when some of the water comes in from the Cuvellai Delta in Southern Angola, making some of the flood plains impassable. When the *oshanas* are flooded, children have to find another way, usually a longer route through the pearl millet fields to school. In areas which are dominated by *oshanas*, schools sometime close down until the water subsides to safe levels for passage. For a vivid depiction, here are some extracts from interviewees:

My children suffer a lot during the rainy season. You see that big *oshana* (pointing in the *oshana* direction) which you crossed on your way here, it gets flooded. For my children to get to school, they have to cross that *oshana*. Sometimes, it becomes impassable. When that happens, schools in the area close down because children cannot cross the flowing water (Parent/guardian interview, 18/08/2012).

One parent spoke about what children face when the *oshanas* are flooded:

When *oshanas* are flooded, the flood waters bring along dangerous snakes which pose a danger to our children's lives due to snake bites. I am always scared that my children might be bitten by snakes as they cross the flooded *oshanas*. A case of death caused by a snake bite was reported at the nearby village in 2009. It really scares me that one day my child might not come back home from school due to snake bite (Parent/guardian interview, 20/07/2012).

The climate of the Omusati region is semi-arid with temperatures in the range of 2 to 6 degrees Celsius in winter while summers are hot with maximum temperatures of approximately 40 degrees Celsius (Integrated Environmental Consultants Namibia (IECN, 2008; Namibia. Omusati Regional Development Plan, 2012). In summer, learners endure the heat of the sun as they navigate their way to school. "The heat of the sun' said one parent/guardian, is dangerous to my daughter. The nurses always say that sun rays can cause cancer. Our children are not protected" (Parent /guardian interview, 20/07/2012). I experienced the heat as I drove through the large, dry, and dusty *oshanas* to learners' homes for data collection, the heat of the sun passed through the glazed blue sky and the river-like mirages kept shifting ahead. The waterways were still noticeable and as I passed some areas of *oshana* terrain, the water splashed out, leaving a mark on the dry *oshana* (Personal field notes, 27/08/2012). In areas where the population is high, what is noticeable is that people settlements are found along *oshanas*, increased tree cutting subsistence agricultural and overgrazing practices that have caused deforestation.

6.2.3 Poverty

The region is characterised by a high unemployment rate consisting of 55% females while 54% of males are employed (NSA, 2012). Sixty percent of the rural population in Omusati region survives on subsistence farming and raise livestock on a smaller scale (NSA, 2012). The great

number of pearl millet fields is noticeable as one traverse the rural landscape of the region in all directions. Females make up 55% of the rural population while 45% are males as depicted earlier in Table 1. The average income per household depends on the educational qualification of the head of family.

The average income for the head of family without a tertiary education is N\$28 253 per annum while the average income received by a head of family with a tertiary qualification is N\$214 337 per annum (NSA, 2014). Often, males in particular with a low level of education serve as migrant workers in the mines and factories away from their rural families where they leave women behind to take care of the children, homesteads and cultivate the fields during the rainy season. Some women who engage in informal trading of meat, vegetables or *kapana* (cooked meat or chicken) are visible in most areas along the main road while others own *cuca* shops or small businesses where they largely sell alcoholic beverages and smaller household items. *Cuca* shops are found everywhere especially in densely populated areas in the regions and close to roads and schools.

Approximately 13% of the households in Omusati region are classified as poor (NSA, 2012). The concept poverty in this context is defined as the number of households which do not have enough resources to cater for their basic needs and who are counted as living below a specified minimum income or national poverty line of N\$377.96 as indicated earlier. Poverty in Namibia is explained in terms of three categories – poor, severely poor and non-poor. Households classified as poor according to the census data are below the poverty line of N\$377.96 while those classified as severely poor are below the poverty line of N\$277.54 (NSA, 2012). According to NSA (2011), poverty prevalence refers to the proportion of the population identified as poor as measured against the poverty line of N\$377.96 (i.e. their monthly consumption falls below N\$377.96). Women are in the majority of those whose households are classified as poor with 22% of the female headed households considered poor compared to 18% of male headed households (NSA, 2012). In total, 54% of the households in Omusati region are headed by females with 11% of the female headed households categorised as ‘severely poor’ compared to 9% of households headed by males in the same region (NSA, 2012). Additionally, poverty incidences are 34% amongst households whose heads have no formal education and 1% in households whose heads have attained tertiary education (NSA, 2012). Eighteen percent of the households whose heads have no formal education are severely

poor while no household for those with a tertiary qualification is categorised as severely poor (NSA, 2012).

One of the female parents who head a family in rural areas of Omusati region succinctly expressed the poverty she experienced when she took part in the interview:

I did not have any means to pay her [Magano] school fees. Exams came and I would go from person to person asking for money to pay for her exams. She was almost discouraged because I am not working... (Magano's mother, 08/09/2012).

Household size is another factor associated with poverty in Omusati region. The average number of children per household in rural areas is two to three while urban areas have an average of one to two children (NSA, 2012). Household in rural areas with a large number of children experience more poverty than those in urban areas with a smaller household size (NSA, 2012). Omusati has a large household size of five children (NSA, 2012). Approximately nine percent of the large households in Omusati region are classified as severely poor and only five percent are categorized as non-poor compared to eight percent of the household that are severely poor and four percent poor at the national level (NSA, 2012). In addition, 13% of poverty incidences are reported in Omusati region.

Ninety-five percent of the Omusati population live in the rural areas with only 6% of the population living in urban areas (NSA, 2012). In line with NSA data, the majority (95%) of the 372 learners who completed the questionnaire indicated that their homes are in rural villages² as reflected in Table 4. Only five percent of the learners indicated city or town as their home location.

Table 4: Learners' home location

Location	Respondents	Percentage
Rural villages	353	95 %
City /Town	19	5%
Total	372	100 %

² A village is a settlement which is normally governed by a village headman.

Eighty five percent of the people of the Omusati region who are rural dwellers live in traditional dwellings or homesteads (NSA, 2014). A homestead is a round enclosure constituting various huts surrounded by a wooden fence. Homesteads are erected in the pearl millet fields used for subsistence farming. Typically the material used for constructing a traditional homestead is sticks or poles, mud/clay, grass and cow-dug. In general, 47% of the households in Omusati region consist of walls made from sticks, mud/clay and /or cow dung compared to 71% of the households using cement/bricks to construct their walls in urban areas (NSA, 2012). Likewise, in 51% of the households in rural areas, walls are built with sticks, wooden poles, grass or reeds with 58% using thatch grass as the main material for roofing sheets (NSA, 2012). The materials used for floors in 58% of the households in rural areas is sand or earth while 52% of urban households have floors made of cement and 25% are made of ceramic tiles (NSA, 2012).

Consistent with NSA (2012), data from learners' questionnaire revealed three types of dwellings in which their families live – modern house, improvised house and homestead. Table 5 below shows that the majority 308 (83%) of the learners indicated that they live in homesteads compared to 45 (12%) who indicated modern (brick houses) while 10 (3%) said they live in improvised houses (or dwellings made from corrugated sheets).

Table 5: Type of dwelling

Type	Respondents	%
Homestead	308	83%
Modern (Brick house)	45	12%
Corrugated sheets	10	3%
Did not indicate	9	2%
Total	372	100%

Several huts within each homestead are visible from a distance as one negotiates the rural areas of Omusati region. Some homesteads' fences are erected with palm leaves and pearl millet straws while floors are just bare sand and soil. Few homesteads have fields with wire fences (Personal field notes, 27/08/2012). During a personal conversation, one parent/guardian described a homestead saying that each homestead accommodates one family and that the various huts in the homestead serve different purposes and thus the location of each hut inside the palisaded homestead is designed for a purpose. For example, the main sleeping hut known

as *ondjugo*³ is erected in the centre of the homestead and close to *elugo*⁴ the kitchen where cooking takes place. *Okalili*, the hut of the man of the house is erected at an area called *ehale*⁵, usually separated from the rest of the huts with poles or sticks and erected about 15 metres away from *ondjugo* but still within the homestead compound. The huts for young men are erected close to the entrance of the homestead while girls' huts are further inside the homestead. Traditionally, young children (both boys and girls) sleep in *ondjugo* which is usually plastered with clay and cow dung. Other huts in the house are used for storage purposes or for providing shade during the day and protecting members from rain (Personal communication, September 9, 2012).

On 19/09/2012 while visiting learners' homes, I found that a noticeable place in a homestead is *oshoto* or a sitting place for men and boys. *Oshoto* is present in every homestead and is located near the homestead entrance. You recognise *oshoto* by some ashes and seats made from poles or dry tree trunk. In all homesteads, *oshoto* is constructed with strong poles and in some homesteads the poles have sharp ends. The main purpose of *oshoto* is to *serve* as a place where boys and the man of the house sit in the evenings while girls and their mother sit at *elugo* [kitchen] where they prepare food for the family. Fire is made at *oshoto* each day as a symbol for keeping the male owner of the house safe and to wish him fortune. The belief is that *oshoto* should be lit every day to protect the man of the house from any danger. What were visible as you enter the households are the skulls of cows that died due to drought. Traditionally, in *ondjugo*, fire is made each day as a sign of life and to keep young children warm in winter. In summer, only a lighted coal is put in *ondjugo* for symbolic purposes. (Field notes, September 19, 2012).

³ Ondjugo in the Aawambo tradition is the most important hut in the traditional house. It is a place where young boys and girls sleep with their mother. It serves as the main sleeping hut in the homestead. Fire is made in *ondjugo* in winter to keep children warm.

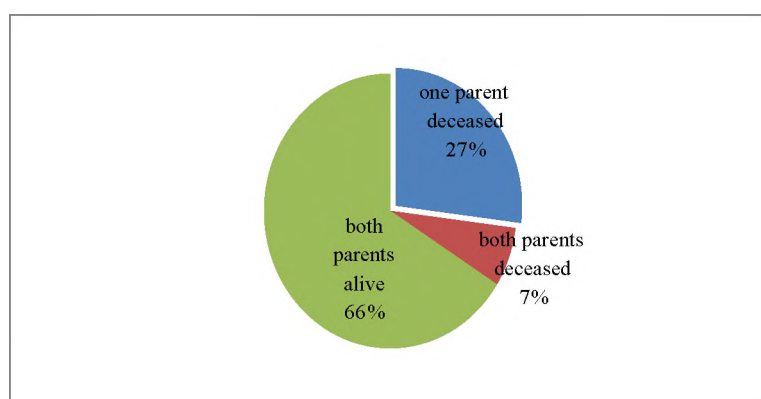
⁴ Elugo is a place where cooking takes place. Traditionally, women and their female children sit at *elugo* while preparing food.

⁵ Ehale or *oshoto* is an area around the hut for the man of the house. When his male friends or relatives come to visit, they sit at *ehale* while women sit at *elugo*.

6.2.4 Orphans

The rural family homesteads in Omusati region also accommodate orphans. The NSA (2012) census data indicate that households that take care of orphans at regional level are spending 34% of their resources on food and beverages compared to 22% of those living without orphans (NSA, 2012). There are 26% to 50% of household members who are orphaned in Omusati region compared to 23% of households that live with orphans at a national level (NSA, 2012). The census data show that 17% of all children younger than 18 in Omusati rural areas have lost one or both parents compared to 14% in urban areas while 45% are double orphans with a 32% of the orphans living in female headed households (NSA, 2012). The presence of orphans in learners' homes has been acknowledged in the data provided by the learners in the questionnaire and in parents/guardians interviews. As Figure 1 shows, 27% of the 372 learners indicated that one of their parents is deceased while 7% said both parents are deceased.

Figure 5: Percentages of learners who are orphans



A few of the core group for this study are orphans. Some extracts from parents or guardian interviews acknowledge the presence of orphans in rural households. “There are two orphans that I take care of and who live with us here. Orphan hood is common here. In this village alone, there are 10 homesteads and only two do not live with orphans, yes” (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012). Another extract states:

When my husband died making my seven children orphans, I did not know how to play a father figure for them. Although I worked on the pearl millet field to provide food for my children, I could not play the role of a father. Uhmhhh, it is hard (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

6.2.5 Education

The level of education attained in Omusati region is lower in rural than in urban areas. Primary school enrolment in urban areas for learners between the ages of 7 and 13 is slightly higher in urban areas at 93% while in rural area it is 91 percent. The enrolment of learners aged five to 24 in rural areas of Omusati region is 73% which is higher than the enrolment of 66% in urban areas (NSA, 2012). In the rural areas however, female enrolment at primary school is slightly higher at 93% compared to 90% for males (NSA, 2012). Thirteen percent of the people in Omusati region have no formal education, 49% have secondary education while only 3% have attained tertiary education.

The NSA (2012) census data show that the literacy rate in Omusati region is 88% with literacy defined as the ability to read and write with understanding. The literacy level of those aged 15 years and above in Omusati region is 88% while 12% are not literate. Of the literate population in the region, 90% are males while 87% are females (NSA, 2012). The percentage of females who are illiterate in the region is slightly higher at 13% while males who are illiterate comprise 10% of the Omusati population (NSA, 2012).

In rural areas, literacy rates in Omusati region are 87% which is lower than the 96% in urban areas. There is a difference in the literacy rates for youths between the age of 15 and 24 in urban and rural areas and between males and females. The percentage of females aged 15-24 years who are literate in Omusati rural settings is slightly higher at 97% compared to 95% for males. Of those aged between 16 and above, 11% in rural areas have never attended school compared to 5% in urban areas. However, the percentage of those 16 and above who have attended school is higher (41%) in rural compared to 32% in urban areas. Of those aged 15 years and above who attended school, 48% completed primary school, 14% complete secondary school while 32% dropped out of school before completing primary school. A small percentage (5%) has completed tertiary education with a slightly higher percentage of females (4%) compared to 3% males. Additionally, 93% of those aged 6 to 16 years has been to school while six percent has never attended school. Of those who are 17 years and above, 86% have attended school compared to 13% of those in the same age group who have never been to school. The percentage of those aged 6 to 16 who have attended school in Omusati region is slightly higher (93%) than the 90% reported at national level for the same age group while those who did not attend school account for 13 percent. For both age groups, the percentage of

those who have never been to school is higher in rural (10% and 19%) compared to (7% and 5%) in urban areas.

The 2011 Population and Housing Census and the NSA (2012) survey data show that approximately 88% of those aged 15 years and above in Omusati region are literate while 12% are not literate. However, there is a slight difference in the literacy rate in favour of males compared to females. The percentage of males who are literate in Omusati region is reported as 90% compared to 88% females. Similarly, 12% of females are reported to be illiterate compared to 10% males. Among those between the age of 15 and 25 however, more females (98%) in Omusati region are reported to be literate compared to 94% males in the same age range.

There are age-based variations in the level of school attendance in Omusati region with the percentage of school non-attendance increasing with age. For example, only nine percent of those aged between 6 and 16 years have not been to school compared to 13% of those 17 years and older, 49% have secondary education while 3% have attained tertiary education. There is also a gender-based discrepancy in the level of literacy with fewer males (10%) reported as illiterate compared to 13% females in (NSA, 2012). There is a high (73%) enrolment rate for those aged five to 24 in rural areas than urban areas (66%). Conversely, of those aged 7 to 13, the rate of enrolment in primary school was higher in urban (93%) than in rural areas (91%), with a slightly higher percentage (93%) of females enrolled in rural areas compared to 90% males.

6.2.6 Access to services

Distances travelled to basic services in Omusati region range between one and 50 kilometres. About 44% of the inhabitants of Omusati region are between one kilometre and less to public transport, while 20% are between six and 20 kilometres. Transport in this regard is privately owned and operated. Distances to school range between one and 50 kilometres to the nearest school with 8% of the households within a kilometre distance to the nearest primary school. The longest distance travelled to the nearest primary school is 50 kilometres while 92% of the learners in rural areas traveling between two and 50 kilometres to the nearest secondary school (NSA, 2012). This is in line with data from the large sample of learners as depicted in Table 6, which indicate that 97% of the learners at MLSS and 85% at ALSS are boarders.

6: Number of boarders at ALSS and MLSS

	Response	ALSS	%	MLSS	%
Are you a boarder?	Yes	153	85%	186	97%
	No	27	15%	6	3%
	Total	180	100%	192	100%

As indicated in Table 6 only 15% at ALSS and 3% at MLSS reported walking to school each day. Learners who walk to school indicated that they walk between one and over 10 kilometres each day as Table 7 below shows.

Table 7: Walking distances to school

	Distances	ALSS	%	MLSS	%
What distance do you walk to school each day?	Boarder	153	85%	186	97%
	1-3 km	19	11%	3	1%
	4-6 km	6	3%	2	1%
	7-10 km or more	2	1%	1	1%
	Total	180	100%	192	100%

As indicated in Table 7 one percent of the learners surveyed does not reside in the secondary school hostel and walks between 7-10 kilometres or more to school each day. Reflecting on her son's schooling life, one of the parents/guardians had this to say:

... I wish I could get him a place in the, umm, in the hostel but I do not have sufficient finances to pay his expenses. I do not know what else to do, but I see him coming home very tired and fatigued each day, almost unable to do anything when he gets home. Oh, I want my child to be educated, but I also see the suffering he is going through. There are times when I wish I could put up a shed for him near the school so that he does not have to walk such a long distance. Oh, I do not have the means to do so (Parent/guardian interview, 16/07/2012).

When driving through the rural areas on a typical school day, what one sees are the children wearing all sorts of uniforms in different colours; some walk bare feet, others wear dirty and torn clothes, with many carrying their books in plastic shopping bags as they navigate the footpaths that criss-cross the rural landscape on their way to school. On 16/07/2012 when I

was driving on a narrow, dusty and sandy road to one of the learners' homes around 7h30, I saw a seven-year-old girl on her way to school two kilometres away from home. It was chilly, the cloud of dust mixed with sand particles covered the gravel road and the heavy wind beat on the windscreen of the car I was driving (Field notes, 16/07/2012). In the rural areas, this case is not unique but characterises the conditions in which people live and the circumstances in which rural learners navigate their way to schools.

Apart from children walking to school, the dusty footpaths criss-crossing the rural villages in different directions are full of rural dwellers walking with buckets or containers of water on their heads from water sources, animals such as donkeys carrying containers of water on their backs or pulling donkey carts. (Field notes, 12/08/2012). A total of 48% of the rural households in Omusati region have access to safe drinking water while 52% of the households get water from unprotected wells, boreholes with open tank, rivers and an open canal (Population and Housing Census Omusati regional profile, NSA, 2014). This contrasts with 92% of the households in urban areas of Omusati region that do have access to safe drinking water.

Driving through the rural areas at night presents another challenge. Here and there I could see a spark of light through a pitch-dark night glittering through the homesteads (Field notes, 19/10/2012). According to NSA (2012) census data, 89% of the rural households in Omusati region use wood fire for cooking while 9% use electricity; 49% and 32% use candles and paraffin lamps or torches as the main sources of lighting (NSA, 2012). In urban areas, 65% of the households use electricity as the main source for lighting with 50% of the households using electricity for cooking (NSA, 2012). The rural areas of Omusati region experience a lack of sanitation with 97% of the households using the bush as a toilet facility while only 3% of the households have access to flush toilets (NSA, 2012). In urban areas of the region, 49% have access to flush toilets (NSA, 2012).

Other services pertaining to communication and network facilities where 69% of the rural residents use radio as a means of communication, 44% use cellular phones, and 1% has access to a landline phone. In addition, only 1% has access to a computer; television (7%) and the internet (2%). In urban areas, the figures are access to radio (75%) television (55%); computer (15%); and 15% have access to the internet (NSA, 2012).

To summarise this section, rain, floods, deep sand, heat, lack of roads and public transport, household size, type of dwelling, education and employment status of household heads, presence of orphans in household, materials used to construct the household dwelling, walking long distances to basic services such as clean water, schools, roads and lack of facilities such as access to the internet in rural settings, electricity and sanitation facilities are all indicators of the poverty that influence learners' lives in the rural areas of Omusati region.

6.3 Familial conditions

This section focuses on conditioning influences in learners' families. Before describing familial structural conditions, I first briefly introduce the twelve learners who are the core of this research. Drawing data from the Namibia Household and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2009/2010 (NSA, 2012) and the 2011 Population and Housing Census Omusati Regional Profile (NSA, 2014), parent/guardian interviews, the learner survey and field notes I describe the family structural influence on learners' lives in order to understand the socioeconomic context in which they live. Five indicators of family socioeconomic status are highlighted, namely, family structure, family level of education, employment status in family, educational resources in family and family assets.

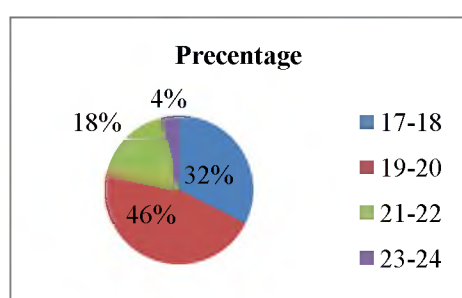
6.3.1 The learner

There were 450 grade twelve learners registered with the two Senior Secondary Schools in 2012 that were chosen for this research at the time of data collection. A total of 372 (83%) grade twelve learners in the two schools completed and returned the questionnaire. Out of those 372 learners, 12 were selected for in depth study. Their profiles follow.

6.3.2 Age distribution of the larger sample

As reflected in Figure 6, learners who responded to the questionnaire are between the ages of 17 and 24.

Figure 6: Age distribution of learners



As Figure 6 shows, forty six percent of the respondents are between 19-20 years of age and 2% are between 23-24 years and 18% are 21-22 years of age.

6.3.3. Introducing the 12 learners

This section introduces the 12 learners who are the subject of this study. All twelve learners were born, grew up and still live with their families in the rural areas. Table 8 highlights the demographic profiles of the 12 learners as a way of introducing the socioeconomic status of their families.

Table 8: Learners' demographic profiles

Learner	Age	Sex	Siblings	Family type	People in household	Mother / female guardian occupation	Father/ male guardian occupation	Family assets	Family religion	Family income /month
Angula	18	M	7	Homestead	12	Subsistence farmer	Deceased	Field, cattle, radio	Catholic	N\$750.00
Meke	22	F	None	Homestead	9	Deceased	Deceased	Field, goats, radio	Catholic	N\$550.00
Nelago	18	F	5	Homestead	7	Subsistence farmer	Taxi driver	Field, goats, chicken	Catholic	N\$200.00
Ndeumona	17	F	4	Homestead	14	Kindergarten teacher	Deceased	Field, cattle, chicken	ELCIN	N\$300.00
Nangula	17	F	5	Homestead	8	Teacher	Cattle farmer	Field, cattle, radio	Catholic	N\$5 000.00

Magano	18	F	3	Homestead	9	Subsistence farmer	Deceased	Field, goats, chicken, radio	Catholic	N\$200.00
Kema	18	F	4	Homestead	12	Subsistence farmer	Deceased	Field, radio, cattle	ELCIN	N\$550.00
Shiwa	18	F	5	Homestead	12	Subsistence farmer	Deceased	Field, radio, cattle	ELCIN	N\$550.00
Shikongo	18	M	4	Homestead	7	Kindergarten teacher	Deceased	Field, cattle, Radio	Catholic	N\$400.00
Elago	18	M	2	Homestead	19	Tailor maker	Deceased	Field, car, radio, cattle	ELCIN	N\$1000.00
Kaoti	22	F	8	Homestead	4	Subsistence farmer and pottery maker	Deceased	Field, radio, goats	Catholic	N\$700.00
Ndapanda	18	M	11	Homestead	5	Subsistence farmer and Enrolled Nurse	Mahangu granary maker	Field, cattle, goats	Catholic	N\$8 151.58

As indicated in Table 8, eleven of the twelve learners grew up in large families of between five and 18 people living in the same homestead. Most of their mothers or female guardians are primarily subsistence farmers while 9 of the 12 learners' fathers/male guardians are deceased as reflected in Table 8. In Chapter 8, we will meet these 12 learners again when narratives of their schooling journeys are analysed. In the following sections I concentrate on familial structural and conditions influencing their lives.

6.3.4 Family structure

This section focuses on family structure, education in family, family employment, family access to utilities, amenities and sanitation, family assets and education resources in the family

in order to understand the socioeconomic conditions that have shaped these learners' lives. In Namibia, 55% of the households live in extended family households with a high number of extended family households (60%) found in rural areas compared to 48% in urban areas. The data from learners' questionnaire revealed that all 372 learners live with family but what constituted family varied as Table 9 depicts.

Table 9: With whom learners live

Live with	Responses	%
Biological parents	157	42%
Mother only	76	20%
Father only	10	4%
Aunt / Uncle	38	10%
Grandmother only	67	18%
Siblings only	4	1%
Other (non-relatives)	20	5%
Total	372	100%

Table 9 shows that 105 (28%) learners live with uncles or grandmothers; 157 (42%) live with both biological parents; 10 (4%) live with fathers only; 76 (20%) live with their mothers only; 67 (18%) live with their grandmothers only and 20 (5%) live with non-relatives. Interviews with parents show the existence of extended families in their households. While all parents or guardians reported that they take care of extended family members in addition to their biological children, they expressed different views about living in an extended family setting.

One of the parents/guardians described her own family as follows:

I raised my husband's relatives. They were many in our house. Some have now left but now I have three of them who are relatives to my husband. Some, particularly men went to towns to look for jobs. The other one is the lady who is still in the house. They are part of my family although my husband has long passed on (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

Another parent or guardian recalling her own childhood said:

My mother took care of about ten children in our home. These are relatives' children. Some are relatives to her husband. We were six children from my mother. The house was full. Some have their own homes now. My mother is deceased but taking care of relatives was considered a good example of a caring mother. Before our mother died, there was also another lady, our mother's family. She is now married (Parent/guardian interview, 11/09/2012).

Extended families as found in Omusati region are regarded as beneficial by family members and often accommodate members of the clan such as grandparents, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunts and other relatives. This is reflected in parents/guardians' interviews.

Extended families are part of our tradition. We believe in keeping our clan members intact. You know, there are times when a family member dies for whatever reason and leaves young children behind. Someone, often a relative should take care of such children. Mmmm, at least someone should provide shelter and food to these poor children. In addition, we assist each other in different ways such as financially, food, spiritually, morally and so on. We also assist each other with raising children to respect other people. Today, living with a pensioner helps to pay school fees for the children while more able bodied take care of the elders, cooking for them, washing their clothes and so on, uhu. Due to this family bond, we do not throw away our elderly or the orphans. It is actually a good cultural practice (Parent /guardian interview, 16/09/2012).

Nelago's mother, on the other hand, has a different view of extended families.

I do not see the value of extended families. I have a big family with aunts and uncles who work but I am the only one paying for Nelago's education although I am unemployed. There is no assistance coming from the extended family to help out with my children (Parent/guardian interview, 18/07/2012).

Pertinent to learner families is the family size. According to the NSA (2012) data, Omusati region has an average family size of five children. The data from the 372 as depicted in Table 10 show that 29% of learners have more than five siblings, 13% have five while only 3% said they do not have siblings.

Table 10: Number of siblings in household

Number of siblings	Respondents	Percentages
0	11	3%
1	19	5%
2	41	11%
3	91	25%
4	53	14%
5	49	13%
More than 5	108	29%
Total	372	100%

Apart from siblings, households in Omusati region also accommodate orphans as indicated earlier in Figure 5.

Overall, the data presented in this section revealed that learners live in large extended family settings; that orphans are prevalent in these families and that extended families serve as a safety net for orphans and other children whose parents do not have the financial resources to pay for the education of their children, feed them and clothe them. The extended family settings have an influence on learners' schooling lives as will be shown in their narratives.

6.3.5 Education in family

As shown earlier, approximately 88% of those aged 15 years and above in Omusati region are literate while 12% are not literate. The percentage of females aged 15-24 years who are literate in Omusati rural settings is slightly higher (97%) than that of males (95%). The data from learners' questionnaire as reflected in Table 11 indicate that 20% of learners' female parents or guardians and 21% of their fathers or male guardians have attained secondary education while 11% of female and 3% of male parents or guardians have never been to school.

Table 11: Parents'/guardians' education

Level of education	Learner response and percentages			
	Male	%	Female	%
No schooling	62	17	49	13
Gr 1-4	29	8	18	5
Gr 5-7	48	13	54	15
Gr 8-10	67	18	91	24
Gr 11-12	79	21	73	20
Certificate / Diploma	56	15	79	21
Undergrad degree	9	2	8	2
Postgrad Degree	22	6	0	0
Total	372	100%	372	100%

Table 11 further shows that an equal percentage (23%) of male and female parents or guardians has attained tertiary education with more females (21%) attaining a Certificate or Diploma compared to 15% males while none of the females have attained a postgraduate degree in comparison to 6% of the males. A few of the parents or guardians indicated the reasons why they could not complete schooling.

I could not continue with school because of poverty. My sister tried to pay with omahangu (pearl millet) and other people from the clan assisted for a while with dried spinach because those days, people could pay in kind. Unfortunately, I could not continue because there was no one to support me to continue school. Those in our family were not supportive to my sister. I wanted to go to school to become a nurse because I was gifted in Mathematics. But, I lost out of school because of poverty (Parent/guardian interview, 04/09/12).

Another parent in her mid-forties had this to say:

When my mother died, I was very young. I do not even remember much about her or her death. Those days, death was kept secret and children were chased from home during the day when people are mourning. All small children were sent away to go and play with distant neighbours. After my mother's death, I went to live with my grandmother and never had a chance to go to school because school was far from home. I only went to Bible study where I learned to read the Bible until I got married and

started my own family. Due to lack of education, I do not have a job to feed my children (Parent or guardian interview 04/09/2012).

The data from learners' questionnaire revealed that their siblings have not had the benefit of education with only a few completing university education. Table 12 shows that of the 372 learners who answered the question with respect to the qualification attained by their siblings, 186 (50%) have a sibling who has completed secondary education while 72 (19%) said they are the oldest in their families.

Table 12: Siblings level of education

Education level	Respondents	Percentage (%)
I am the oldest	72	19%
Primary	16	4%
Secondary	186	50%
College	42	11%
Undergrad Univ	28	8%
Postgrad Univ	11	3%
Did not indicate	17	5%
Total	372	100%

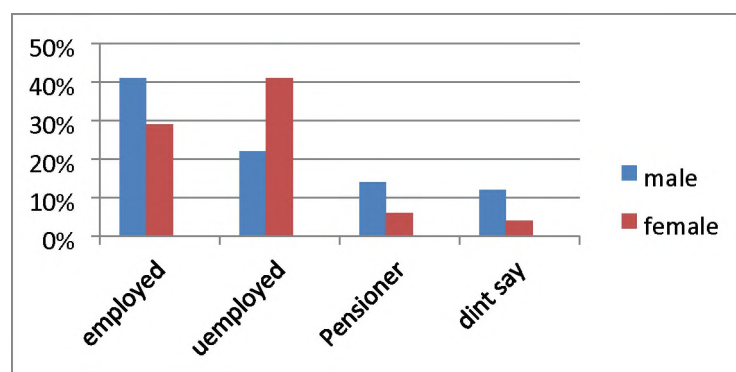
As shown in Table 12, only 3% of learners' siblings have attained postgraduate university education, 11% attained college and 4% attained primary education.

6.3.6 Family employment

This section focuses on the employment status in families. As indicated earlier, Omusati region has the second highest unemployment rate in the country of 54% compared to the national rate of 34% while 60% of the rural households survive on subsistence farming as the main source of income (NSA, 2012). Twenty percent of the rural households have salaries and wages as the main source of income, whereas 13% of the households have a pension as their main source of income. Of people who are 15 years and above, 57% in rural areas are employed while 66% are employed in urban areas. Of those who are unemployed in the region, 55% are females compared to 52% males. The unemployment rate is 43% among the rural economically active

population aged 15 years and above compared to 34% in urban areas. Likewise, 45% of females in rural areas are unemployed while those who are unemployed in urban areas account for only 39%. The data from learners' questionnaire as depicted in Figure 7 support the census data indicating a high employment rate for learners' parents/guardians.

Figure 7: Male and female parents' or guardians' employment status



As Figure 7 reveals, 41% of the male parents/guardians are employed compared to 29% of the female parents/guardians. In addition, 41% of the female parents/guardians are unemployed while the unemployed males account for 22%. The average income for the head of family per household in Omusati region is N\$28 253 per annum with heads of families with a tertiary education receiving an average income of N\$214 337 (NSA, 2012). As indicated earlier, 94% of the people in Omusati region live in the rural areas, with 60% of the rural population surviving on subsistence farming (NSA, 2012). Data from learner questionnaire show in Table 13 that 36% of their families derive their income from subsistence farming compared to 33% whose main source of income is salaries and wages while 19% indicated a pension as the main source of income for their families.

Table 13: Family main source of income

Income source	Respondents	Percentage
Subsistence farming	123	33%
Salaries and wages	134	36%
Pension	72	19%
Kapana*	35	9%
Make profit	1	0.3%
Did not indicate	7	2%
Total	372	100%

*Kapana refers to the business of selling cooked food at an open market

The data in Table 13 also show that 9% of the households derive their income from *Kapana*. This section revealed a significant percentage of the unemployed in Omusati region with 41% of those unemployed in rural areas being females. In addition, the data show that for those employed, the income received by the head of family is concomitant with their level of education. As the data show, salaries and wages, subsistence farming and *Kapana* selling serve as the main sources of income for learners' families.

6.3.7 Family access to utilities, amenities and sanitation

This section presents data on family access to utilities, amenities and sanitation. As indicated earlier that 52% of the households in Omusati region have access to safe drinking water while 10% use unsafe sources. Of those who have access to safe drinking water in Omusati region, 44% of the households travel less than a kilometre distance to the source of drinking water, 34% travel one kilometre, while 22% travel between two kilometres to 10 kilometres to the source of drinking water (NSA, 2012). The data from learners' questionnaires revealed that 89% of their family households have access to safe drinking water derived from in-house pipes, neighbour's pipe, communal pipe, borehole, rain tank and protected wells as reflected in Table 14. Similarly, 11% of the learners reveal that their households get drinking water mainly from flowing water sources, unprotected wells and stagnant water.

Table 14: Family's main source of drinking water

Source of drinking water	Respondents	Percentage
In-house pipe	182	49%
Neighbour's pipe	25	7%
Communal pipe	63	17%
Borehole	37	10%
Rain tank	13	3%
Protected well	10	3%
Flowing water	8	2%
Unprotected well	7	2%
Stagnant water	27	7%
Total	372	100

In terms of household access to utilities, 80% of the people in Omusati region use wood/charcoal as a source of energy for heating and cooking (NSA, 2012). Similarly, 160 (43%) of the 372 learners who completed the questionnaire indicated that their family homes use wood fire as the main source of lighting while electricity is used by 12% of learners' households as shown in Table 15. Candles and paraffin lamps are used in 18% and 21% of learners' households respectively, thus supporting the Census data as presented earlier.

Table 15: Family main source of lighting in family

Lighting source	Respondents	%
Electricity	45	12%
Candle	67	18%
Wood fire	160	43%
Paraffin lamp	78	21%
Torch	6	2%
Solar panel	13	4%
Did not indicate	3	1%
Total	372	100%

Sanitation is another indicator of socioeconomic status. According to Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census, 78% of the people in Omusati region use the bush (no access to toilet) compared to approximately 6% who use flush toilets. In addition, 17% use pit latrines while 1% use bucket as toilet facilities. The data from the learner survey as depicted in Table 16 show that the majority (87%) of the learners indicated using the bush as their toilet facility while only 13% said they use pit latrines.

Table 16: Toilet facilities in family

Toilet facility	Responses	Percentage
Flush toilet	0	0 %
Pit latrine	50	13%
Bucket	0	0%
Bush	322	87%
Total	372	100%

As shown in Table 16, none of the learners who completed the survey indicated that they use flush toilets.

6.3.8 Family assets

Apart from access to communal land, the data from NSA (2012) show that 86% of the households in Omusati region own or have access to communal land i.e. a crop field, 87% own poultry, 50% own cattle, 43% pigs, 70% goats, and 42% have access to grazing land. Similarly, the large sample of learners' questionnaire reveals that 344 (92%) out of 372 learners said their families own or have access to land, 89% said their families own cattle and have access to grazing land while 11% said their families neither own cattle nor have access to grazing land as Table 17 shows.

Table 17: Family ownership or access to land and animals

Family ownership or access		Crop field	Cattle	Poultry	Pig	Donkey	Grazing land
Indicate which of the items your family owns or have access to.	Yes	344 (92%)	332 (89%)	276 (74%)	209 (56%)	2 (1%)	330 (89%)
	No	38 (10%)	40 (11%)	96 (26%)	163 (44%)	370 (99%)	42 (11%)
Total		372 (100%)	327 (100%)	372 (372%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)

The most commonly owned asset in 71% of the households in Omusati region is the radio set, with 10% who do not own one having access to one while 19% neither own nor have access to a radio at all (NSA, 2012). Other family assets include access to a television set, landline telephone set, cellular phone, refrigerator, a car and a donkey cart. The NSA (2012) data show that 15% of the households in Omusati region own a television set; 78% of the households own cellular phones and 28% own a landline telephone. The households without a television account for 82% while 85% do not have a refrigerator. A vehicle (car) is owned by 16% and a donkey cart by 15% of the people in Omusati region. In line with NSA (2012) data, responses from learners' questionnaire as depicted in Table 18 indicate radio and cellular phone as the most commonly owned assets by 89% in their families, followed by car (32%) and donkey cart (29%).

Table 18: Family assets

Assets		TV	Radio	Landline phone	Cell phone	Refrigerator	Car	Bicycle	Donkey cart
Indicate which of the following items your family own.	Yes	72 (19%)	330 (89%)	59 (16%)	332 (89%)	33 (9%)	118 (32%)	87 (23%)	109 (29%)
	No	300 (81%)	42 (11%)	313 (84%)	40 (11%)	339 (91%)	254 (68%)	285 (77%)	263 (71%)
Total		372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)	372 (100%)

As shown in Table 16, the least owned assets are television (19%), landline phone (16%) and refrigerator (9%).

6.3.9 Family educational resources

The data from learners' questionnaire as depicted in Table 19 show the Bible as the most available resource in 50% of learners' families followed by newspapers (38%), dictionary (4%), novels (3%) while an encyclopaedia was shown as the least available i.e. only available in 1% of learners' homes.

Table 19: Family education resources

Which of the following resources are available in your home?	Resource	None	Bible	Newspaper	Dictionary	Novel	Encyclopaedia	Didn't indicate	Total
	Response	13	186	140	16	12	2	3	372
	%	4%	50%	38%	4%	3%	1%	1%	100%

By way of summarising this section, extended family structure and the socioeconomic status of learners' families have been revealed as major influences on learners' lives. The socioeconomic status of learners' families as indicated by a low level of education in the family, unemployment, lack of amenities and utilities, lack of sanitation, family assets and absence of educational resources emerged as the primary family structural influences on

learners' lives. These factors corresponds to those identified in the literature on social context as contributing to academic underachievement. In this research, these influences interact with those at regional level to present learners with constraints and enablement as they navigate their way to school. In the next section, I turn to the cultural conditions influencing learners' lives.

6.4 Cultural conditions influencing learners' lives

This section presents data from learners' parents/guardians on the cultural conditions in their family lives. Archer (1996) states that both structural and ideational influences have conditioning effects on agents and presents them with constraints and enablements which compel them to act in certain ways. This section animates the cultural conditions in Omusati region and in learners' families in order to understand ideational influences that have shaped their lives. The section focuses on communalism, religiosity, family values of obedience and respect, family values of education and family values of household chores. Data is drawn from interviews with parents/guardians and field notes.

6.4.1 Communalism

The communities of Omusati region are Aawambo speaking people. This group is made up of Aambalantu, Aakwambi, Aangandjela, Aakwaaludhi, Aakolonkadhi and Aambandja tribal or ethnic groups who all fall under the umbrella of Aawambo. The Aawambo people have always lived in the northern areas even throughout the colonial era when Owamboland was turned into a homeland (a place of the Aawambo people previously designated by the colonial government). All Aawambo people speak the same language with only minor differences in accent and enunciation. As such, they have the same traditions with few differences on specificities depending on specific ethnic groups. Communalism is one of the dominant values shared among the Aawambo people, including the people of Omusati region, which entails doing things together as a team. They eat together from the same traditional basket and clay bowl and drink from the same scooping calabash. They work together with their neighbours, share some items such as food and essential items such as matches with neighbours, assist each other in the fencing and cultivating of pearl millet fields, take turns looking after animals with their neighbours, extract marula juice together and many other shared activities. Aawambo people also share sad occasions such as death together. The spirit of communalism

in learners' families is reflected in the way family and community members assist each other. Interviews with parents/guardians confirm that.

As part of the people of Omusati regional tradition, we do almost everything together. We eat together, ya, our foods are not scooped in separate plates like modern people do; we drink from the same calabash, we work in the fields together, we look after our cattle together with the neighbours and discipline our children together. We are like one family. When a family slaughters a cow or goat, we share with our neighbours. That is how it has been. We expect our children to do the same thing at school and when they do their schoolwork (Parent/guardian interview, 08/05/2012).

Communalism is not confined to house chores but also to children's play. In this regard, one of the parents/guardians talked about what children do together:

You know, when I was growing up, young people used to play traditional dances under moonlight. When the moon is up and shining, young people from the village go to an open space to dance. It was nice because we had to learn to cooperate with other children from the village. It teaches you respect. I still instil this value in my children. I sometimes watch my boys play soccer with neighbouring children and I can see the spirit of communalism is still there (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

While this communal spirit has been around for years and has been passed on from generation to generation, modernization is taking its toll, forcing people to abandon some of the traditional practices to protect their children. One of the guardians said:

Things have changed so much that our traditional values are getting diluted by so called development. I sometimes feel my children should not go around to the neighbours' houses to play. I do encourage them to continue helping the elderly such as pounding pearl millet for them. But, playing, ummm, we no longer know what happens there because a lot is going on. Some families are into alcohol and no longer respect our traditional values. I, mmm I do not want my children to join bad influences (Parent/guardian, 17/07/2012).

The data from parents'/guardians' interview revealed that they continue to teach their children the core traditional values.

I teach my children to learn to work together with other people in our community. We have been brought up this way and till now we continue to assist each other. It teachers

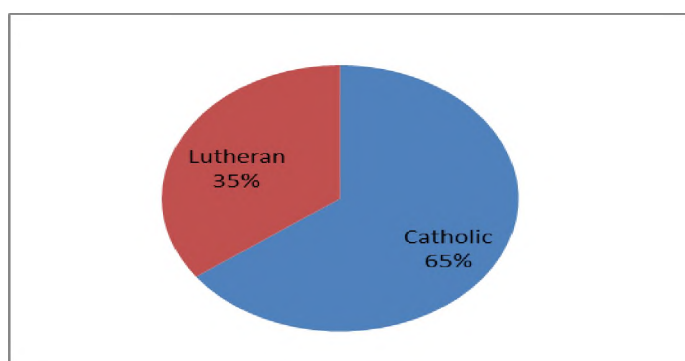
them to work together with other children and strengthens the bond between them (Parent/guardian interview, 14/06/2012).

As the data reveals, learners were born into and raised within the cultural and traditional practices of their families and communities. This entailed having to make choices that at times were against traditional expectations to achieve in school. The results highlight the complexities involved in understanding the achievement phenomenon notwithstanding biological and social contexts explanations.

6.4.2 Religiosity

The belief in *Kahunga* (a term used to refer to both the ancestral god and the Biblical God in the northern regions who is believed to have the power to make things happen) is one of the aspects of rural family life that learners and their parents depicted in their narratives. Parents raised their children to believe in God and to go to church. This section presents data from learners' questionnaire, parent/guardian interviews and field notes on Christian values, value of obedience and fear of God and family religious values. According to the 2011 Population and Housing Census, more than 90% of the people in Omusati region are Christian. The data from the larger sample of 372 learners who completed the questionnaire revealed that all learners are from Christian families. Figure 8 below show that all learners who completed the questionnaire are Christians, with 65% belonging to the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) while 35% indicated that they belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN).

Figure 8: Family religious denomination



What struck me as I drove through the rural areas on my way to learners' families and schools during data collection was the presence of churches in the vicinities of schools in Omusati

region, recognizable by the crosses which are visible at a distance. I observed that in almost every village where there is a school, there is a church building next to the school or within a walking distance from the school (Personal field notes, 27/08/2012). One parent/guardian spoke about the presence of churches in this way:

You know, the churches, predominantly the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Churches were the first to establish schools in the northern regions of the country. They established schools to teach people how to read and write about the Bible. These schools were then expanded to be what they are today (Parent/guardian interview, 27/08/2012).

The presence of churches in Omusati villages is depicted in parents'/guardians' interviews as playing a role in the education of the people in the rural areas.

The churches followed the population pattern, looking at highly populated areas and establishing primary schools to support the work of the churches. Today those schools have been expanded, some have become combined schools catering for grade 1-10 and others have expanded to secondary schools catering for Grade 11-12. The churches have played a major role in influencing the lives of families and the children. In addition, most churches have a positive influence on children's education (Parent/guardian interview, 27/08/2012).

All 12 parents/guardians who were interviewed said religious values are an important part of their family lives and that they raised their children to believe in God because they believe that He can assist their children in different ways.

I emphasise going to church because I believe we are moving on because of God. He gives us strengths. I tell my children to pray every day and ask God to assist them with their schoolwork. When my child experiences difficulties with her school subjects, I encourage her to focus and pray at the same time for God to assist her. It is only God who can help her succeed in school. Without Him, she is powerless. Yes (Parent/guardian interview, 11/05/2012).

The belief in God is however not only associated with Christianity but also with traditional practices that existed in the region before Christianity was introduced as expressed in the following excerpt:

Oh ya! You know even before the churches came and converted us to Christianity, we believed in our own God, Kalunga ka Nangombe (God of Nangombe) who created everyone. We did not learn about God with the arrival of western Christianity. What they did was to destroy our traditional beliefs in Kalunga ka Nangombe. So for me my children should fear God because he is the only one who can protect them from all sorts of evils. God can help them succeed in doing their school work (Parent/guardian interview, 27/07/2012).

Such belief is transferred from generation to generation.

The belief in God has been transferred from our great parents. My father told me to pray, especially when I experience difficulties. He also told me to teach my children about God ... My parents also respected the church because when I was small, I used to go to church with my father. Church is the first commandment in our home up to now (Parent/guardian interview, 31 08/2012).

The role played by religion in families is described by parents in the following way: "... we tell the children to respect God and pray for his guidance in their studies. I know children succeed in school with the assistance of God" (Parent/guardian interview, 25/07/2012).

Another parent said: "I emphasise going to church because I believe we are moving on because of God. He gives us strengths ... I tell my children to go to church every Sunday as well as pray every day to ask God to assist them with their schoolwork" (Parent/guardian interview, 27/07/2012).

Some families turn to God as a way of seeking support in raising their children.

I am trying to raise today's children, my grandchildren. Where I am failing I put it in God's hands because he is supportive. I pray to ask God for assistance. I ask God to guide my grandson into the right direction. God is the only one who knows what the future holds for him (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

In summary, the data from parents/guardians showed religiosity as a value that guides family lives and which has an influence on their children's lives. Parents/guardians encourage their children to combine the religious values of respect, obedience, prayers and fear of God to achieve in school. Religion is portrayed in all parents'/guardians' interviews as a way for their

children to seek support from God with their schoolwork. The data from parents/guardians revealed that they too rely on support from God to raise their children.

6.4.3 Family values of obedience and respect

This section presents data on family values of discipline, obedience and respect for adults and the elderly or their superiors, abstinence from sex before marriage, punishment for noncompliance and the value of household chores and decision-making. The Aawambo culture emphasises discipline, obedience and respect for adults and the elderly. Adults raise their children in ways that they adhere to the norms. Enforcing the value of obedience and respect is a collective responsibility. Hence, parents or guardians raise their children in accordance with community norms and values and how such values are enforced.

Yes, I emphasise discipline, obedience and respect for adults and the elderly in my house. I tell them if they do not have respect, they will not be fortunate in life, no matter how hard they try. I raised my children to obey and not to question adults or those in authority (Parent/guardian interview, 04/09/2012).

Obedience and respect for adults and the elderly is considered as a way for children to be privileged in life.

I tell my children to be disciplined. I tell them that discipline is the key to success. I tell them to respect adults and the elderly. I tell my children that they should assist adults and the elderly where they can because by doing so they will be blessed (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

Traditionally, respect as a value is associated with success in life.

Respect for the elderly is emphasised in our culture as an important value associated with success. If children have no respect, they will not go far in life. Adults and the elderly pass their blessings to those who have respect for them and curse those who have no respect. As a result, I tell the children, I tell them that if they see an elderly person looking for his cattle which are in the vicinity, they should get the cattle for him and then take them home, you know? I also tell the boys to nod their heads and the girls to kneel when they greet adults and the elderly. Showing respect will give them the blessing to succeed in school (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/12).

Drawing from their childhood experiences, some of the parents/guardians provide examples of how being obedient and showing respect to adult and the elderly have shaped success in their lives.

What was important and this is something that carries a human being is respect and obedience. The reason why I got here is because I respect my mother (my elder sister). She is my mother because she is the one I know. She accepted all my difficulties like

“eating someone’s tail” (using up someone’s wealth to enrich yourself) but she encouraged us to work hard so that people do not say he (my sister’s husband) is poor because we “ate his tail”. Everything is grounded on obedience and respect for the elderly. It is only when you respect God that He will carry you to success. It is only through respect and obedience that our children will succeed in school (Parent/guardian interview, 04/09/12).

Parents also draw from their childhood experiences to explain how discipline was enforced by their own parents when they were growing up.

Oh ... traditionally, children had respect for the elderly. We could be beaten for misbehaving, not only by our parents but by any adult and we respected that ... Those days there were strict values about respect for adults and the elderly. Adults were also strict about teaching the young acceptable ways of behaving at home and in public. Discipline was enforced by all adults and not just by biological parents (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

Contrasting the time they were growing up with today’s children, parents see a distinction. One parent elaborates:

Today’s children can insult or even physically assault you. They will tell you, you are not their mother or father. When I was growing up, children were not encouraged to drink alcohol, now some are sharing a bottle of beer with their parents. Our traditional values are rotting. We are adopting a foreign culture which is destroying us. Traditionally there were strict values about respect. Adults were also strict about teaching the young acceptable ways of behaving at home and in public and all adults could punish a child for wrong doing. Today, you cannot reprimand another person’s child for wrong doing, mmm. Things have gone bad (Parent/guardian interview, 08/09/2012).

Another family value pertains to indulgence in sex. The data from parents/guardians show that families emphasise abstinence from sex as part of discipline, obedience and respect for adults and the elderly in their families. A number of parents said they emphasised abstinence from sex before marriage to protect their children from falling pregnant and dropping out of school.

I want to keep my children in school and I do not want them to drop out early due to pregnancy like what is happening to some children. I tell my children the same advice I received from my parents when I was young not to play with boys. I tell them it is taboo to play with boys before marriage. I tell them traditionally, girls who fell pregnant before marriage were burnt to death, uhu. I tell them to pay attention to the advice I give them. You see, our culture does not condone sex before marriage. I tell them, but, but, they sometimes do not listen. I tell them it is a sin to God deserving of punishment to play with boys before marriage. It is the only way I can keep them in school (Parent/guardian interview, 04/09/2012).

Drawing from her own experience of how she was brought up, one parent said:

I teach them our old traditions that people do not play with boys [laughter], no, if you learn to play with boys, you will land in trouble, ehe. You are with them but you have to play nice. Do not play on each other. This is my advice to them although today's children are difficult to deal with. Even if you tell them, they sometimes do not listen. They influence each other at school and want to try out things. That is when they end up in trouble. No, I still feel our upbringing was good (Parent/guardian interview, 09/07/2012).

Talking about sex with children is not part of the tradition of raising them among the Aawambo people. The same parent/guardian elaborated:

I am talking about children engaging in sex, not ordinary play. If they start sex at an early age, they might fall pregnant before they finish school. If they fall pregnant, their dreams are gone. My tradition does not allow me to be explicit with children about sex. I cannot discuss about sex with my children. I simply tell them it is not allowed and expect them to abide by the rule (Parent/guardian interview, 09/07/2012).

Parents presented the methods used to discipline children in their homes as varying from family to family. In traditional practices of Omusati region, corporal punishment was prominent and

some of the parents or guardians in this research acknowledged using this method as depicted in the following excerpts:

If my children are undisciplined, I beat them. This is how we were brought up and I believe this is the best method of disciplining them (Parent/guardian interview, 07/07/2012).

I usually stop my children to go and play with the neighbours' children if they disobey the rules (Parent/guardian interview, 04/09/2012).

Another parent/guardian provided an example of how she disciplines her children.

There was a time when my boy allowed the cattle to graze in the neighbour's pearl millet fields while playing with others. At night, when we were about to have dinner, I told him to go and sleep because the same food he was about to eat was the same that he allowed the cattle to destroy in the neighbour's crop field. I asked him what he thinks the neighbours will be eating. I know it was harsh but he has to learn to take responsibility for his actions, uhu... This will also teach him to become responsible for his own education (Parent/guardian interview, 17/06/2012).

The data from parent/guardian interviews revealed that discipline, obedience and respect are the core values in their families. The data also show that discipline of children is a collective responsibility of both parents and adults in the community and that parents/guardians draw from their own childhood experiences to enforce discipline in their families. The methods used to discipline children vary from corporal punishment to deprivation of play and food.

6.4.4 Family value of education

The data from parent/guardian interviews portrays the value of education as significant in their families. All parents said they enforce this value by making sure their children go to school even if it means coercing them to go to school. One of the parents/guardians said:

What is important to my family is that I tell my children to go to school. First they go to the kindergarten, now we have pre-primary and they should go to pre-primary. I tell them that when they are at school, they should look at the face of the teacher when teaching and listen carefully. When the teacher asks them a question, they should remember that he/she was saying this and that. With respect to the big children who are at the grades [higher grades], the teacher still stands in front of the class, teaching

and teaching. I tell them to listen carefully and when the question comes, they have listened to what the teacher told them and are able to answer questions. I tell them, when the teacher gives them a homework, they should try to use the paraffin lamp to complete the homework and take it to school the following day as instructed by the teacher (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/12).

Another parent/guardian reported that she chased her children to school. She said:

I chase them like other parents do. Like that small one you saw in front of my house when we entered, he does not like to go to school. I chase them to school. Sometimes they go halfway and do not reach school, but they come home when school is out. Ya, mmmm ... sometimes I follow them to see if they reach school (Parent/guardian interview, 20/06/2012).

When the parent was asked why she chased children to school. She replied:

Those days our parents and grandparents did not need education to survive. All they needed was our pearl millet fields [smiling] and they cultivated plenty of pearl millet then. Nowadays, rains are not good. Even if you have the field, sometimes the fields are flooded, other times there is little or no rain. How will they survive if they do not have education? That is why I said things have changed and that is why I chase my children to school (Learner interview, 19/07/2012).

Parents also have their own ideas about what they want for their children. They want to see their children succeed at school, they want to see them working. Some of the excerpts from parents:

I would like my daughter to study hard, behave well towards the teachers and to have a good life (Parent/guardian interview, 12/06/2012).

I want my daughter to be a respected person in life (Parent/guardian interview, 19/07/2012).

I want my son to work and become a good husband one day (Parent/guardian interview, 09/08/2012).

What this data reveals is that learners' families regard education as important in the lives of their children and thus emphasises the importance of going to school. They ensure that children go to school, sometimes by coercing them.

6.4.5 Family value of decision-making

In a household context of the Aawambo people, a man is regarded as the head of family and thus responsible for making decisions. In the absence of a man, the female parent takes charge of the household. Children are not allowed to make decisions in their families. "Children cannot make decisions. They cannot stand by those decisions. Decisions are made by adults, not children" (Parent/guardian interview, 23/ 09/2012). Children are thus raised to accept their place in family as non-decision makers.

6.4.6 Family value of household chores

Another family value that parents/guardians talked about is household chores. The Aawambo tradition requires that children learn to do house chores from a young age. The types of household chores in which children engage differ from family to family. In most cases household chores are related to gender roles in family. Table 20 indicates that 47% of the learners who completed the questionnaire said they take part in household chores.

Table 20: Learners' participation in household chores

		Responses	Percentage
Do you take part in household chores in your family?	No	173	47%
	Yes	199	53%
Total		372	100%

The data from the large sample of learners indicate that the majority (53%) as reflected in Table 19 below indicated that they take part in household chores of pounding *mahangu*, collecting water, collecting firewood, tilling the land and looking after siblings.

Table 21: Types of household chores

House chore	Responses	Percentages
Nothing	141	38%
Pound mahangu	58	16%
Fetch water	48	13%
Fetch firewood	46	12%
Till the land	30	8%
Look after siblings	23	6%
Did not indicate	26	7%
Total	372	100%

Parents/guardians also spoke of some of the household chores that they teach their children to participate in. One parent said:

My children have to work on the pearl millet field during the rainy season. I sometimes wake them up very early to cultivate before they go to school and then continue after school. Sometimes they come back late from school and cannot work in the field when it is dark. Uhm, I want my children to have a good education. But I also know that they cannot study and pass well if there is no food at home. My tradition has always engaged children in household chores in preparation for the future when I am no longer there, mmm. Although I want them to get an education, they also have to assist me at home. I am 60 years old now and do not have enough energy to do all the household chores. What can I do? I do not have an answer since someone has to put food on the table for children to survive and have energy to study (Parent or guardian interview, 12/07/ 2012).

Another parent/guardian said her children only do household chores on weekends and not during the course of the week.

I never ask my children to do household chores on weekdays. I really disagree with the tradition and those forcing school children to do household chores before and after school. What time do they have to study? Some parents get disappointed when their children fail, but do not reason that they do not allow them time to study. My children only do household chores on weekends. That is when I teach them about the tradition.

Sometimes I have to pound mahangu myself or cook to give my children a chance to study. Many times, I tell them to pound enough mahangu flour for the week on Saturdays (Parent / guardian interview, 20/09/2012).

In summary, this section presented data on ideational influences shaping family lives in Omusati region. The values of communalism, religiosity, obedience and respect for adult and the elderly, the value of education, the value of decision-making and the value of household chores are considered family values. Learners navigate their way through these values to achieve in school.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presents data on the structural and cultural conditions in Omusati region and in learners' families that influence learners' lives. The data revealed that the regional context and family socioeconomic status are the key structural conditions shaping learners' lives. In the research literature on social explanations for learner achievement, these factors are associated with underachievement. Within these two major structures are distances to school, family education, and access to basic services, family structure, family employment, amenities, utilities and, family resources and assets. Both at regional and family levels, poverty is measured by lack of resources in learners' families such as utilities, amenities and sanitation facilities such as flush toilets; low level of education attained by learners' parents/guardians, low or lack of family income and high unemployment rates as structures shaping learners' lives. However, unlike the hereditary thesis expounded earlier that presents learners' from low socioeconomic status as genetically low in intelligence and thus unable to do anything about their disadvantaged circumstances, some parents reported that the extended family provides financial and emotional safety nets for families which make it possible for children to remain in school. The cultural conditions shaping the lives of the people in Omusati region and in their domestic lives are communalism, religiosity, family values of obedience and respect, family value of education, family value of household chores and family values of decision-making as shaping but not deterring learners' lives them as alleged by biological and social context explanations.

CHAPTER 7

STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS AT IDENTIFIED SCHOOLS

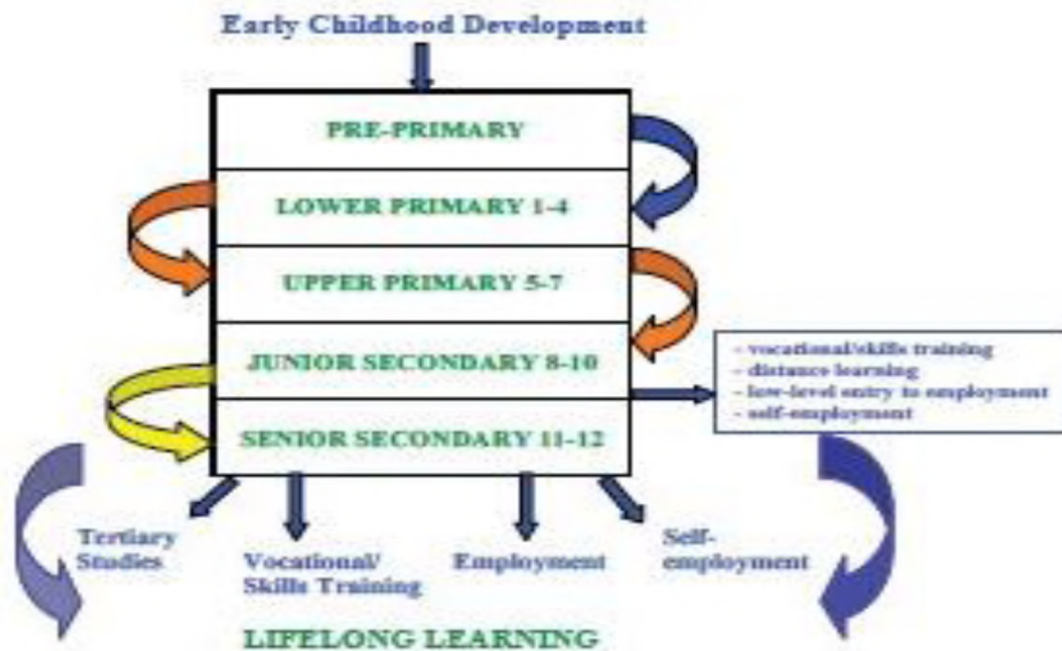
7.1 Introduction

Apart from the family, the school is another important conditioning influence in learners' lives. Archer (2012) argues that in late modernity, young people are presented with variety which propel them to be reflexive and to make choices. The school is one of the platforms where learners are shaped by structural and cultural conditions to confront late modernity. This chapter highlights the structural and cultural conditions at school that shape learner's schooling lives and is presented in three sections. The first section describes the structure of the education system in Namibia. The second section presents the policies that govern schools. The third section presents the actual events in the two identified schools (including the surrounding areas) and the challenges experienced. We should be reminded that the two identified schools are rural with the majority of learners being non-achievers. The strategies that learners used to act on the structural and cultural conditions at school are provided in Chapter 9.

7.2 The structure of the education system in Namibia

The education system in Namibia is divided into three phases. As portrayed in Figure 9, the education school system in Namibia begins with Early Childhood Development where children attend kindergarten (which are privately run) before they enter Pre-Primary.

Figure 9: Structure of education in Namibia



The Pre-Primary phase caters for children who are 5/6 years of age and prepares them for formal education. The Lower Primary phase caters for Grades 1-4 where learners learn to read and write in two languages i.e. their mother tongue or a predominant language in the area where they start school with a transition to English medium in Grade 4. Grades 5-7 makes up the Upper Primary phase, Grades 8-10 the Junior Secondary phase and Grades 11-12 the Senior Secondary phase. At the end of Grade 10, learners write the Junior Secondary National examinations and learners who obtain 23 out of 41 points are promoted to the Senior Secondary phase. Other learners can take the vocational route, distance education or enter the job market as Figure 5 shows. At Grade 12 level, learners write the National Examination and then exit to tertiary institutions, vocational skills training or enter the job market.

7.2.1 Education policies

This section outlines some of the policies guiding the education system at national and regional levels for the purpose of understanding the broader policy frameworks within which schools operate. Four broad policies guide education in Namibia. First, Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution stipulates that “all children shall have the right to education.” In other words, education is not a privilege but a right for all regardless of their social status in the Namibian society. Second, in order to achieve the requirement of the constitution, the national policy document entitled *Toward Education for All: A Development Brief of Education, Culture and*

Training (1993) states that all schools in Namibia should provide education based on four pillars, namely, access, equity, quality and democracy. In the same document, access is defined as opening up opportunity for all learners to enrol and remain in school until they reach the age of 16 or until they finish school. Equity refers to equality and a non-discriminatory education system for all including those who live in disadvantaging contexts and those living with disabilities and to ensure equal distribution of educational resources to all school for quality education. Quality is defined as the provision of an effective education to learners from all corners of society through an “interactive process in which learners create, not simply receive, knowledge” while democracy refers to fairness in education for all (Namibia. MEC, Toward Education for All, 1993, p. 67). In other words, the policy document stipulates that a quality education should be provided through a learner-centred framework which allows active learner engagement in the learning process.

Third, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in the Curriculum for Basic Education (2010) states that English is the language of instruction in all schools from Grade 4 onwards while the mother tongue is the language of instruction for Grades 1-3. Although the NSA (2012) statistics revealed that English is only spoken by 1% of the population in Namibia as the first language, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Toward Education for All policy document (1993, p. 66) states that “English will be the medium of instruction for all subjects at Secondary School level.” The policy document additionally states that “schools are expected to play their role in establishing the use of English as the official language” and that “since English is not a lingua franca in Namibia, teaching English is to have a high priority” (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 63). Furthermore, the National Curriculum for Basic education (2010) requires schools to ensure that another local language is taught concurrently with English at all school levels.

Fourth is the Assessment and Promotion policy for schools. According to the National Curriculum for Basic Education (2010), assessment at secondary school level is a combination of continuous assessment and examination results. The curriculum document specifies that continuous assessment (CA) should account for 50% of the summative grade in skills-based subjects such as Languages and Pre-Vocational subjects while examination should account for another 50%. The curriculum document additionally stipulates that CA should account for 35% in all content subjects while examinations account for 65%. This implies that more weight is placed on examinations in content subjects while equal weight applies to skills subjects.

At Grades 11 and 12, CA results determine whether a learner should write examinations at Ordinary or Higher levels and in the case of Mathematics and Second Languages at the Core or Extended Ordinary levels. The curriculum requires all learners to write a formal schoolbased examination at Grade 11, the purpose of which is to identify essential areas of skills learned and to familiarise learners with procedures and formats of the exit external examinations at Grade 12 level. All learners who are in Grade 12 are required to write a mock examination in August of each year to further prepare for the external examination at the end of the year.

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (Namibia. Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010) stipulates that entrance to senior secondary education is determined by the number of points obtained in the Grade 10 national examinations. The Senior Secondary Education curriculum is divided into two phases, Grade 11 and 12. For a learner to be promoted to Grade 11, they are required to attain a minimum of 23 out of 42 points. The curriculum also states that promotion to Grade 12 requires that a learner attain satisfactory results in attendance, schoolwork and Grade 11 examinations. The grade a learner attains in continuous assessment at grades 11 and 12 determines if a learner writes Grade 12 examinations at Ordinary or Higher level and in the case of Mathematics and Languages at the core or extended levels. A formal school-based examination is provided at the end of Grade 11 to enable a review of areas and skills learned in the course of the year. A grading scale of A-G is used for Grade 12 ordinary level while the higher level uses a grade scale of 1-4 with a U or ungraded being used at both levels. Learners who do not achieve satisfactory results may be denied readmission to formal secondary education and instead take the non-formal education alternative (Namibia. MoE. National Curriculum for Basic Education, 2010).

Furthermore, the Curriculum for Basic Education (2010) stipulates that all learners shall select their fields of study they pursue at senior secondary level when they are in Grade 10 (Namibia. MoE, 2010). A list of various fields of study is provided and learners have to decide in which fields they wish to pursue their future careers. The following fields are offered and all learners are required to make choices in grade 10 for them to be placed in their chosen fields of study when they go to grade 11. Table 22 shows the fields available for study.

Table 22: Namibia Secondary Education: Fields of Study

Natural Science and Mathematics	NSM1	Biology*, Physical Science*, Mathematics*
	NSM2	Biology*, Mathematics*, Geography*
	NSM3	Physical Science*, Mathematics*, Computer Studies*
	NSM4	Agriculture, Biology*, Mathematics*
	NSM5	Physical Science*, Mathematics*, Geography*
Social Sciences	SS1	Development Studies, Geography*, History*
	SS2	Economics*, Geography*, History*
Technology	T1	Design and Technology*, Mathematics*, Physical Science*
	T2	Home Economics, Biology*, Development Studies
	T3	Fashion and Fabrics, Business Studies*, Development Studies
	T4	Mathematics*, Computer Studies*, Design and Technology*
Commerce	C1	Accounting*, Business Studies*, Mathematics*
	C2	Accounting*, Mathematics*, Computer Studies*
	C3	Accounting*, Economics*, Mathematics*

Source: Namibia.-NIED, 2010. (*) Available for both Ordinary and Higher levels of the examination.

As reflected in Table 22, four areas of study are provided namely Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Technology and Commerce and schools can offer subjects in those areas. Each learner is required to choose a field of study in Grade 10 based on their career aspirations. According to the Curriculum for Basic Education (2010), apart from the fields of study, learners also do non-promotional subjects (e.g. Religious and Moral Education, Basic Information Science, Physical Education, Computer Practice and Life Skills). Broadly, all schools are expected to enact these policies in their respective schools.

Overall, this section outlined key educational policies which serve as frameworks for schools in Namibia. The four comprehensive policies guiding education in Namibia in general and Omusati region in particular are education as a right for all children; access, equity, quality and democratic education for all; the use of English as a medium of instruction in all schools and the assessment and promotion policy.

7.2.2 Omusati Regional Education Profile

As reflected in in Table 23, the 2011 Census data revealed that the total number of schools in Omusati region make up 21% of the schools at national level. The average number of learners per teacher at secondary level is 21 which is equal to that at national level.

Table 23: Omusati Regional Education Profile as per 2011 Population Census

Summary Statistics	Omusati	National
Population (Census, 2011)	242,900	2,104,900
School-age population 7-18	83,384	599 897
% in poor households (NHIES, 2009/10)	21%	33%
Number of schools (EMIS, 2012)	274	1,703
<i>Teachers (EMIS, 2012)</i>		
Primary (approximate)	2,243	15,314
Secondary (approximate)	1,316	8,294
% Female	63%	59%
% Qualified	80%	80%
Learners (EMIS, 2012)	87,782	623,116
Primary only	53,211	393,385
<i>Attendance rates net/gross (DHS, 2006/07)</i>		
Primary	96/150	91/133
Secondary	46/61	47/60
Learners per teacher primary	24	26
Learners per teacher secondary	21	21
Textbooks per pupil (EMIS, 2012)	4.1	4.1
% schools > 3 textbooks/ learner	67%	63%

Source: UNICEF, 2013

As Table 23 indicates, there are approximately 1 316 secondary school teachers in Omusati region of whom 63% are female and 80% are qualified. In the next section, I focus on the structural conditions at Malenga Secondary School (MLSS).

7.3 Structural conditions at Malenga Secondary School (MLSS)

The purpose of this section is to depict the structural conditions influencing learners' schooling lives at MLSS. I begin with the location of the school before homing in on school policies and rules, school resources, school timetable and classroom life, learner support systems and hostel life as the structures that shape the lives of the learners at school. The data presented for this section is derived from learners' questionnaire, focused group interview with teachers, school documents, observations and field notes.

7.3.1 School location

MLSS is located about 80 kilometres from the nearest town in Omusati region. It was initially a female only Finnish Missionary School but was changed to a co-educational public secondary school in the 1980s. The area where the school is located is rural and the school is designated as rural by the Ministry of Education (Namibia. Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment [DNEA], 2012). With poor infrastructural development, the surrounding areas consist of subsistence agricultural communities with traditional homesteads in nearby villages. The most cultivated crops are pearl millet and sorghum but families also raise small stocks, mainly cattle and goats which were seen grazing in the vicinity of the school during the data collection process (Field notes, 12/06/2012). A glance at the environment of MLSS shows that the area is bare and dusty with a few palm trees and some thorn bushes and mopane shrubs. There is only one main tar road from the nearest town which is less than a kilometre from the school and which passes through the settlement (Field notes, 12/06/2012).

A small PEP store, Circuit Inspector's Office, cuca shops and small grocery shops are visible from the main road and within the school radius (Field notes, 12/06/2012). There is no clinic and learners who fall sick are taken to the district hospital at the nearby town. The school is surrounded by a fence and the main entrance is guarded 24 hours a day. The security guard at the gate ensures that all visitors entering the school sign a visitor's book before entering the school premises.

7.3.2 School structure

MLSS follows a hierarchical structure which is modelled on the generic structure prescribed by the Ministry of Education. This structure consists of the School Board as the overall body responsible for the governance of the school, followed by the school Principal who is the daily administrator of the school. The School Board is made up of the school Principal, one Head of Department, one teacher and two community members. The Heads of Departments are next in the structure reporting to the School principal. Thereafter come subject heads, teachers, Learner Representative Council (LRC) and learners.

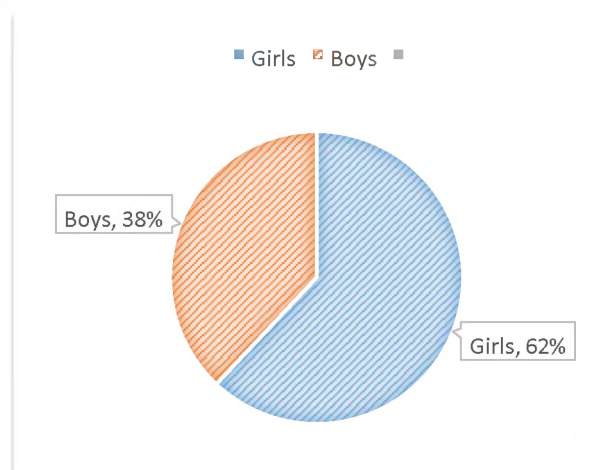
With an enrolment capacity of 574 learners, the school provides tuition for Grades 8-12. According to the School Principal, this school capacity is often surpassed due to community demand to have their children registered in school. According to school records, the school registered 692 learners in 2008, 746 learners in 2010 and the highest was 911 learners registered in 2011. The age of the Grade 12 learners range between 17 and 24. As shown in Table 24, the 192 learners who completed the questionnaire indicated that 46% are between the age of 19 and 20 while 3% indicated that they are 23 to 24 years of age.

Table 24: MLSS Grade 12 learners' age in 2012

Age	Responses	Percentage
17-18	70	36%
19-20	88	46%
21-22	29	15%
23-24	5	3%
Total	192	100%

Of the total number (574) of learners enrolled at the school in 2012, Grade 12 comprised 192 (119 girls (62%) and 73 boys 38%). The remaining 479 learners were in Grades 8-11.

Figure 10: MLSS learners' gender



As a boarding school, MLSS accommodates up to 300 learners in the hostel. A total of 192 were in Grade 12 in 2012. Since not all the 300 learners are boarders, 186 of the 192 Grade 12 learners were boarders while the rest were attending school from home. Learners who are accommodated in the hostel are mainly from remote areas and priority for hostel placement is given to those whose homesteads are within a 5 or more kilometre radius (MLSS Internal Policy Guide, 2011). As reflected in Table 25, learners' responses to the questionnaire indicated that 97% of the 192 Grade 12 learners who completed the questionnaire are boarders and only 3% travel from home to school each day.

Table 25: Number of MLSS 2012 Grade 12 learners who are boarders

		Responses	%
Are you staying in the school hostel?	Yes	186	97%
	No	6	3%
	Total	192	100%

The school has a staff complement of 25 teachers. The class lists of 2012 show that there were six Grade 12 classes with the number of learners ranging from a minimum of 17 and a maximum of 39 learners per class. Classes were organized in accordance with subject choices with the smallest class size being in the field of Commerce while areas of Social Sciences and Natural Sciences had larger classes of between 30 and 39 learners each.

7.3.3 School policies and routines

The purpose of this section is to present data on MLSS policies as structures influencing learners' schooling lives and how national education policies highlighted earlier are enacted at school level. School policy documents and learner codes of conduct for the two schools are attached to the appendices. The MLSS Internal School Policy Guide (2011) stipulates that there are a number of policies to which the school personnel and learners adhere. These policies include the policy on school and hostel admission, teaching and learning policy, assessment and promotion policy, policy on school programmes, the codes of dress policy, policy on school budget and School Development Fund (SDF) as well as the policy on the mass cleaning campaign.

The Regional Office Placement Committee is responsible for the placement of all learners seeking admission to Grade 11. In other words, the school does not directly deal with admissions to Grade 11. However, through 'guided transfer' the school deals with special cases of Grades 9, 10 and 12 learners who seek admission due to family relocation, death of the parents/guardians, chronic illnesses requiring them to transfer if MLSS is closer to their family homes. Admission under these circumstances is done with strong recommendations from the School Principal (MLSS Internal Policy, 2011). To facilitate this exercise, an Admissions Committee has been established to screen applications for admission of learners to Grade 8. This committee is headed by a senior teacher. According to the school policy guide, learners who seek admission to Grade 8 write an aptitude test and the results of the test determine final admission. In addition, learners are required to be in possession of an identification document and must acquire a school uniform before going to classes. The policy further states that all parents of children who seek admission to Grade 8 should be informed about their children's admission status no later than October of each year. Special attention is devoted to the admission of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and to advising teachers on how to assist them. During parents' meetings, teachers advise parents on how orphans can apply for social grants and to use the grant for the purpose of educating their children. Children whose parents cannot afford to pay school fees can apply for exemption and the school guides parents on how to go about this process.

Admission to the school hostel is considered "a privilege but not a right" (MLSS Internal School Policy, 2011, p. 15). Learners who require admission to the school hostel should live

more than 5 kilometres away from the school to be considered for admission. Should the learner be admitted to the hostel, they must report to the school not later than two days after the commencement of the school term, otherwise they forfeit their places in the hostel. Admission to the hostel is renewed on an annual basis.

There is a policy on teaching and learning which is based on the national policies for education of access, equity, quality and democracy as indicated earlier. The high quality of education at MLSS is attributed to good teaching and it practices face-to-face teaching where the teacher is expected to impart knowledge to the learners as reflected in the school timetable and there is an expectation of lesson preparation. The school timetable shows that learners are expected to be in their classes between 7h30 in the morning to 14h00 from Monday to Friday (MLSS Summary timetable of teachers, 2013). During this time, teachers teaching different subjects are expected to be in their classes teaching as stipulated in the school policy. A siren is used to alert learners and teachers to go to their classes or indicate when a lesson is over and when it is time for a break.

On 12/07/2012 I observed a typical lesson at MLSS. The teacher played a predominant role, using mainly a question and answer methodology. There was little interaction between the learners and the teachers. The majority of the learners sat still during the lesson while the teacher delivered subject content. The teacher used the textbook to deliver the lesson without aiding the lesson presentations with concrete materials to enhance learners' understanding. The most commonly used teaching aid used in the classes observed was the chalkboard and all lesson notes were written on the board for learners to copy. Furthermore, learners were expected to sit quietly, listen to the teacher, complete classwork and copy notes from the chalkboard. Few learners asked or answered questions during the lessons observed. (Personal field notes, 12/07/2012).

Apart from teaching, class teachers are required to complete the class attendance register, follow-up on learner absenteeism and report them to the School Principal's office, conduct home visits where possible to find out why a learner has been absent from class, ensure personal hygiene and appearance of the learners, make different timetables available to his/her classes on time and liaise with learners' parents/guardians through the office of the School Principal. Supervisory teachers and the Learners Representative Council (LRC) enforce punctuality, learners' arrival at the morning devotion and classes and also after break time.

They also see to it that learners attend the afternoon and evening studies on time. While the afternoon study is compulsory to all including day learners, the evening study is only compulsory for learners who reside in the hostel. During examination time, the evening study time is extended to two hours (from 18h00-20h00. There is also study time on Fridays and Sundays from 18h00-19h00. The academic office is responsible for drawing up a supervision timetable and teachers take turns. A class roll call is done to ensure that all learners are in their classes during study times.

The school also has a policy in place for class visits for teachers. Class visits are carried out by the School Principal, HOD and Senior teachers in different subjects including non-promotional subjects twice per term. Such visits are either scheduled and the teachers informed in advance or unscheduled and without the knowledge of the teacher. After each visit, a post-discussion conference is held with the teacher not later than two days after they were observed. According to one of the teachers, the purpose of class visits is to “render support to teachers, identify teaching weaknesses and assist those who are struggling” (Teacher focused group interview, 12/08/2012).

MLSS is examination-driven. The promotion of learners is determined through examinations and tests. For a learner to pass Grade 12, they write a national examination and should attain a minimum of 25 points in five subjects including an E in English for those seeking admission to Vocational Training Centres (VTC). Learners who want to proceed to university are required to attain 25 points in 5 subjects including a C in English (EMIS, 2011). There is no automatic promotion for learners at MLSS but all learners must be promoted based on their performance in examinations, class attendance, behaviour and general conduct at school. It is compulsory for all learners to complete the work they receive as failure to adhere to the rule results in learners being asked to redo the work or sign a misconduct of transgression if the behaviour is repeated. At times, parents are called in for further engagement. If the learner does not improve, he/she is referred to the Disciplinary Committee or referred for counselling and eventually to the School Board for a final decision. Furthermore, subject teachers are required to keep clear records of learners’ performance and behaviour for reference purposes.

Various meetings are conducted at the school per term - at least three staff meetings, two departmental meetings, one parents meeting, two LRC meetings and one mass meeting, one school board meeting, three institutional workers meetings and two supervisors’ meetings. In

addition, the school holds a weekly management meeting, one subject meeting per month and one hostel block meeting per month. There are various clubs at the school. The HIV/AIDS awareness club at school aims at addressing, managing and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS related diseases such as My Future My Choice and HIV/AIDS awareness club. There is also an English language club, sports club and religious club. These clubs are responsible for organizing events such as HIV/AIDS week, World AIDS Day and other related programmes and events. Some clubs such as the English club provides opportunity for learners to improve their language proficiency.

The school also has a policy on finances. The policy on the school budget and School Development Fund (SDF) stipulates that for the fund to be used for the benefits of the school, it should be approved by the school board and parents. However, an amount of up to N\$5000 could be used to purchase essential items for the school with the approval of the School Principal. The collection of the SDF is done by class teachers. The purpose of the fund is to cater for official school trips fuel payments within the radius of 80 kilometres, buying of textbooks and stationery, minor school maintenance, pay for additional staff members (such as relief teachers, security guards, computer instructor and assistant librarian), funding sport equipment and activities, pay school phone bills, provide transport and meals to school board members while engaged in school related functions, subsidise teachers' transport to and from official workshops. The policy does not allow the school to keep petty cash exceeding N\$1000.

MLSS additionally has a policy on school laboratories. There are two school laboratories at MLSS, a Computer and a Physical Science and Biology laboratory. Regarding the computer laboratory, learners are encouraged to surf the internet and improve their computer skills. The school policy on laboratories stipulates how the two laboratories should be used by both teachers and learners. For example, class groups are allowed to make use of the computer laboratory during their scheduled time slots while individual learners can make appointments to use the computers in the afternoons. Learners are only allowed to use the computer laboratory in the presence of the computer instructor and are required to follow the rules of using the computers. Teachers are not allowed to use the computer room while classes are in progress and internet is to be used only for academic purposes. Additionally, the policy only allows authorised users (teachers and learners at the school) in the computer laboratory but other interested groups such as community members can use the computer lab with consent from the school Principal at a cost.

With regard to the Physical and Biology laboratory, the MLSS Internal School Policy (2011) indicated that the laboratory should only be used for experiment purposes. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to ensure that the necessary apparatus is available, conduct inventories of apparatus and teaching aids, materials and take precautions when handling and storing chemicals.

MLSS has developed a Code of Conduct for learners which stipulate what the school considers unacceptable behaviour from learners at school and which outlines what the school regards as 'serious' offences. According to the Code of Conduct for Learners (2011), if a learner commits a 'serious' offence while staying in the hostel he/she forfeits his/her place for the following year. The MLSS Code of Conduct for Learners (2011, p. 3) shows some of the 'serious' offences as theft, bullying, harassment and intimidation, provocation and insulting others, fighting, use of alcohol and/or drugs, beating someone, abortion, disrespectful attitude towards staff members, leaving the school premises without permission, intentional use of a weapon, cheating in examinations, sexual harassment, vandalism and losing school property.

The MLSS Internal School Policy indicates that the cleaning of the school premises and surrounding areas is part of learners' schooling lives. This is part of the school community partnership effort outlined in education policy at the national level which stresses the community school partnership (1991/2001). The school policy stipulates that there is a compulsory monthly cleaning campaign in which the entire school community participates. It is also stated in the policy document that the school also responds to community cleaning campaigns which are organised by the Local Authority. Class teachers are responsible for ensuring that learners in their classes are present at the cleaning campaigns whether they are boarders or day learners. Apart from general cleaning, learners are required to take turns to clean classrooms under the supervision of the class teacher. They are also responsible for taking care of cleaning equipment and are held accountable for their loss

As indicated earlier, MLSS' requirements for admission to the hostel state that homes should be more than five kilometres away (MLSS Internal Policy Guide, 2011). The data from the larger sample of learners as portrayed in Table 26 revealed that of the six Grade 12 learners at MLSS who were non-boarders in 2012, three (2%) indicated that they walk between 1-3 kilometres while 2 (1%) said they walk 4-6 kilometres

Table 26: Distances non-boarders travel to MLSS

Distance to school	Responses	Percentage
Stay in hostel	186	96%
1-3 km	3	2%
4-6 km	2	1%
More than 10 km	1	1%
Total	192	100%

At MLSS learners who arrive in Grade 11 are those who have not been admitted elsewhere and are placed at the school by the Ministry of Education office.

Most learners here have been placed by the Ministry of Education because they were not admitted elsewhere. Some of these learners performed low at their previous schools while others were simply unfortunate and could not get admitted elsewhere (Teachers focused group interview (19/08/2012)).

In terms of school routine, all learners and teachers at MLSS follow school routines that are reflected in the school Internal Policy Guide (2011) document and the school timetable and include a compulsory morning assembly, daily classroom teaching, compulsory class attendance, study times and the prescribed time for being in the dormitories for learners who are boarders.

The school morning assembly is held every Monday at 7h00 and is used to make announcements and convey information deemed necessary from staff members to the learners and their parents/guardians. On 23/09/2012, I attended one of the morning assemblies. The assembly started with a prayer followed by announcements from the School Principal. Teachers can also contribute. Items under discussion included disciplinary matters, punctuality, and respect for authority, fear of God and sport activities. Apart from the morning assemblies there are also teachers' briefings during the week.

Another aspect of the school routine is the attendance register. There are two types of attendance registers at MLSS, one for the staff and the others for learners. All school staff members are compelled to complete an attendance register each day upon entry and exit.

Similarly, each class teacher completes an attendance register for learners 10 minutes before the school closes each day.

The school timetable provides class schedules for both teachers and learners. There are also scheduled study times where all learners are expected to be in their classes in the afternoon for study but day learners are exempted from evening study time. During examination time, the evening study time is extended from one hour to two hours.

In line with the national policy, the language of instruction at MLSS is English. However Oshiwambo is the language predominantly spoken in the surrounding areas of the school. Teachers focused group discussion confirmed this.

As you know, the people in this area speak Oshiwambo as their mother tongue. That also applies to both teachers and learners here. As a result, both learners and teachers find it convenient to speak in their mother tongue instead of English which is a struggle for most of us (Teacher focused group interview, 19/08/2012).

7.3.4 School resources

The school has electricity and piped water and the buildings are constructed with cement bricks while the roofing is corrugated sheets. My first classroom observation day was on 10/06/2012. The physical condition of the classrooms was poor - they looked old with dilapidated ceilings and the walls and floors were dirty with broken chairs and tables. One of the windows was broken and covered with a box. Each learner was allocated a permanent seat and could not change position. Although each learner had a chair and small table, some of the chairs were broken. The second classroom was no better, paint was peeling off and there were no decorations. The floors were potholed and uneven while rubbish collected behind the door. There was an old broken cupboard with the door ripped off. In both classes, teachers used an old cloth as a duster. There is also an acute shortage of textbooks in the school. As one teacher puts it:

I am aware that resources in our school especially textbooks are not enough. We have learners who are sharing textbooks in some subjects, uhnu, on some instances two or three learners share one textbook (Teacher focused group interview, 19/09/2012).

In addition, one of the classrooms served as both a classroom and a school library as Figure 11 shows.

Figure 11: The MLSS Library



As shown in Figure 11, only two shelves on one side of the classroom serve as the school library while the rest of the space is used for teaching. On 17/07/2012 I visited the library but a class was in progress. When I looked through the library shelves, I found mostly novels and old textbooks some of which dated back to the 1960s (Field notes, 17/07/2012). My observation is supported by one of the teachers who took part in the focused group interviews.

There are hardly any useful books in our school library. Most books there are outdated and cannot really assist learners. However, the school makes copies for the learners where possible. Sometimes, the school photocopy machine does not work, but when it works, we try by all means to make handouts for our learners. That is the best we can do under the circumstances (Teacher focused group interview, 19/07/2012).

The minutes of the Science Departmental Meeting dated 14/01/2011 confirms the shortage of Grade 12 textbooks as follow: 50 in Physical Science, 4 in Biology and 50 books in Agriculture. The minutes also recorded the need for posters and models in Biology. Similarly, the minutes of the first Science departmental meeting held on 28/02/2012 reported that there was an urgent need for Biology and Agriculture textbooks for Grades 11-12, Mathematics and Physical Science Grade 11-12 as well as new Mathematic textbooks for Grade 10. Furthermore, while there is a laboratory at MLSS, there is a shortage of chemicals to conduct experiments. One teacher confirmed the shortage of laboratory materials at the school.

Yes, we do have a laboratory, we have the building, but what is the use of it if we do not have chemicals to conduct experiments for our learners to understand what they are learning, particularly in Physical Science? We cannot just have a building for a laboratory. It does not help us, uhu. The government should put more effort to supply

required chemicals especially to rural schools like ours if our learners are to succeed (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

Additionally, the minutes of the first Science departmental meeting held on 28/02/2012 state that the laboratory lacked equipment and proper storage but the HOD encouraged teachers to use what was available while the school tried to find ways to purchase some equipment.

As indicated earlier, MLSS is a boarding school with approximately 300 learners residing in the school hostel. The hostel is located to the western part of the school and about 800 metres away from the classroom blocks. There are two dormitories, one for female and the other one for male learners. On 17/07/2012, I visited the school dormitories. The school hostel appears neat as one approaches its entrance. However, on entering one of the hostel rooms one sees signs of overcrowding. Each room has four bunk beds so there were 8 learners in each room. The space between beds was small and there were no tables where learners could sit and do their schoolwork. The male dormitories are physically separated from females with a wall between them. The paint on the walls of both the male and female dormitories was peeling off and the walls are in need of repainting. There is electricity, piped water, shared flush toilets and shower facilities in both hostels. There are also designated areas in both dormitories where learners wash their clothes because there are no washing machines (Personal conversation, 17, 07/2012).

7.3.5 Learner support

A Learners' Representative Council (LRC) has been established at the school to represent the interests of the learners at disciplinary hearings and those experiencing educational challenges. It also provides counselling services and support to those learners in need. The LRC also facilitate the overall day to day running of the school as reflected by its involvement in enforcing school rules such as ensuring that learners are in their classes on time, putting order at the dining hall and assisting with food distribution and ensuring that learners are respectful of those in authority as stipulated in the Code of Conduct for Learners (2011). The teachers also provide support to the learners.

Uh...I think ...that will now depend on individual teachers. I have seen some teachers are giving extra work. They do give some lessons in the evening. We also have as I indicated vacation classes. I think it is part of the school because we are the ones to

decide who is to go and attend vacation learners hosted at high achieving schools. When you decide who is to go you look at who is going because he/she knows little, who is going because you want him/her to get more [knowledge] although he/she is good, like these learners although we send them, we want them to benefit because we know if they go they will get something (Teacher focused group interview, 24/09/2012).

Morally, one of the teachers said:

The school has an open door policy which allows learners a chance to consult any teacher they trust with matters pertaining to their education. For some learners encouragement from some teachers is all they need to work harder and succeed (Teacher focused group interview, 27/08/2012).

Some learners who are in need of counselling to cope with schoolwork are referred to the counselling services provided at the school.

7.3.6 School performance

As reflected in Table 27, the 2012 learner performance at MLSS was low with only an accumulative of 0.3% of the learners receiving A* while an accumulative of 61% received E grades in the national examination.

Table 27: Distribution of symbols per subject in NSSCO 2012 at MLSS

Subject	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	I	Total
Oshindonga 1 st Lang	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
English 2 nd Lang	0	0	0	6	1	26	44	68	39	1	185
Design and Tech	0	0	1	2	10	5	1	0	0	0	19
Agriculture	0	0	0	13	2	32	30	0	0	1	78
Biology	0	1	2	6	16	40	47	45	27	1	1850
Physical Science	1	2	4	8	13	22	29	11	2	0	92
Maths	0	0	0	21	41	47	48	16	10	2	185
Development Studies	0	1	2	7	11	14	33	20	1	0	89
Geography	0	0	0	7	1	10	30	20	7	1	76

Fashion and Fabrics	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	6
Home Economics	0	0	0	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	11
Total for centre	1	4	9	78	105	197	262	180	86	6	928
Accumulative % /symbol	0.11	0.54	1.52	8.40	11.31	42.73	71.15	90.67	100		

Source: Directorate on National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA), (2012)

As indicated in Table 27, the accumulative percentage of learners who received A* and C is approximately 28 while an accumulative of 81% received an F grade. There is a structured award system at MLSS for the best performing teachers and learners. Categories awarded include academic achievement, achievement in sport, best performing teachers, the best wellbehaved learner, well-dressed learners, the neatest classroom and the neatest hostel block. Those serving on the LRC are also awarded as well as the most punctual teacher.

To summarise, the structural conditions at MLSS both constrain and enable learners' academic achievement. Stringent school policies governing the school, the focus on face-to-face teaching, routinized school activities, shortage of resources (textbooks, laboratory equipment and chemicals), and overcrowded dormitories were structures which learners have to navigate in order to achieve in school. However, the LRC, counselling services and teacher support services provided an enabling environment for learners to achieve. Let us now turn to the cultural conditions shaping learner' schooling lives at MLSS.

7.4 Cultural conditions at MLSS

At MLSS, the focus is on school culture and values, professionalism, school rituals, obedience and respect for authority and teaching and learning. These values are manifested in the habits, routines and practices established and emphasised in the school.

7.4.1 School culture and values

MLSS displays an institutional culture that is predominantly teacher-centred. Teachers are compelled to submit their lesson preparation books for inspection each week by the Head of Department as a means of ensuring quality teaching (Teacher focused group interview,

17/07/2012). A siren is used to organize learning time and guide instructions and communication devices such as cellular phones for learners are not allowed on the school premises. There is emphasis on obedience to authority and adherence to the code of dress. The Code of Conduct for learners (2011) stipulates the dress code for learners and teachers including their overall appearance and this is closely monitored.

Additionally, MLSS emphasises mutual respect, obedience, honesty from within and towards others, unity of purpose, a triangular educational approach and unwavering commitment to both learners and teachers (MLSS Internal Policy Guide, 2012). Discipline is strictly enforced. Furthermore, the school articulates commitment to equitable and quality education, freedom of learners to develop their abilities, hard work, discipline and responsible citizenry as some of the values (MLSS Internal Policy Guide, 2011). While the vision of the school is to achieve an 80% pass rate in all grades, the results of 2012 show that less than 30% attain grades that qualify them to enter university as shown in Table 27 above. The motto of the school “Knowledge is forever” is displayed on the administration building as you enter the school (Field notes, 06/05/2012).

Part of the school practices entail rituals which serve to guide behaviour in a particular way. Prayers are held at every school occasion and learners are also encouraged to attend church services on Sundays.

The notion of communalism is exercised through community service which entails the school engaging in joint venture cleaning campaigns with the surrounding communities. 18/07/2012 was a cleaning campaign day. Community members brought implements for cleaning and removed some of the shrubs to provide a clean environment. They picked up paper, bottles, cans, and other litter from the surrounding areas. Teachers were at work, supervising learners from their classes and maintaining discipline and respect for community members.

To summarise, the culture of MLSS places emphasis on adherence to school rules with little attention given to human relations and innovation. Discipline and obedience is highly valued and stringent measures are in place to punish those who do not adhere to the school rules. The culture of the school is geared towards maintaining order and respect for authority. The practice of religiosity is emphasised at school and a spirit of communalism is promoted through community service activities such as the cleaning campaign.

7.5 Structural and cultural conditions at Aludhilu Secondary School (ALSS)

This section describes structural and cultural conditions at ALSS, the second school under study, drawing data from school documents, field notes and teacher' focused group interviews. I begin the section by describing the geographic location which structures learners' schooling conditions at ALSS.

7.5.1 School location

ALSS is located about 70 kilometres from the nearest town. It is situated in an area which was formerly forested but has now been converted into communal agricultural land. As a result, the surrounding areas consist of homesteads which are visible in the pearl millet fields as you approach the school. ALSS was established in the early 1990s in a rural area where the Finnish Missionaries settled in the 1870 and established an Evangelical Lutheran Church, a clinic and a primary school which are still functional (Field notes, 23/05/2012). There are a number of palm trees and thorn bushes, two other schools, one a lower primary while the other is an upper primary which were initially run by the church but are now run by the government. According to the School Principal of ALSS, the two primary schools serve as feeder schools for ALSS and are attended by learners from the surrounding villages. None of these primary schools have a hostel and thus learners walk from home to school each day. The area is covered by deep sand that makes it difficult for cars to access the school.

The Circuit Inspectors' office is located approximately 500 meters from the school gate. The Circuit Inspector is responsible for all the schools (both primary and secondary) in the circuit and oversees all school activities in his Circuit including ALSS (Field notes, 12/07/2012). There are also *cuca* shops and a small grocery shop 800 metres away from the school which the learners use. One of the teachers spoke of *cuca* shops as problematic to learners who walk to school.

Oh, there are times when learners who walk passed the *cuca* shops on the way to and from school get provoked by drunken people. Some try to beat the children for no good reason. Unfortunately, the footpath that some learners follow passes near those *cuca* shops. It is really sad (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

Being a rural school, ALSS is attended by the learners from local communities. As reflected in Table 28, the data from the larger sample of learners who completed the questionnaire show that of the 180 Grade 12 learners at the school in 2012, 94% were from the rural areas while only 6% indicated that they were from urban areas.

Table 28: ALSS learners home locations

Location	Responses	Percentage
Town	10	6%
Village	170	94%
Total	180	100%

As indicated in Chapter 6, some of the learners' family homes are far from secondary schools. Due to long distances, Table 29, shows that at ALSS, the majority (85%) of the learners are boarders.

Table 29: Number of Grade 12 learners in 2012 at ALSS who are boarders

Are you staying in the hostel at school?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	180	85%
No	27	15%
Total	180	100%

As Table 29 shows, a substantial percentage (15%) of the learners at ALSS indicated that they do not reside in the hostel as reflected in Table 30 and thus reported walking to school each day due to lack of space in the hostel.

Table 30: Distances learners travel to ALSS

Distances	Responses	Percentage
Stay in hostel	151	84%
1-3 km	19	11%
4-6 km	8	4%
7-10 km	2	1%
Total	180	100.0

As Table 30 shows, 11% of the learners at ALSS travel 1-3 kilometres each day, 4% travel 4-6 kilometers and 1% travel 7-10 kilometres. The teacher's focused interview confirm the unavailability of space in the school hostel.

Ja, on the challenges, one big challenge there is about accommodation. Like we told you most of these learners are still coming from home; and sometimes distance and sometimes they come from home they did not taste anything. So, one can imagine that if there was proper accommodation maybe the results we are saying is good now could be more better (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

7.5.2. School structure

ALSS is a boarding school with the capacity of approximately 600 learners. The school offers tuition for Grades 8-12 and had a complement of 27 teachers in 2012. There were 207 fulltime Grade 12 learners, 100 females and 107 males at the school. In 2012, Grade 12 learners were taught in seven classrooms. Allocations to class was done by the teachers based on learner ability, resulting in a class that consisted only of 'slow learners' or those not performing. The total number of full-time learners per Grade 12 class was between 27 and 33. In addition, the school offers tuition for part-time candidates who are registered with the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to improve their Grade 12 results. The NAMCOL learners attend classes in the afternoons, assisted by some of the Grade 12 fulltime teachers at the school.

The school has a formalised structure modelled on the stipulations of the Ministry of Education. The School Board is the overall governing body of the school, followed by the School principal, the Head (s) of Department, Subject Heads, Subject teachers, Learners' Representative Council (LRC) followed by the learners. The LRC is strictly regulated with their daily activities monitored by the teachers and the school management. As an example, Minutes of the Teachers Review meeting held on 17/06/2010 show that the agenda of the LRC meetings was checked before they held their meetings. In disagreement with this measures put in place to control the LRC, one teacher said:

Sometimes, our school treats learners as if they are unable to determine what is right for them. This is done by controlling what learners discuss in their meetings. Checking the agenda for LRC meetings is in reality spying on them. This is a sign of mistrust on

the part of the school management. Sometimes, we need to allow learners to run their own affairs without interference (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

The line of authority is strictly enforced by the School Principal and his second in command, the Head of Department. A number of committees are in place at the school - Assessment and Promotion Committee, Disciplinary Committees, HIV/AIDS Committee and Sport Committee. There are also clubs at the school such as the English Language Committee, Sport Committee, Mathematics and Science Committee and Hostel Committee. Each of these committees is headed by a teacher.

On 12/06/2012 a tour of ALSS premises revealed that the school is equipped with piped water, electricity and flush toilets. The security fence surrounding the school premises is old with holes in it. The main entrance and exit gate is guarded 24 hours a day. The guards see to it that learners do not leave the school premises without permission. At ALSS there was no book to be signed upon entry.

The school has an administration building with a number of offices - the office of the School Principal, the office of the Head of Department and the staffroom. The most noticeable feature as the researcher entered the office was the school organogram which was displayed on the wall. All teachers have small tables where they sit and prepare their lessons and mark learners' books. While the floors of the staffroom appear neat, the room is small with little space to store materials.

Two types of materials are used to construct the classrooms at ALSS. One classroom block is constructed with prefabricated materials while the rest are permanent structures constructed with bricks and corrugated sheets as roofing materials. On 0/08/2012 I conducted a classroom observation in one of the Grades 12 classrooms. The classroom is made of iron sheets, with low roofs that became hot in summer. The room is small with little space between learners' tables which made it difficult for the teacher to walk around. The classroom was hot and some learners used wet cloths to wipe their faces during the lesson. One of the teachers who took part in the focused group discussion noted: "I cannot stand the heat in the prefabricated classrooms as it affects learners' concentration during lessons" (Teachers focused group interviews, 20/06/2012).

7.5.3 School policies and routines

Documented school policies are in place at ALSS and serve to guide and regulate behaviour in the school. There are policies pertaining to academic matters and general conduct, inspection of teachers' preparation books, class attendance by both teachers and learners, compulsory attendance at the morning devotion, compulsory study time, dress code for both teachers and learners, learner conduct in school and hostel, prohibition of certain items on school premises such as cellular phones and many others. There are also undocumented rules pertaining to learner conduct in and outside the classroom such as raising up their hands if they want to say something, standing up when given a chance to say something in class and remain standing until the teacher tells them to sit down, standing in the queue before entering the classroom and speaking English on the school premises. There are four sets of rules that govern learners conduct at ALSS as outlined in the School Rules and Regulations (2011) document. These are, classroom/school rules, office rules, hostel rules, dining hall rules and rules pertaining to day learners. School rules are also seen as helping to "create a climate of order necessary for meaningful education to occur at school" (ALSS School Rules and Regulations, 2011, p. 1). The school stresses orderliness, harmony and self-discipline as important for it to function well. Structures (e.g. various committees, teachers and the LRC) have been put in place to oversee the functioning of the school to control the behaviour of teachers and learners for the wellbeing of the school. As a result, school rules and regulations are portrayed as a "positive approach to education and school problems" and a "system of maintaining discipline and expressing disapproval to negative conducts and behaviours" (School Rules and Regulations, 2011, p. 1).

The school timetable indicates that every Monday and Friday at 7h30 there is a morning assembly and devotion for the whole school community which lasts for 30 minutes. There are also morning devotions that are held from Tuesday to Thursday in the classrooms with the subject teachers before classes start. The purpose of the morning assembly is to update staff and learners on staff activities and communicate decisions from management or parents' meetings and remind learners of school rules including the code of dress (Personal conversation with the ALSS Head of Department (HOD), 25/07/12).

On 12/06/2012 I attended one of the morning assemblies and devotions at ALSS. The assembly is compulsory for all teachers and learners. Classes start immediately after the morning

assembly and learners and teachers are expected to be in their respective classrooms. The timetable shows that the day is well ordered.

7.5.4 School resources

ALSS experiences a shortage of resources such as textbooks, library resources and laboratory materials like chemicals to conduct experiments, equipment for the Physical Science laboratory, a new graph board and laboratory washing materials and other necessary items. The minutes of the first Science Departmental meeting held on 28/02/2012 confirms a lack of materials such as cylinders, insufficient laboratory equipment and the cages where cylinders are kept do not close. The school is equipped with electricity, piped water but the school library is a converted classroom, part of which was still used as a classroom during the time of data collection. The electricity supply was unreliable and the computer laboratory only has four computers that are shared by approximately 600 learners and which are not connected to the internet. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 12, the school library consists of four shelves which contain mainly outdated books dating back to the 1960s and novels with a few textbooks in some subjects. In line with this observation, one teacher said:

The school library is a challenge. I am aware that you visited this library. What did you see madam? Uhm, this is really not a library the way it should be. There are limited resources. Those few shelves cannot serve as a good library; they cannot serve 600 learners in our school. There are very few helpful books, books that learners can use to supplement their learning (Teacher focused group interviews, 10/06/2012).

Figure 12: ALSS Library



As indicated earlier, there is lack of textbooks and support materials at the school. There was a shortage of Grade 12 textbooks as follow: 40 in Physical Science, 20 in English, 60 books in

Agriculture and lack of posters and models in Biology. There were also lack of sewing machines and materials for those who want to pursue Fashion Design. The minutes of the first Science Departmental meeting held on 28/02/2012 documented this lack of resources and articulated an urgent need for Biology and Agriculture textbooks for Grades 11-12, Mathematics and Physical Science Grades 11-12 as well as new Mathematic textbook for Grade 10. Interviews with the teachers also confirmed this.

Where the textbooks are not available, of course there are a few but there is just, ah, no way learners can share them. Maybe there are five textbooks in the school or maybe they are ten but there are about 200 Grade 12s. So, there is a shortage of textbooks in subjects like Agriculture, subjects like Biology, subjects like Languages, ja. How can five textbooks be shared by 200 learners? It is difficult for the learners (Teacher focused group interviews, 10/06/2012).

In summary, lack of textbooks, laboratory equipment and chemicals to conduct experiments, a small school library and insufficient hostel accommodation are some of the factors that learners confront at ALSS.

7.5.5 Teaching and learning

At ALSS, teachers' responsibilities are to prepare for their lessons, be in class each day to teach, determine the content of the lesson to be taught based on the curriculum, give learners schoolwork to complete, assess learners, instil discipline in the learners and see to it that learners are well-behaved inside and outside the classrooms. In most of the classrooms which were observed learners' conduct is strictly controlled. On 29/09/2012 I observed a class of 30 learners during a Mathematics lesson. The seating positions of learners in the classroom were strictly adhered to. In addition, learners may only leave their classrooms during lessons or study time with permission from the subject teacher, class captain or supervisory teacher (ALSS School Rules and Regulations, 2011). This also applies to learners who want to visit the toilet. During lessons, learners were required to put up their hands when answering a question posed by the teacher, failure to do so resulted in being ignored. (Field notes, 29/09/2012).

The teacher's knowledge in the subjects they teach is highly valued and all teachers are required to submit their lesson preparation books to the Head of Department (HOD) for inspection every Friday as a control mechanism. The belief is "learners can do little to succeed

if teachers do not teach” (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012). On their part, learners are compelled to attend classes, study time, clean and keep the classrooms tidy each day, clean the chalkboard after every lesson, complete all homework on time and communicate in English on school premises at all times. Enforcement of school rules is the responsibility of both the LRC and the teachers. In particular, the LRC enforces school rules by monitoring learners’ respect for time (arrive at class on time) and show respect to the teachers and school authority.

In 2012, the academic performance of learners at ALSS was low, with only 0.48% of the learners achieving accumulative A grades in all subjects while the majority (75. 14%) attained an accumulative grade of an F as Table 32 shows.

Table 31: Accumulative symbols per subject in the NSSC-O examinations at ALSS in 2012

Subject	Distribution of symbols										Tot
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	I	
English 2 nd lang	0	0	0	2	13	33	17	16	124	2	207
Agriculture	0	0	6	27	66	75	25	1	0	1	201
Biology	0	0	1	8	15	29	61	53	33	1	201
Physical Science	1	4	4	17	33	55	64	21	1	1	201
Mathematics	0	0	0	38	60	59	40	8	1	1	207
Development Studies	0	0	0	2	1	4	6	0	0	0	13
Accounting	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	6
Business Studies	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	6
Economics	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	6
Total for centre	1	4	11	100	192	260	215	99	160	6	1048
Accumulative % per symbol	0.10	0.48	1.54	11.1	29.5	54.5	75.1	84.64	100		
				3	6	1	4				

Source: Directorate on National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA, 2012)

As portrayed in Table 32, out of 1048 learners at ALSS who sat the Grade 12 examination in all nine subjects, only 1 learner received an A*, 4 attained As, 11 Bs, 100 Cs and 260 received E grades.

7.5.6 Learner support

There were three types of support which learners at ALSS received at the time of data collection. First, there is a Learners' Representative Council (LRC) whose responsibility is to cater for the well-being of all learners, ensuring that challenges pertaining to their education are raised with the school management, ensuring that all learners obey the school rules and sometimes dealing with learner personal challenges. However, their activities are regulated by the teachers as indicated earlier.

Secondly, learner support also existed in the form of counselling. The Disciplinary Codes for Learners (2011) show that there is Counselling Committee at the school to which learners are referred when they exhibit unsociable behaviour. The Disciplinary Codes for Learners (2011) also indicate that learners who persistently do not perform well are referred to the Counselling Committee. It appears that at ALSS, counselling is mostly offered in relation to unsatisfactory school performance of disciplinary matters as counselling is only reflected in the Disciplinary Codes for Learners in relation to poor performance or ill-discipline.

The third type of learner support takes the form of established clubs at school. According to the HOD, the Maths and Science Club has been re-activated and is headed by a teacher and who was elected by other teachers to this position. The club provides a forum for learners to share their concerns about the subjects and to get assistance from the teachers and to prepare learners for regional Mathematics and Science competitions (Field notes, 20/07/2012).

There is also an English clinic which was established to help learners identified as having difficulties with English and to provide supplementary classes to learners in need after school. Some teachers identify the learners who need to join the clinic while others do so voluntarily.

What normally happens is that the teacher identifies the challenges learners' experience and focus on those. There are also some learners who ask to be assisted in certain areas such as writing skills especially composition writing, how to answer some questions which appear in the English examination papers and so on and so on (Teacher focused group interviews, 10/06/2012).

In summary, the type of materials used to construct the classroom spaces, school policies and routines, an outdated school library, insufficient laboratory equipment and chemicals to conduct experiments, small computer laboratory and lack of internet connectivity are some of the conditions learners experienced at school. Walking distances to school was an additional factor shaping non-boarders in their schooling journey. The LRC provides support to learners in terms of their conduct at school. Support is also rendered in the form of counselling in relation to both disciplinary and academic matters. In addition, a number of clubs such as the Science and English clubs have been established at school where teachers rendered support to the learners.

7.6 Cultural conditions at ALSS

The purpose of this section is to describe the cultural conditions in which learners navigate their way at Aludhilu Secondary School. The focus is on school culture and values, professionalism, school rituals, obedience and respect for authority and teaching and learning. These values are manifested in the habits, routines and practices established and emphasised in the school.

7.6.1 School culture and values

Archer (1996) defines culture as referring to ideologies, doctrines, values that guide human thought as indicated earlier. Some of the values emphasised at ALSS are good behaviour and orderliness and all learners are expected to adhere to these values in and outside the classrooms. Good behaviour is enforced by placing emphasis on the dress code, demand for respect for the teachers and other learners, strict routine in the classroom, showing respect for the hoisting of the national flag and respecting all instructions from the office at all times. According to the Disciplinary Codes for Learners (2011), discipline and obedience also means adhering to a specified hairstyle and demonstrating respect when greeting an adult or the elderly whereby girls kneel while boys nod their heads (Field notes, 14/08/2012).

Although there was emphasis on obedience and respect at the school at the time of data collection there was reported misbehaviour by some of the learners regarding initiation (Informal conversation with ALSS School Principal, 03/07/2012). One of the parents acknowledged being aware that such practice prevails at ALSS.

My son has complained about such a situation when he first went to the boarding school. I did not think it was serious. I thought he simply wanted to leave school for whatever reason. I told him to tell the teachers. But, then, he did not mention it again. I really thought it was not a serious matter (Parent or guardian interview, 20/06/2012).

One teacher claimed to be unaware of the initiation practice in the school:

I am not aware of such practices. The school does not allow mistreatment of other learners. I know it can have devastating effects on the newcomers. I just wonder why learners do not report these cases to the office. Perhaps the school can take action to discipline those learners who engage in such practices. Ya, that is interesting! Uhhmm, I did not know that such things are happening in an independent Namibia (Teacher focus group interview, 12/07/2012).

ALSS emphasises good classroom teaching, obedience and respect for authority. In addition, professional behaviour is portrayed as a way to attain the school motto of “Knowledge is Power” as stipulated in the School Rules and Regulations document (2011). As with MLSS, teacher preparation, teacher subject knowledge, compulsory teacher class attendance and respect for time is reflective of a school culture that is predominantly classroom centred. As one teacher puts it:

Hmmm, our school still place so much value on classroom teaching. If the teacher does not go to the classroom, no one sees that learning is taking place. You can see why we are compelled to submit our lesson plans for inspection. There is a belief that good preparation, teacher subject knowledge and respect for time produces good results. As a result, these things have become part of our daily school lives. If the HOD does not get our lesson plans, he does not think teaching and learning is taking place in the school. Ja (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

The various minutes of staff meetings show emphasis on teacher preparation. One of the teachers summarised the qualities of a good teacher at ALSS:

A good teacher is the one who prepares in advance, he/she must know the subject he/she teaches very well, produce high passing rates and submit his/her preparation for inspection to the Head of Department as required. A good teacher is also characterised

as diligent, hardworking and always on time for their lessons (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

Contrary to what is considered as the virtues of a good teacher at ALSS, one teacher said:

Hmm. Not all of us really make effort to prepare for our classes. There are always a few teachers that do not see the value of preparing. Some feel they have been teaching their subjects for many years and thus know the content. Unfortunately, we continue to have a high failure rate in our school each day. For me, preparation is important whether you think you know your subject or not (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

Observations regarding the school atmosphere show that there was generally a lack of joint venture in which teachers engaged in activities at the time of data collection. The researcher did not observe teachers working as a team to plan, teach, do peer coaching or observing each other's lessons. Often, each teacher prepared individually in the staffroom with little discussions taking place about teaching and learning (Field notes, 24/07.2012). One teacher confirms this observation:

... Some [teachers] do not even appreciate anyone going to their classes to see how they are teaching and give them feedback. It is as if they are afraid of something. There is so much insecurity here (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

The value of spirituality characterised the general atmosphere of the school. Religiosity was portrayed as an aspect of school life and was reflected in the daily activities at school. Additionally, the Discipline Codes for Learners (2011) stipulates that learners are allowed to leave the school premises to attend Sunday service at their respective churches. Other times, the school organizes church service for learners on the school premises. Acknowledging that most learners came from Christian families as indicated in Chapter 6, one teacher explained:

Most of these learners are from Christian families. They belong to the Evangelical Lutheran or Catholic Churches. The school sometimes organize a Pastor to use the school dining hall to provide church services to most of our learners. It is important that the school uphold the values respected in learners' families (Teacher focused group interview, 10/06/2012).

As is the case with MLSS, the school culture at ALSS stresses the importance of class teaching, obedience and respect for authority, and good behaviour and orderliness.

7.7 Chapter summary

To summarise this chapter, the structural conditions which encompass learners at both MLSS and ALSS include stringent school policies and routines, lack of educational resources, small computer laboratories, and lack of internet connection, overcrowded dormitories and walking distances to school for day learners. The cultural conditions at both schools emphasised religiosity, obedience and respect, face-to-face teaching, good behaviour and orderliness. It is suffice to say school structure – whether physical, hierarchical or regulatory - created an environment that is on one hand conducive while the other hand it presented difficulties for learning. Enabling conditions at both schools include, the LRC, clubs and committees where teachers support learners both academically and emotionally. The difference between the two schools lies with the way the affairs of the schools are run. Although both schools have stringent mechanisms in place to control the behaviour of the learners, MLSS was flexible in terms of allowing learners to discuss issues pertaining to their schooling within the LRC. In contrast, ALSS checked the agenda items of the LRC before they held their meetings and had teachers represented on the Learners' Representative Committee.

CHAPTER 8

LEARNERS' NARRATIVES OF THEIR SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS IN FAMILY AND SCHOOL

8.1 Introduction

The previous two Chapters 6 and 7 highlighted the structural and cultural conditions in the region, learners' families and the schools which have shaped their lives. Archer (2000) affirms that people are born and shaped by the circumstances which they do not choose. This chapter focuses on two areas - the 12 learners' narratives of their subjective experiences of the structural and cultural conditions at home and their subjective experiences of schooling. I first present learners' narratives of their subjective experiences at home and then their experiences of schooling.

8.2 Learners' narratives of family subjective experiences

This section presents the narratives of learners' subjective experiences in their family situation. All 12 learners in this research were born into large extended families in socially disadvantaged and rural settings. None of the 12 learners chose to be poor, rural and from socially disadvantaged contexts. Conditioning at home followed the teachings of their parents/guardians; they all performed household chores, adhered to discipline prescriptions from their parents/guardians, learned to respect and fear God, respected adults and the elderly, participated in communal activities and were well-behaved.

Kaoti, was born in a rural village of Omusati region and is the ninth of her eight siblings. Her family homestead where she grew up and still lives with her unemployed mother is 100 kilometres away from the closest town. When she was growing up, Kaoti and a brother lived with their mother while seven of her siblings were raised by relatives. "My mother could not afford to take care of nine of us because she has no source of income. Some of my relatives are taking care of my siblings", said Kaoti (Learner interview, 02/09/2012). Growing up without a father who died two weeks before she was born, Kaoti adjusted to rural life where she learned to do household chores. Recalling her childhood life, Kaoti said:

When I was with mom, there were times when there was no money to support us. We would go to school without applying lotion or Vaseline because there was no money to buy it. There were also times when we ate food without oil because there was no cooking oil, but we ate. Other times, we warmed porridge on the coal, ate and went to school. But, I do not really see these as difficulties (Kaoti, 01/08/2012).

The presence of her mother seems to have played a major role in shaping Kaoti's life as a child. She described her mother as having struggled to take care of her and a brother and working hard in the pearl millet field to feed them. "I watched her struggling with us although most of my siblings lived with my uncles and aunts. I envy how she was able to feed us without an income" (Learner interview, 02/08/2012). Her experience of early life challenges and how her mother struggled to take care of them led Kaoti to regard her mother as her "role model". Although Kaoti spoke of feeling bad about the hardships she experienced when she was a child, it is surprising that she does not see herself as having grown up in poverty. She said: "Even though mother was unable to provide some of the basics such as body lotion, shoes and a lunch box to school ... I never slept on a hungry stomach. I never thought I was living in poverty" (Learner interview, 02/08/2012). Growing up in a rural area, Kaoti never experienced city life such as going to nightclubs but concentrated on household chores, schoolwork and practiced religion as expected by her mother. She has been to a nearby town several times but only to buy essential items for her mother.

Kaoti's socialisation into rural life gave her a firm grounding in the ideational lives of the rural community where she learned to respect adult and the elderly. While she was growing up, Kaoti participated in traditional dances in the village with other young people, did collective work such as team harvesting, grinding pearl millet under moonlight and helping the neighbours with household chores. Growing up with her brother did not accord her the opportunity to play with her sisters and for that reason she also learned male roles such as looking after cattle, using bows and arrows and playing with toy cars. Propelled by circumstances of lack of finances and absence of basic essentials at home, she works hard in school in order to become a fashion designer and own a tailoring shop. "I realised that I need to get a good education in order to find a good job in future so that I can assist my mother. She has suffered enough" (Kaoti, 02/08/2012).

Angula, experienced a similar situation to Kaoti. When he was three years old, his father died, leaving his unemployed subsistence farming mother to take care of eight children without a source of income. Growing up without a father figure, Angula at times wishes his father was still alive. “I really miss my father. Sometimes I asked why he had to die. I wish he was still alive” (Angula, 18/07/12). His life was not only shaped by economic conditions in his family but also by ideational beliefs. Angula came face to face with cultural practices in his family as a child. He experienced his paternal family inheritance system after the death of his father. “My paternal family threw us out in the cold with nowhere else to go. This is the only home I knew then” (Angula, 18/07/2012). Though Angula was young when it happened, he described his experience as a young boy when they left his father’s homestead in the following way. “I was crying because I could not understand what was happening but my mother told me to stop crying and that everything will be fine” (Angula, 18/07/2012). This assurance from the mother provided a sense of security and demonstrated what Archer (2012, 99) referred to as “relational goods”; the warmth that children receive in their families in terms of love, caring, trust and security. After eviction, Angula’s family went to live with his grandmother, a pensioner, where they still lived at the time of this research. Angula’s mother said it was traditional practice at the time to evict the widow and her children from their family home upon the death of the husband.

You know, when my husband died, our family home was taken away from me and the children by his family. That was the traditional practice those days [pause]. One of his relatives had to take over the house. So, I, I had to move in with my mother who kept the mahangu field she occupied with my father. My mother kept their family home because my father became mentally ill and his family came and took him (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

Growing up in a Catholic family, Angula was brought up to respect the elderly and to fear and respect God. Discipline was emphasised in their family home. “Mom was very strict and did not tolerate indiscipline” (Angula, 17/07/2012). The family environment in which Angula grew up was a maternal extended family. His grandmother still lives with them in the same homestead and I met her when I visited the family during data collection. Angula recalls some of the hardships he experienced in his family while growing up.

Oh. There were times when there was no relish in our home. We could get palm fruits and use them as relish. We ate together with mahangu porridge. Other times we went

fishing. There were also times when we had to shoot birds and eat them as relish (Angula, 18/07/2012).

While Angula's mother is unemployed, his elder sister is a nurse and his brother is a carpenter. Both siblings work far from home but provide financial support to the family. In addition, Angula receives a N\$200.00 orphan grant from the government each month. The family financial resources are supplemented by Angula's grandmother's pension which was N\$550.00 at the time to pay school fees. Angula's mother affirms: "The entire pension that my mother receives is spent on my children's education" (Angula's mother, 09/09/2012). Angula further reflected his family financial situation when talking about leisure time.

... I, my siblings and children from neighbouring homesteads played together [pause]. My brothers, neighbouring children and I played soccer ... We played ball together; uhmu ... The ball we played is made from plastic bags, old cloths and mattresses which we stole to enable us to play soccer ... Yeh! There were also times when we stole new socks which our parents bought us to make balls so that we could play soccer (Learner interview, 18/07/2012).

Although both Angula and his mother spoke of a lack of financial resources in their family, they did not see themselves as impoverished. In particular, Angula's mother postulates: "We are just doing fine with the little we have. We do not sleep on a hungry stomach and we have a roof over our heads" (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012). While growing up, Angula learned to do household work. He helped pound pearl millet, plough the field with donkeys, cultivate, harvest, mend the field fence, cut poles for building the homestead in accordance with the tradition and looked after cattle. Angula described the duties of his parents and other adults in the surrounding mainly as "to cultivate the fields, take care of children, harvest and collect water especially when children are too young" (Learner interview, 18/07/2012). Angula's main concern is finding a good job after completing tertiary education.

I need to read seriously and when I get admitted to a tertiary institution, I will go to further my study...I will be the first in my family to become a qualified Electrician or Plumber. I want to find a good job (Angula, 18/07/ 2012).

As is the case with Kaoti, Angula's narrative stresses lack of finances in his family home as a motivating factor for him to achieve academically. He works hard in order to become one of

the first qualified Electrician or Plumber in his family as indicated earlier. Like Kaoti, Angula stressed the importance of respect for parents, adults and the elderly, respect for teachers, listening to advice from his parents and the elders, and working hard both in school and at home. While Angula enjoyed athletics while in primary school, he stopped participating in sport at secondary school to focus of his schoolwork.

Elago's story depicts him as having grown up in a large maternal extended family of 19 people living in the same homestead as indicated in Chapter 6. The 04/09/2012 was my second visit to Elago's home. Driving through the narrow path that passes through some thick bushes required concentration. The homestead is seven kilometres from the main dusty and rough gravel road that goes to a nearby hospital. Arriving at Elago's homestead I could see wooden fenced homesteads mostly made out of poles and thatched huts erected in large pearl millet fields. Elago's homestead is a mixture of traditional and modern structures surrounded by a wooden fence. There is a three bedroom modern building and various huts. Upon entry to the household, the first thing I saw were *iipamba* (parts of dead cows that hold the horns) hanging on the poles of the traditional *oshoto* (male living room) described earlier in Chapter 6.

Elago has experienced tragedies in his family life. While being raised by his grandparents, Elago's grandfather who financially supported him and the family died when he was only two years old, resulting in a loss of financial support. In 2007, Elago's father who was employed in Grootfontein about 300 kilometres away from home as a soldier in the Namibia Defence Force (NDF) also died resulting in a further loss of family income. Another tragedy hit in 2012 when Elago's uncle who assisted the family financially died. Some of the assistance he receives now comes from his aunts, uncles and grandmother who sometimes make school fees payments from her pension and gives him pocket money to go back to the school hostel after holidays or on out weekends. Growing up in a large maternal extended family, Elago did not like the number of people who lived in his grandmother's homestead where he grew up and still live.

... There were too many people in our household. There were 19 people ... ummm ... I really did not like that... We could never have enough food to eat because we were too many. I do not want this for my own children (Elago, 18/07/2012).

His grandmother has a different view about accommodating the extended family. “We cannot throw away our own families. It is just not right. God will bless us if we take care of our own” (Elago’s grandmother, 18/07/2012).

Growing up in the village, religion was a strong part of Elago’s upbringing and was strictly enforced. He was brought up to respect, obey and fear God. He prayed and asked God for support with his schoolwork, he was obedient and respectful of adults and the elderly as well as those in authority such as teachers at school. He adhered to these values as emphasised by his parents/guardians as they were linked to fortune and success in life. “We were told that if we do not respect God, adult and the elderly, we will never succeed in life” (Elago, 18/07/2012). Elago’s grandmother stressed this point, “... we also tell the children to respect God and pray for his guidance in their studies. It is only through God that they can succeed in school” (Elago’s grandmother, 04/09/2012). When children do not adhere to the values of respect and obedience, Elago said corporal punishment is used to make them obey the rules.

I remember my parents telling us not to insult, to respect the elderly and not to disrespect other people like telling a family member that she/he does not belong to our home. We were beaten up for not showing respect; apparently we should respect them even if we do not know the person (Elago, 04/09/2012).

The financial challenges experienced in his family prompted Elago to study hard to go to university to qualify as Mechanical Engineer. “I want to become somebody in life. I want to become a Mechanical Engineer” (Elago, 04/09/2012).

Magano, unlike other learners, initially grew up in a paternal extended family but now lives with her mother and siblings. Apart from financial challenges experienced in her family, Magano said she was unhappy while growing up with the paternal family arrangement. Her parents did not have their own home because, her father was chosen to inherit Magano’s paternal grandmother’s pearl millet field after her death. Hence, Magano, her three siblings, three paternal nieces and their parents lived in her paternal grandmother’s traditional homestead in a rural village about a hundred kilometres from the nearest town. In total, there were nine people including their paternal grandmother in their homestead. Unlike other learners, Magano experienced “relational evils” such as fights between family members. Magano did not like this type of family arrangement because of family conflict which ensued between her mother and her paternal extended family.

So, what made me feel bad when I was growing up were fights, people fighting because you touched an item from the other side of the house; people not talking to each other, sometimes you do not know what you have done to them. It was just not a nice thing to me and affected my concentration on my schoolwork (Learner interview, 18/07/2012).

Expressing her unhappiness with this family arrangement, Magano said:

I wish I did not grow up in this extended family. When there is tension between members, I also get affected and cannot study. Ya, uhm, it was bad and I found it difficult to study in such a situation. Ehm ... ah ... I could not just concentrate on my schoolwork because I did not know what could happen and when the situation would get back to normal (Learner interview, 18/07/12).

Magano's family conflict ended in a tragedy when one of the family members committed suicide.

My niece from my father's side who grew up in the same household was disrespectful to adults; she could not listen to adults and the elderly in the family. Then, for whatever reason she committed suicide. I felt so bad when she ended her life by hanging herself in our homestead. The picture of her hanging in one of the huts still haunts me. Sometimes, when I study, I start thinking about her (Magano, 18/07/2012).

Soon after her niece died, Magano said her paternal grandmother also died.

Yes, it was not long thereafter my grandmother also died. I could not believe what was happening. It was like a curse on the family. After she died, some relatives remained on the other side of the homestead alone (Learner interview, 18/07/2012).

Her mother and siblings have moved out of the paternal extended family home and now live in their own homestead. While growing up, Magano said her "parents emphasized respect and obedience for adults and the elderly, encouraged us to learn to do household work so that when they are no longer there, we have learned from their example" (Magano, 18/07/2012). She said her mother in particular taught her to:

Respect God. She taught me to pray and ask God for assistance whenever I need it. She said the only thing she can do is love me and encourage me to work hard. I am grateful to my mother (Learner interview, 18/09/2012).

As a young rural girl, Magano learned to do household chores.

I remember waking up very early to pound pearl millet with my elder siblings before going to school. I also used to cultivate where I could, pick up beans from the field, help clear the field, draw water and look after the goats. I still help my mother to clear the field. My siblings and I also fetched water from a traditional man-made well because we do not have piped water at home, and collected firewood for preparing our family meals. (Learner interview, 18/07/2012).

On 14/10/2012 I visited Magano's family homestead which was about 150 kilometres away from the nearest town. I drove on the tar road before I branched out into the rural landscape where her family lives. The road to the homestead is bumpy and was initially a foot path but some car tracks are visible. The narrow gravel road passes through bushes and between wooden fences that surround the pearl millet fields. Upon arrival at the homestead, one observes the palisaded homestead, some of the small sticks used to construct the homestead are broken while some of the huts are aging and losing grass. There are two sleeping huts in the homestead which accommodate nine people residing in the homestead.

Magano's father was a Prison Warden who worked about 300 kilometres away from home. He died in 2007, leaving his family in a financial predicament with no income. "Ever since my husband died, I do not have any source of income. I rely on cultivating the field to secure food for my children", said Magano's mother. As a result, her mother continued to work in the pearl millet field to ensure that her children have a means of survival by selling some of her field produce to pay her children's education. "Now, I have a small shop where I sell sweets, nuts and beans from my field and other small items" (Magano's mother, 14/10/2012). Lack of financial resources experienced in Magano's family is presented in her mother's narrative as intergenerational. Magano's mother became a double orphan after her biological parents died when she was young; went to live with the grandmother who also later died leaving her and her siblings alone to take care of each other.

My mother died when I was young and I was therefore raised by my grandmother... My grandmother had no way of getting money to pay for my schooling. So I stayed at home. Not long thereafter my grandmother also died, leaving my siblings and I to take care of each other without any source of income, mmm...I did not get a chance to go far with my education because of my family situation (Magano's mother, 14/10/2012).

Magano spoke of the hard times she and her siblings experienced which supports her mother's experience of financial hardships indicated in Chapter 6.

... Many times, my siblings and I went to school on hungry stomachs because there was no sugar at home to prepare soft porridge for us. I remember when we used stones and sticks to get baobab fruits from those big trees in our area. Sometimes we got these fruits on our way to school and other times after school. We ate the fruits, mmm. It really helped us concentrate on the lessons. Life was not easy then ... (Learner interview, 08/09/2012).

The economic conditions in her family propelled Magano to take her education seriously and excel in school:

Without education, oh, I cannot, I cannot get a good job. Now, I can see how my mother is struggling to pay my school fees. Ah, it is hard. I want to help her out and my younger siblings. So, I must work hard to find a good job in future. If I do not succeed, the economic situation at home will worsen as life becomes more expensive (Magano, 18/10/2012).

Magano said she wants to become a "specialised Tour Guide". "I like working with people, I want to work with people from different countries, ummm, ya, I think it will be an interesting experience" (Magano, 18/10/2012).

Unlike the other learners' family background is Nangula, 17 years of age. Although she also has an extended family consisting of her parents, five siblings and a niece in their rural family home, both her biological parents are alive. Her mother is a teacher at a local Primary School while her father is retired from his job in a shoe factory some 500 kilometres away from home where he was employed. Nangula's father was a full-time cattle farmer at the time of this research. Nangula spoke of being "scared" of her father. "I really do not know why I am sometimes scared of dad but perhaps it is because he was not at home when I was small ..." (Magano, 31/07/2012).

Although there is no piped water and electricity in their home, her mother owns a car (truck) which she uses to get water from a public tap. Unlike other learners highlighted earlier who experienced financial hardships in their early lives, what concerns Nangula is life in the

surrounding areas where her family lives. Nangula described the surrounding in which she grew up as “frightening”.

I remember one time ... ummm, there is a sport field near the cuca shops. I remember one time there was a soccer tournament and my friend from the village and I went to watch soccer. While we were there, we saw two men fighting each other. Someone said they were fighting for a beer. We do not really know what happened, but one man stabbed the other one with a knife in the chest. I still remember seeing the blood flowing. We ran away when we saw that a man was injured. Lucky enough we heard afterwards that the man did not die. I am still afraid of walking passed the cuca shops. It's frightening (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

Her mother spoke of a high unemployment rate in the area. “Few people have jobs here, others cultivate their fields and tend their animals from which they survive but some spend their time drinking as there is not much to do” (Nangula's mother, 31/07/2012). Like the other learners whose profiles are provided earlier, Nangula spoke of growing up in a religious family where prayers and going to church on Sundays was the order of the day. As she was growing up, she obeyed her mother, learned to believe in God, have prayers at home, went to church on Sundays, took turns to pray, read verses from the Bible and sang Hymn songs. “Mother said God is the driving force without whom we cannot do anything. So I pray when I study for God to help me pass well. I believe God is really helpful (Nangula, 31/07/2012). As part of the family, Nangula and her siblings had no say in the affairs of the family. “No, our parents always maintained an upper hand and we respected that. They took all the decisions. We have no say” (Nangula, 31/07/2012). In this regard, Nangula reflected on an incident that took place at her family home in this way:

... There was a time when my younger brother ate meat from the pot. Since he was the first to be asked who ate meat from the pot, he said it was me. From there, it was me who was beaten up ... Nobody really said anything when my parents discovered the truth but I started complaining about it in the house. Now my parents know but it has become a joke of the house that I was beaten up for what my brother did (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

The way Nangula and her siblings were raised reflected their mother's upbringing. Reflecting on how she was raised, Nangula's mother sees her role in this way: “... I have a responsibility

to teach children what my parents taught me which has enabled me to take care of my own family. That is what matter the most in my family ...” (Nangula’s mother, 31/07/2012). Apart from cultural values, Nangula’s family also consider education and household chores as important. Hence as a child, Nangula learned to pound pearl millet, extract marula juice and kernel, extract oil from marula kernel which they used for cooking, make traditional ontaku (a non-alcoholic traditional drink), work in the field and sometimes look after her younger siblings.

Unlike other learners who were propelled by lack of finances in their families to achieve academically, what propelled Nangula to achieve in school is the desire for a good life. “I want to make a good life for myself away from this village” (Nangula, 31/07/2012). Nangula ultimate project was to go to university to qualify as a Medical Doctor. Her mother is supportive of Nangula’s choice. “A Medical Doctor is something and she can do it” (Nangula’s mother, 31/07/2012).

Another learner, Nelago, 18 years of age grew up in a single mother rural family with no water and electricity in their traditional homestead. Nelago is bothered by lack of amenities in her family homestead.

We walk four kilometres ... Uh! My siblings and I, uhm, we walk about four kilometres with buckets of water on our heads. Life is not easy for us [giggling]... We collect water from “omuthima” [traditionally man-made unprotected well] (Nelago, 18/06/2012).

Her unemployed mother and five younger siblings survived on the pension of Nelago’s grandmother who is now deceased.

My grandmother took care of us ... Although she was never employed in her life, she received the N\$500 grant that pensioners received in Namibia. We all survived on this money because there was no other source of income (18/07/2012).

Like other children, Nelago respected her parents, elders, did household chores such as drawing water from a public water pipe, looking after cattle, taking care of younger siblings, cultivating the field during the rainy season and sometimes assisted her mother with the selling of nuts and beans from their field along to main road, went to church with her mother and prayed to God for support. What concerns Nelago the most is the economic condition of her

unemployed mother. “Mmm my mother, my mother only source of income is subsistence farming. Many times she struggles to buy soap, cooking oil, body lotion and sugar for the house” (Nelago, 18/ 07/ 2012). The death of Nelago’s grandmother resulted in the loss of income for the family.

Oh! When my grandmother died, life became very difficult. My mother struggles a lot to pay my school and examination fees. My grandmother assisted me before she died. Life is really difficult and sometimes I wish there was someone who can assist my mother to pay our school fees (Nelago, 18/07/2012).

Describing her early life experiences, Nelago said:

Winter time was difficult because I did not have shoes and it was cold, mmm, most of us did not have shoes. It was really difficult for me to wake early in the morning and go to kindergarten. My mother forced me to go anyway (Nelago, 31/08/.2012).

Nelago’s mother conceded that she lives in poverty. “I can see there is no assistance from anywhere. Ah, mmm, I am truly in poverty” (Nelago’s mother, 31/08/2012). Contrary to what her mother said and while Nelago acknowledges the lack of financial resources in her family, she does not see her family situation as impoverished. Nelago has a different view about her family situation.

I cannot say I live in poverty because there was no single day when my siblings and I slept on a hungry stomach. My mother works hard in the field to make sure we have food on the table each day. Yes, we do not have the money and other items such as shoes, soap and reading resources in our home, but I do not consider myself as living in poverty [giggling] (Nelago, 18/07/2012).

Apart from lack of financial resources at home, Nelago experienced distress during childhood because:

... My parents engaged in some fights. I was young then ... Uhm, I did not like it when adults are angry at each other or quarrelling. I guess this happened because my father was often drunk. It made me feel bad and unable to concentrate on my schoolwork (Nelago, 18/07/2012).

On the 17/07/2012 I paid my first visit to Nelago's family. Nelago's mother and I communicated over the cellular phone and she waited for me at the main tarred road. The road to her homestead was gravel and a cloud of dust hung behind as I drove through shrubs to Nelago's home which was about seven kilometres from the main road. The households in the villages through which I drove consist of a mixture of traditional structures made out of sticks and pearl millet straws and grass thatched huts with a few sheds made out of corrugated sheets. On arrival at Nelago's family home I saw that the only small building in the homestead had been flattened by the strong wind two days earlier. The homestead consisted of only a shack and one thatched hut. Nelago's family financial concerns have affected her daily life. She sleeps in the same shed with her mother which she desires to change.

Life is difficult here. Can you imagine at my age I still share a shed with my mother?

We sleep in the same shed. This cannot continue. I need my own space and I know my mother does too (Nelago, 19/07/2012).

Nelago wanted to complete school, go to university to specialise in teaching Mathematics at secondary school to assist her mother and to "serve as an example to others from my village that good teachers do not only come from the cities" (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

Nelago also suffered from eye infection when she was growing up. "I recall her sore eyes... Tears were coming out of her eyes. The eyes were red and she found it difficult to complete her schoolwork. It is miraculous that she has come this far" (Interview with Nelago's mother, 31/08/2012). Nelago's desire to complete school, go to university to specialise in teaching Mathematics at secondary school was prompted by her desire to serve as an example to others from her village. Additionally, "I want to teach at senior secondary level. I want to teach grade 11 and 12. I know I will make a difference in the rural children's lives ... I believe that I can make a difference" (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

Shikongo, also 18 years old grew up in his grandparents' household with his mother, female siblings and grandparents' while his elder brother lived with their father in another village. His mother is now married and has moved in with her new husband but Shikongo remained with his grandparents. Shikongo lives in an extended family setting. His grandfather though still alive is blind and has never been employed but receives a grant. His grandmother is also alive and a pensioner. As a young boy, Shikongo respected the elders, participated in household

chores – looking after cattle, working in the pearl millet field during the rainy season, collecting firewood and mending the homestead.

On 11/07/2012 I visited Shikongo's family. Driving to his family home, I followed an undeveloped sandy road which is used by other motorists to the village. The rural landscape in this area is barren and characterised by large floodplains and few palm trees. The dry flood plain was dusty, uneven and stretches across a kilometre. At Shikongo's homestead, I met Shikongo's mother and his grandparents. Although Shikongo was on school holiday, he was not at home as he had taken the cattle for vaccination.

Shikongo's concern pertained to financial challenges in his family. The family depended on the pension with some assistance from extended family members.

My worries mostly concern the financial situation of my family. When we were growing up, our mother took care of us but we also received financial assistance from my grandparents and father. My uncle also assisted by adding to the little money I get from my mother when I go to the school hostel (Learner interview, 11/07/2012).

His father passed away in 2005. At the time of his death, Shikongo was in Grade five at the village primary school. Shikongo describes his father's death as a financial loss to the family.

Oh! I was still young when my father died but I realised that when he died, we experienced more financial problems. He was really the only one employed. When he was alive, he took us shopping ... and we could buy a lot of the things that we needed such as school uniforms and other clothing. It is a financial loss to us now that he is no more, mmm. He assisted me financially with my education because my mother does not get enough money to pay our school fees. Now it is my mother who assists but with difficulties (Learner interview, 11/07/2012).

The effects of lack of finances in Shikongo's family have already been demonstrated.

Shikongo's elder brother has completed Grade 12 but is at home due to financial constraints.

In an interview conversation, Shikongo had this to say:

Researcher: Did any of your siblings finish high school?

Shikongo: Yes, one of my siblings passed Grade 12 but is now just at home without a job.

Researcher: Why did he not go to University or College?

Shikongo: He did not get a government loan and there is no money to pay for him.

Researcher: How was his performance in Grade 12? How many points did he receive?

Shikongo: He passed with 27 points in five subjects (Learner interview, 11/09/2012).

Shikongo described the surrounding in which he grew up and still live as “poverty stricken.”

Ya, there are many homes made out of corrugated sheets. Many people are poor and do not work. They struggle to put food on the table. Some cannot even afford to buy a *vetkoek*. Some houses are made of sticks and the surrounding is very dirty. The area is truly poor, oh, poverty stricken (Learner interview, 11/07/2012).

While he described his family home surrounding as poor, Shikongo participated in communal work in which people work together.

We and our neighbours normally assist each other. If there is something that needs to be done, we all work together as a team. Also, when there is a birthday party we invite our neighbours to celebrate together. We also assist each other when there is a death in the family, helping each other with cooking, serving the mourners and providing moral support to the bereaved family (Shikongo, 11/07/2012).

Apart from lack of resources in his family homestead, Shikongo, like other learners whose narratives have been presented experienced a tragedy in his early life when his nephew who lived in the same household died.

I was very scared. Sometimes, I could not sleep well at night. I kept seeing his face. There were also times when I could not focus on my schoolwork because I kept thinking about him. It was bad but the elderly in my family consoled me. They talked to me to move on with my life. It was simply not easy (Shikongo, 11/07/2012).

Shikongo is motivated to work hard by lack of finances, poverty and absence of a university graduate in his family.

There is no one in my family who received a university education. I told myself that I can be the first person in my family to achieve a university education in order to hopefully find a good job and get out of poverty. If I do not do it, it will be hard to

survive without a good job. Suffering is what I do not want. My life can be better if I study hard (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Shikongo relies on school for educational resources because the only reading resource at home is the Bible. “School books are expensive and my parents cannot afford to buy them for us. Uhmmm ... so I rely on the school” (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). His elder brother could not secure the finances he needs to go to university after he successfully completed Grade 12 but that has not discourage Shikongo from seeking a university education. “I will work hard, pass with good marks and get a bursary or loan from government or companies” (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). Shikongo derives his strength to work hard from his belief in God.

I was raised by my mother to pray to God and ask for the strength to study hard and succeed. God gives me the strength to work hard at school. It is because of Him that I have reached this stage of my educational life (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Being self-motivated and willing to honour his family’s wishes, Shikongo worked hard in order to go to university to qualify as a Mechanical Engineer. “Yes, I cannot afford not to attain a university education. My family, especially my mother is looking forward to see me succeed” (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Kema and Shiwa, both 18 years of age are cousins who grew up with their uncle and grandmother in the same family homestead. Kema was four years old when she went to live with her grandmother who was married to her uncle at the time and to start at kindergarten which was far from her biological parents’ home. Shiwa went to live with her uncle and grandmother because her mother could not take her with to Windhoek where she went in search of job opportunities. Their grandmother is now deceased but both Kema and Shiwa still live with their uncle, a pensioner who is now 90 years old. The uncle, originally from Angola left his natal family many years ago to come and work for the nearby Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) where he grew up, learned to drive and became an ambulance driver for the Church Hospital.

Kema has three siblings while Shiwa has five as indicated in the learners’ profiles in Chapter 6. Shiwa’s parents are alive, divorced and both are unemployed although they live in Windhoek, leaving the children in the village to be taken care of by relatives. While Shiwa lives with her uncle, her younger sister stays with her aunt in the village where she was born.

Kema's father made *omashisha* [traditional *mahangu* storages] which he sold to earn an income for his family but is now deceased while her mother is a subsistence farmer. There were a total of twelve people living in the homestead. Both experienced change at a young age and expressed their dislike for parting with their biological parents.

I did not want to part with my biological parents but, because I was the youngest and financial resources at home were insufficient, my parents decided to send me to my uncle's home. At that time, my other siblings were already in school and my parents could not afford to pay fees for all of us... (Kema, 10/07/2012).

I wish my parents did not give me away. I miss their love ... I miss my siblings ... mmm, I do not know my siblings ... (Shiwa, 10/07/2012).

While both Shiwa and Kema rely on their uncle for food and school payments and receive extra financial support from their biological mothers and aunts, Shiwa had this to say about her biological father:

He does not take care of me. No, not at all. My father does not care about me. Sometimes I feel as if I do not have a father. It really makes me angry and sad to see my old uncle struggling to pay for my education while my father is going around in the city and does not make any effort to support me (Learner interview, 10/07/2012).

Like other learners highlighted previously, the uncle's home in which Kema and Shiwa grew up was an extended family setting consisting of their grandmother, uncle, nephews and nieces making a total of twelve people in the homestead as indicated earlier. Both Kema and Shiwa were day learners at the time of this study. What concerned Kema most is "... my studies. I do not want to end up unemployed like my mother. At least I should succeed to assist my mother. She has been struggling for years" (Kema, 10/07/2012). Speaking about the difficulties she encountered in her life, Kema spoke of the death of her father and household chores.

I experienced the death of my dad in 2002. He could buy us clothes but when he died there was no one to buy these for us. At my uncle's house ... it is difficult because we are working in the field for the whole day especially on weekends but in the evening we still have to go and pound pearl millet to make flour for cooking. There is no money to use the hammer mill. Sometimes we get too tired even to do any schoolwork (Kema, 10/07/2012).

Similarly, Shiwa pounds pearl millet and cooks before going to school. Both Kema and Shiwa are motivated by the economic difficulties experienced by their parents and the desire to make a better future life for themselves.

I am ... if I do not pass Grade 12, I will live a difficult life like my parents. I will not get a good job, so I must work hard to have a better life in future (Shiwa, 10/07/2012).

I thought of my mother and how she is struggling to assist us. I also realized that I needed to get a good job in future to live a better life. I cannot get a job without education. Studying hard is the way to achieve education (Kema, 10/07/2012).

While Kema is working hard in school to go to university to qualify as a Nurse, Shiwa wants to become a Medical Doctor.

Compared to other learners, Ndapanda, 18 years old has the most siblings from the same biological parents. He has five sisters and six brothers making a total of eleven siblings. All his siblings are alive. Three of his siblings stay with an uncle while the remaining seven stay with his biological parents. His parents are unemployed and survive on cultivating the land. When asked to describe his family, Ndapanda responded:

Ummm, my family, I was born into a large family of 12 children. My mother got married to my biological father when she was 18 years old and does not have any education. My father also has never been to school and is unemployed. So, when we were small, we lived in a traditional homestead made of stick and thatched huts. The main sleeping room (known as ondjugo) in the homestead where my mother and the small children slept was made of clay and cow dung. My parents worked on the land to feed us and the children assisted them. Cultivating the pearl millet field was the only means of survival (Learner interview, 10/07/2012).

Ndapanda recalls the challenges his family experienced when he was young.

My family did not have financial resources. My siblings and I walked bare feet and we did not have many clothes. We wore torn clothes at home while a few clothes were reserved for going to church and special occasions such wedding celebrations. I remember times when we did not have soap to bath and wash our clothes. Sometimes, we used washing powder to wash our faces and there was no body lotion. I remember us applying oil which my mother extracted from pumpkin seeds. That is how we lived.

Oh, relish was another problem. My parents could not afford to buy meat for the family. So we sometimes shot birds and used palm fruits as relish. It was not easy growing up in my family (0/07/2012).

I asked Ndapanda if he thought his family was living in poverty and he responded this way:

Oh, you know the concept poverty is not part of our tradition. There was no such a thing as living in poverty. What mattered to us was food and our parents provided food for us each day although they struggled with relish. There were also a lot of wild foods in the area which we ate. As such we did not consider our family as living in poverty. Yes there were lack of resources both financial and material, but we did not see that as living in poverty (Learner interview, 10/07/2012).

Ndapanda left his birthplace at the young age of eight years to live with his namesake (traditionally, children are named after people within the family or outside the family, usually someone who is highly regarded, an exemplary, friend, well-to-do or a leader in the community or a 'decent' family member who has died and whose name the family wants to keep alive as part of the tradition), a good 'friend' to his father. He was still staying at his namesake family home at the time of this interview. Like other learners, Ndapanda lived in a large extended family of nine people. Neither his biological nor his current family has electricity or piped water in their homesteads and thus relied on communal piped water outside their homesteads. Like other children, Ndapanda grew up respecting adults and the elderly, was self-disciplined, focused on his education and did household chores such as looking after cattle, collecting water and fire wood, mending the field fence, helping the neighbours and taking care of younger siblings. In particular, he shows respect for his guardian because "she treats me like one of her biological children" (Learner interview, 10/07/2012). Ndapanda's guardian said:

I do not have any problems with Ndapanda. I would be lying if I say we have a problem. He does everything I ask him to do. If I feel bad about something, he also feels something is not right (Parent/guardian interview, 03/09/2012).

Growing up in a Catholic family, Ndapanda said, "Our parents taught us that God is the Almighty, that without him we will not succeed. They taught us to study hard and pray at the same time to ask for God's assistance" (Learner interview, 10/07/2012). Ndapanda further states: "Our parents constantly reminded us that if we did not obey we would have no luck in

our lives. We were told that we will not succeed in school” (Learner interview, 10/07/2012). Ndapanda described his dislike for the surrounding areas in which his family live.

There was a time when the older boy in our home went to the bars. A fight broke out and he came back home beaten up. That affected us a lot. Eish! He was beaten when they were fighting. I do not like cuca shops near our house (Learner interview, 10/07/2012).

Similarly, his guardian described the neighbourhood as “insecure because there are some people who steal other people’s things” (Parent/guardian interview, 03/09/2012). Motivated by the lack of finances in his family, Ndapanda wants to achieve in school, complete secondary education and go to university to qualify as a Mechanical Engineer.

I thought of how life will look like without a job. Life without a job will mean owning nothing. I might end up not even affording pants. Hence, I thought it is better to study hard and work for myself (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

Different from all the other participants is Meke, 22 years of age who experienced a disruptive childhood life. Her storyline depicts her as a child who went back and forth between her maternal and paternal families. “When my mother went to work in a fish factory in Walvisbay, she left me with my grandmother but she used to go and come” (Learner interview, 12/07/2012). In the same year, Meke’s father, a successful businessman fetched Meke from her maternal grandmother to live with him.

I grew up with my father. I left my mother’s family when I was two years old ... When my father got married he took me away from my grandmother and brought me to his village which is about 100 kilometres away. At that time my mother was working in a fish factory in Walvisbay, I was told, because I also do not know my mother. My father then took me to his village where I grew up (Meke, 12/07/2012).

Meke recalls her dislike for the landscape in the village where she grew up with her father.

I dislike the surrounding in which I grew up even if I were to go there now. There are no trees and the house is too close to a flood plain. The house is always full of water during the rainy season and it is far away from the road. There are always floods although the pearl millet field is a bit on higher grounds. There is also too much sun heat and forests are far and it is too windy at times. (Meke, 12/09/2012).

Like other learners, Meke experienced two major tragedies in her life; the first when her father died in 1997 leaving Meke with her step-mother. Second, Meke's mother died in a car accident three years later in 2000. Since then, Meke has gone back and forth between her paternal and maternal families as indicated earlier.

On 11/09/09/2012 I visited Meke's paternal aunt's homestead which is situated about 15 kilometres from a nearby town. Like other visits, the road to Meke's current family home is gravel and dusty and passes through the flood plain. Upon arrival at the village near Meke's homestead, a few palm trees were visible but the area was mostly bare and desert like. The road to Meke's homestead was filled with deep sand that required the use of a 4x4. The homestead is surrounded with a fence made out of mahangu straws, a few poles and dry palm leaves. Meke's aunt waited for me in an open hut where she spends her day in the shade. There is no single building in the homestead and the family of nine shares three sleeping huts. There is also no in-house piped water or electricity. Meke has identified two options in which she can pursue a career – she wants to become an Office Administrator or Nurse. She is ready to work anywhere to be able to take care of her son.

Finally, Ndeumona 18 years of age did various tasks at home and was always polite and respectful. She was born in a rural village about 60 kilometres from the nearby town. Like other learners whose profiles have been described earlier, Ndeumona grew up in a large extended family consisting of biological parents, three sisters, one brother and five half brothers and sisters. Recently, three more members were added to the family, her mother's grandchildren. In total, there were 14 people living in Ndeumona's homestead at the time of this study. The family shared four sleeping huts in their homestead which Ndeumona said she does not like. "I wish I could have my own hut, I do not like to share" (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012). Her mother is a rural kindergarten teacher and a subsistence farmer while her father worked for a fishing company more than a thousand kilometres away from his family and is now deceased. His father left the family with a small income of N\$300 per month which her mother earns from teaching at the nearby rural kindergarten. "When my father died, there was little income left for us. My mother does not get much money from the kindergarten" (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

10/07/2012 I visited the family at their homestead. I drove to their homestead which is located about 20 kilometres from the nearest town. A large bare flood plain with few palm trees in

some areas serves as a water channel that flows southwards during floods and separates Ndeumona's home village from another village. Upon arrival at Ndeumona's homestead I noticed the relatively large palisaded homestead made out of pearl millet straws and palm leaves with approximately five huts thatched with grass. Some huts are surrounded with sand bricks and others with sticks and pearl millet straws. A new building that has been added to the homestead was still under construction when I visited the family. There is also piped water in the homestead but there is no electricity (Field notes, 30/08/2012). According to Ndeumona, "piped water was added to the homestead about five months ago" (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

Before that, "we did not have piped water in our home when we were growing up. We used to carry buckets of water on our heads from an unprotected well which is about one kilometre from here" (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

Since the death of her husband, Ndeumona's mother maintains an upper hand in the household.

I do not remember making any decision ... My mother makes decisions in our home ... She is the oldest in the house. Decisions are made by older people, not by children" (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

In what appears to be a contradiction to what Ndeumona said about decision-making, she explained how she one time decided to lie to her mother about her actual well-being.

I told my mother I was going to visit my sister. I told her I would go for a weekend. Instead I went to a friend's house to study. I knew if I told my mother the truth she would not allow me to go. However, I told my sister the truth and asked her not to tell my mother (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012)

In most villages, there are no job opportunities. Hence, men leave their families in the rural areas to seek employment in towns away from home. While men leave their traditional homesteads to look for work in urban areas far away from home, women remain behind to raise children and work on the land. "Men are in the south, mmm, working in the mines and factories. They only come home to visit. Only women remained in the village to work on the fields" (Parent/guardian interview, 10/07/2012).

Describing the surrounding in which she grew up, Ndeumona said, "... I often do not feel safe when I walk to school. I am always scared that something might happen to me on the way"

(Ndeumona, 11/07/2012). Her mother expressed a similar sentiment: “Some people spend their time at cuca shops drinking. They harass children on their way to school and break into our houses. It is not safe here!” (Ndeumona’s mother, 10/07/2012). Brought up in a Christian family, belonging to the ELCIN church, Ndeumona said “We were taught to pray and fear God, be obedient, truthful and not tell lies, respect the elderly and respect other people” (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012). Like other children in rural settings, Ndeumona learned to do household chores at a young age, “pounding pearl millet, cooking, cleaning the house, cultivating the field, looking after cattle, and sometimes pounding pearl millet for the elderly in the village” (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

Since childhood, Ndeumona recalls lack of educational resources in her family and wish things could change. She said:

You know [smiling] I wish my family could afford to buy some of the educational resources I need to supplement the notes I receive from the teachers. I only recall the Bible in our home since I was young (Ndeumona, 11/07/2012).

The family conditions that Ndeumona experience in her early years of life like the death of her father and loss of income for the family, no access to piped water and electricity and lack of educational resources in her family home has motivated her to pursue her dream for “a better life” (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012). She wants to complete secondary education and enrol at university to qualify as an Electrical Engineer saying, “I should lead a better life and education is the key” (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

Apart from a lack of financial resources and large extended families, all twelve learners noted the lack of sanitation facilities in their family homes as reflected in some of their excerpts that follow:

Oh, ever since I was born, I only got to know flush toilets at our school hostel. At home ... mmm ... at home we use bush (Angula, 18/07/2012).

Our area is now deforested because people are clearing the land for cultivation. The bushes we used when nature calls are no longer there, so we use our neighbours’ pit latrine (Nelago, 18/07/2012).

8.3 Narratives of subjective experiences at school

This section focuses on the experiences of learners' objective circumstances at the two selected schools. As indicated earlier, Archer (2000) states that the circumstances in which individuals or agents find themselves impinge on them and compel them to act in certain ways. In this study, both secondary schools were seen as the space where some learners started to think about their future projects.

When I came to secondary school, I realized education was significant. I take my studies seriously and want to finish and become someone. I do not want to suffer in future. My life should improve (Angula, 03/09/2012).

For some learners, secondary school afforded the opportunity to interact and collaborate with friends and colleagues regarding their schoolwork.

At home, my mother does not allow me to study with friends. She wants me to study alone at home. Secondary school gave me the opportunity to interact with friends and colleagues away from my controlling mother who wants me to stay at home. Maybe she does not trust me (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

Learners also recognised the challenges at school that influenced their education trajectories.

Some teachers are an obstacle. There are times when they remain in their offices while they are supposed to be in class. Other times, they come to class but spend a lot of time talking about their personal lives. They talk about unimportant things and at the end of the year learners fail. The problem is the teacher who does not teach (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

The attitude of some teachers at ALSS has also been highlighted in learners' narratives as a constraint.

... There are also teachers who are not doing their work. Some come to class unprepared. Some have language [English] problems and struggle to clarify the subjects they teach. I think some teachers need further training to teach better. Oh! Some teachers see you as challenging them if you ask too many questions. They tell you that you are not a teacher and that they are. It is really discouraging. Then, some learners just learn to keep quiet in class, because they do not want to make enemies, especially when such enemies are the teachers (Kema, 31/07/2012).

At both schools, most learners recognised their disadvantage with English being their second language and the medium of instructions.

I experienced difficulties with the English subject. It was about how to write an article and I just couldn't get it. I, mmm, I decided to go to the teacher to ask him to make me understand article writing. He assisted me and I began to understand how it is done. That made me happy, happy because now I understand how to write an article. But English remains a problem for many of us here (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

English is difficult to me. I do not seem to improve. But, I am trying (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Oh! English is a real problem for most of us here. The problem is that even the teachers are struggling with the language. How can we become proficient if those teaching us are not proficient? Well, I am praying every day to ask God to help me pass the subject at the end of the year. God is the only one who can help me out ... (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Oh, we do not really have a good background in English. We only use English in the classroom and speak our mother tongue when we are not in class. It is really hard. I try to read novels from the library but it is just difficult. There are many words I do not understand. I wish mother had enough money to send me to an English speaking environment. Oh ... English is really a problem. But, we have no choice. It is a compulsory subject. I wish it was not (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

Learners also recognised lack of educational resources at school as a real constraint to their academic achievement.

There is a serious shortage of textbooks at school. We share most of the books in most subjects. There are also subjects in which there are no textbooks. All Grade 12 learners are taking English as a compulsory subject but there are very few textbooks that they share. These books are brought to each class by the teacher because there is no way they can be distributed to learners. Worse of all, the library is unhelpful and consists mainly of outdated resources. It is a real struggle (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

We have a problem of textbooks. In some subjects like Mathematics we do not have any textbook. In other subjects such as Physical Science, English and Oshindonga, yes, we share textbooks. We share two or three learners per book which makes it difficult for us to study (Kema, 11/09/2012).

At MLSS, learners spoke about the inadequate and poor quality of food. “There is food but it is not always enough. Sometimes it is not well-prepared. Portions are sometimes too small” (Kaoti, 04/09/2012). In the same vein, learners’ narratives depicted ALSS as posing constraints to their learning by not maintaining conducive hygienic conditions in the school. “There are times when toilets are not working ... Oh! I cannot stand the stench in the dormitories when that happens. It is difficult to concentrate on schoolwork” (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). Apart from poor sanitation facilities at ALSS, learners at both schools felt constrained by routinized activities at schools and how policies are implemented. “Although we have the LRC at our school to represent us, we do not have much say in our learning. The teachers decide when we ought to study, go to eat and even go to sleep” (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

8.4. Chapter summary

In this chapter, learners’ narratives indicated that their socioeconomic conditions are the primary motivator for them to study hard in order to achieve academically to make a better life for themselves and their families. Due to their family economic circumstances, learners experienced a lack of resources in their families such as water, electricity, sanitation facilities, and basic essentials such as bathing soap, body lotion. As reflected in their narratives, most of their economic hardships are presented as caused by unemployment or the death of bread winners in their families. Despite experiences of hardships, learners’ narratives indicated that they had respect for adults and the elderly, performed household chores, were disciplined and respected and worshipped God as instructed by their parents.

Learners’ subjective experiences at school included routinized activities, strict discipline enforcement with little room for making individual choices, a focus on teaching and learning, lack of textbooks and laboratory chemicals, poor sanitation facilities, lack of English language proficiency by both teachers and learners and lack of teaching by some teachers. The next chapter focuses on learner agency, reflexivity and strategies that learners employed to achieve in school.

CHAPTER 9

STRATEGIES LEARNERS EMPLOYED TOWARDS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED AND RURAL SETTINGS: A SOCIAL REALIST ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS' NARRATIVES

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted learners' subjective experiences of the structural and cultural conditions at home and in school. This chapter draws on Archer's (1995, 1996, 2000, 2012) social realist theory to analyse the narratives of the 12 learners. The first part of the chapter considers the structural and cultural constraints and enablements that learners navigated both at home and school. Second, I analyse the narratives of the 12 learners' configurations of what concerns them most. Third, I draw on Archer's idea of agency and reflexivity to explicate coping strategies that learners employed to navigate their way to success despite their limiting circumstances. Finally, I turn to learners' reflexivity and the stances they took towards society as they exercised their agentic potentials to achieve at school.

9.2 Structural and cultural conditions in family and at school

Archer (1996) postulates that we are born into circumstances that we do not choose. In line with this contention, all 12 learners started off as Primary Agents who are involuntaristically placed and sharing the same life chances in their socially disadvantaged rural families. As Primary Agents, they responded primarily to situations which are not of their own making i.e. following the rules and cultural values of their families such as respect for adult and the elderly, following religious orientations of their families as imparted by their parents or guardians, and going to primary school as per the demands of their parents as indicated earlier in chapter 6. Learners' lives were primarily constrained by the socioeconomic conditions in their families — poverty, lack of access to basic services (sanitation, piped water, absence of electricity and reading resources in their extended family homes. Their mothers, or female guardians who are primarily subsistence farmers, played a significant role in their upbringing.

The rural schools which they attended were also constrained by the rural poverty. As indicated in chapter 7, constraining factors at the two rural schools that learners attended included lack of educational resources, poor teacher English language proficiency, overcrowded dormitories, and inadequate and poorly prepared food. Other structural conditions that shaped learners' schooling lives were stringent school policies, routinised school activities, strict discipline enforcement with little room for making individual choices, a focus on teaching and learning, lack of textbooks and laboratory chemicals, poor sanitation facilities, lack of English language proficiency by both teachers and learners and lack of teaching by some teachers. As Archer (1995) affirms, the structural conditions in which learners were involuntarily placed by virtue of their birth and the life chances this has afforded, served to constraint and enable the range of choices. For example, although learners had school results, lack of finances was a constraining factor and thus there was no guarantee that they will receive funding for their tertiary education.

In terms of cultural conditions shaping learners' schooling lives both at home, some of the learners had strong bonds with their parents/guardians and extended family members. That was in a way affirming or enabling as parents / guardians supported and encouraged them to take their studies seriously even though they themselves did not achieve a secondary or tertiary education. Religiosity also played a major role in encouraging learners to seek support from God to achieve success. In addition, parents/guardians believed in the learners and their ability to successfully finish high school and become who they want to. As Magano puts it,

My mother encouraged me to work hard, she told me to be serious and to make a better life for myself and my siblings. She said I could become anything I want with God's grace. I believe her and work hard to succeed (Magano, 12/08/2012) The teachers were also optimistic that the 12 learners will succeed. "I have no doubt that the 12 learners will succeed with their education...I am sure they will be at institutions of higher learning, comes 2013" (Teacher interview, 10/06/2012). This encouragement from the teachers served as an enabler towards academic success.

Despite the many constraints that learners experienced in familial and school contexts, the 12 learners have devised strategies to confront structural and cultural constraints both at home and school. The next section considers how learners navigate structural and cultural constraints at home and school.

9.3 Navigating structural and cultural constraints and enablements

According to Archer (2012) structural and cultural conditions in which agents find themselves impact on them and compel them to act in certain ways. As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, constraints and enablements do not exist as entities on their own but they are “causal powers of emergent properties” (Archer, 2012, p. 56). Here, for the powers of constraint and enablement to be exercised, learners should have what Archer (2012, p. 56) referred to as “agential projects”.

With regard to the restrictions these learners experienced, financial and educational resources were paramount. The role of the extended families alleviated the situation what Archer (2012, p. 99) referred to as “relational goods such as love, reliance, caring and trust” in the absence of biological parents. In terms of schooling, learners’ narratives presented the rural landscape (weather conditions), long distances to school, and lack of educational resources in school, English as a subject and teachers’ attitude as some of the factors constraining their schooling lives. However, learners also conceded that their schooling provided them with new experiences such as exposure to different ways of life that contributed to shaping their achievement trajectories and career choices. In fact, learners were able to develop “projects” (Archer, 2003, 115).

9.4 Learners’ configuration of ultimate concerns and projects

As highlighted in Chapter 4, Archer (2000) proposes that an individual develops a “personal identity” depending on his capacity to reflect and “prioritise concerns” which are related to the three orders of reality (natural, social and practical). Such personal identity, Archer (2000, p. 241) suggests that it occurs through an “internal conversation” which “leads to unique patterns of commitment.” With the exception of four learners at ALSS, seven learners were compelled to seek admission to schools away from their families. Given the lack of education of their parents/guardians highlighted earlier in Chapter 6, the choices that learners made in terms of secondary school and their preferred careers should be understood in the light of them having to make decisions in the absence of their parents/guardians.

While learners' experiences of familial and schooling constraints are mediated by their own ultimate concerns, there is evidence from the learners' narratives that suggest that the 12 learners were still trying to work out their concerns and commitments. Despite that, they were indeed "project-makers" and all indications showed that they had attained personal identities (Archer, 2003, p. 115). Hence, they recognised at secondary school level that learning matters to them and that it provides access to a better life:

At the start, I did not have any goal in mind at primary school because I did not understand the value of education. So, sometimes I did not understand why my uncle said we should not miss school (Kema, 11/09/2012).

I must study hard now because if I fail my life becomes automatically bad (giggling) (Magano, 09/08/2012).

Now I know what I want. I also know that for me to get what I want, I must study. It is the only way to finding a good job in future (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

I realized I have to get good grades to pass Grade 12. I do not want to fail Grade 12. Getting good marks is the only way I can go to university (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Recognising they care about their learning can be equated to saying that they realised their ultimate concerns. With the exception of Nelago and Kaoti, all 10 learners had a list of concerns and projects which they wanted to achieve which signals their engagement in internal dialogue (Archer, 2012). Archer (2012) argues that the discernment phase for 18 years old is messy because learners have a list of concerns to which they add or delete, although what they care about remains constant. These concerns are part of their personal identities and confirm their engagement with the natural order of reality (Archer, 2000). Personal identity is linked to social identity where individuals learn to confront structural and cultural conditions in which they find themselves (Archer, 2000). All 12 learners were aware of the limitations of their objective life chances posed by the structural and cultural conditions of their families in which they were involuntarily placed as "primary agents" as reflected in the narratives that follows.

I told myself that I can be the first person in my family to achieve a university education in order to hopefully find a good job and get out of poverty. Suffering is what I do not want. My life can be better if I study hard (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Education is the only way out of my current economic situation at home. For me to succeed, I must work hard to find a good job in future. Education is the key (Magano, 02/09/2012).

The obstacle I see is money. It is going to be money to pay for my education at higher education institutions. I am trying hard to apply for bursaries to assist me paying for my education (Shiwa, 11/09/2012)

Learners were also cognisant of the economic challenges that their families experienced. “Yes, finances to pay my university fees are a challenge. University is very expensive and my sister who is employed as a nurse cannot afford it ... Oh, it is really hard” (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012). Similarly, Shiwa spoke of the difficulties that her uncle experienced financially.

No, my uncle cannot afford to buy textbooks. The only reading resources we have at home are the Bible and Hymn books which we use when we go to church. So, I rely on the school for resources. There are no school textbooks at home. Even my cousin who completed secondary school does not have any textbook because he returned the books to school at the end of the year, otherwise he could not have received his certificate (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

While they were growing up with their large extended families, all 12 learners learned to negotiate their financially burdened family space. With the exception of Kaoti, Shiwa, Kema, Nangula, Ndapanda and Meke, six learners grew up with their mothers in traditional homesteads in impoverished rural villages of Omusati region with a lack of basic services. They also attended rural primary and secondary schools which were characterised by few resources such as textbooks, proper classrooms and laboratory facilities. In addition, 11 learners, with the exception of Nangula, grew up without their fathers. Growing up in strictly controlled family environments where corporal punishment was used to enforce discipline afforded them little choice to do what they thought was best for them.

At home, I often spend time in my sleeping hut studying alone. Mother does not like me to go to other people’s homes. So, I learned to study on my own most of the time. (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

For some learners, family circumstances served as an enabler for them to continue with their education.

My father owns cattle and goats. So, he sells some of these to get money to pay school expenses and buy school uniform ... uhmmm, both mother and father take turns to take care of us. Whoever has something assists us (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

The narratives of the 12 learners suggest that they used their objective circumstances as a stepping stone to think about the actions they took to achieve in school.

Well, I want to finish university as early as possible so that I can assist my mother. So, if I do not make use of the time available to me, I might not succeed. Then, what will I do with the limited finances that my mom has? I cannot afford to repeat a grade. So, time is important to my work (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

For some learners, secondary school was seen as a space where they started to think about their future projects. "I thought of how life will be like without a job. Life without a job will mean owning nothing ... It is better to study hard and work for myself" (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012). For other learners, secondary school afforded the opportunity to interact with friends and colleagues which some learners found difficult to do at home.

At home, my mother does not allow me to study with friends. She wants me to study alone at home. Secondary school gave me the opportunity to interact with friends and colleagues away from my controlling mother who wants me to stay at home. We mainly meet at school on Saturdays and Sundays after church. There are five of us and our group is a type of study group where we meet and assist other with schoolwork. Weekends are the best time we have because during the week we attend study time at school in the afternoon and have to rush home thereafter before it gets dark (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

Yet, other learners saw schools as constraining towards their academic achievement. They recognised the challenges at school that influence their education trajectories.

Some teachers are an obstacle... They talk about unimportant things and at the end of the year learners fail. The problem is the teacher who does not teach (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

... There are also teachers who are not doing their work. Some come to class unprepared. Some have language [English] problems and struggle to clarify the subjects they teach. I think some teachers need further training to teach better. Oh!

Some teachers see you as challenging them if you ask too many questions. They tell you that you are not a teacher and that they are. It is really discouraging... (Kema, 31/07/2012).

Learners also recognised that lack of educational resources at school is a real constraint to their academic achievement.

There is a serious shortage of textbooks at school. We share most of the books in most subjects. There are also subjects in which there are no textbooks. All Grade 12 learners are taking English as a compulsory subject but there are very few textbooks that they share... Worse of all, the library is unhelpful and consists mainly of outdated resources. It is a real struggle (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

We have a problem of textbooks. In some subjects like Mathematics we do not have any textbook. In other subjects such as Physical Science, English and Oshindonga, yes, we share textbooks... (Kema, 11/09/2012).

One learner spoke of dysfunctional sanitation facilities in the school as a constraint. "There are times when toilets are not working ... It is difficult to concentrate on schoolwork" (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Shikongo had a quiet life at school; he talked very little in class, had few friends and spent time reading. He does not participate in any sport or extra-mural activities as indicated earlier but rather uses the time on his schoolwork. What this means is that learners at this stage cared about their concerns. Archer (2012, p. 104) defines "to care" as the same as "something is of concern or importance to someone." In this research, learners' concerns were mainly sparked by their familial economic conditions and the desire to live a better life as indicated earlier. Being pregnant at the time of the interview, Kaoti expressed concern about the financial implications of her unborn baby.

My baby ... when my baby is born, it will need financial support. I know I will not be able to provide such support if I do not complete school, go to university and make a life for myself and my baby... I must work hard for my child to have a better life (Kaoti, 02/08/2012).

Her concern was sparked by her early life experiences of growing up with her unemployed mother with the absence of basic essentials in their family home. Kaoti was also concerned about her mother. “I realised that I need to get a good education in order to find a good job in future so that I can assist my mother. She has suffered enough” (Kaoti, 02/08/2012). Similarly, Angula’s narrative stresses the effect of poverty as a motivating factor for him to achieve academically. His main concern is finding a good job after completing tertiary education.

I come from a poor family... my mother is unemployed ... My family depends on my grandmother’s pension and the orphan grant ... I will be the first in my family to become a qualified Electrician or Plumber. I want to find a good job (Angula, 18/07/2012).

Unlike Kaoti and Angula, Elago had two concerns. The first one had to do with the size of his extended family.

... There were too many people in our household. There were 19 people... I do not want this for my own children (Elago, 18/07/2012).

The second concern pertains to lack of financial resources in his family. “Oh, when my father died ... mmm ... I did not know how I would survive with payments for my education (Elago, 18/07/2012). Since his father, grandfather and uncles who were able to render financial assistance to the family are no longer alive Elago desired a different way of life.

I want to have a different way of life ... I want to have sufficient finances to take care of myself ... and my family. I do not want my children to walk long distances to school ... I want to become somebody in life. I want to become a Mechanical Engineer (Elago, 18/07/2012).

Magano’s concerns pertained to the challenges posed by extended family arrangements and lack of finances in family. “I, uhm ... I cannot imagine my children going through what I did. I prefer a nuclear family for the sake of my children as well as financial security” (Magano, 18/08/2012). Magano’s father had influence on her decision to get an education.

My father told me to study hard, and that if I do not study hard I will suffer in future and no one will help me (Magano, 18/07/2012).

The death of her father who was the only breadwinner for the family meant that Magano has a sense of financial responsibility for her mother and younger siblings.

I see how my mother is struggling to pay my school fees. It has not been easy. If I succeed, I will be able to help her out and my younger siblings. My mother is looking forward to the day when I find a good job (Magano, 18/08/2012).

While Magano's concern emanated partly from the dynamics in her extended family which were marked by what Archer (2012) referred to as "relational evils" in the form of family conflict, what concerned Nelago most are the economic conditions of her unemployed mother and the absence of financial assistance from the extended family.

Mmm ... my mother, my mother only source of income is subsistence farming. Many times she struggles to buy soap, cooking oil, body lotion and sugar for the house. There is no other person who assists her (Nelago, 18/ 07/ 2012).

Nelago is also bothered by lack of amenities in her family homestead.

My siblings and I, uhm, we walk about four kilometres with buckets of water on our heads ... (Nelago, 18/06/2012).

Nelago's family financial concerns have affected her daily life in that she has to share her sleeping space with her mother.

Nangula's situation is different from that of other learners. She grew up in a financially stable family. Her mother is a teacher and her father is retired but owns a cattle post from which he generates his income. Nangula was disturbed by the lack of security in the surrounding where her family lives as highlighted earlier which prompted her to desire a different life away from her family village. "I want to make a good life for myself away from this village" (Nangula, 31/07/2012).

Unlike Nangula who grew up with both her biological parents and in a financially stable family, Shikongo grew up with his grandmother and his blind grandfather and relied on their pension to pay school fees. Household chores sometimes caused him to arrive at school late. As if he did not have sufficient challenges at home, Shikongo additionally walked a distance of two kilometres, negotiating the flooded *oshanas* during the rainy season on his way to school.

... During the rainy season, we experience difficulties because there is a flood plain before we reach school which becomes impassable when flooded ... (Shikongo, 10/07/2012).

The condition of lack of resources, poverty, walking long distances to school, floods and absence of a university graduate in Shikongo's family motivated him to work hard. The lack of finances has already costed his elder brother a university education although he completed Grade 12 successfully. His mother's expectation is for him to succeed. "Yes, I cannot afford not to attain a university education. My family, especially my mother is looking forward to see me succeed" (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Ndapanda situation is different from the other learners who grew up with their mothers or maternal relatives. Ndapanda left his birthplace at the age of eight to live his namesake, his wife and their children as indicted earlier. The decision to leave was not his but that of his parents. Ndapanda did not gain from what Archer (2012, p. 99) referred to as direct "relational goods" (love, security and emotional well-being) that his biological parents could provide. In the interview, Ndapanda spoke about being treated badly by his siblings with whom he did not grow up.

I used to go back to visit my biological parents and siblings during holidays. You know, since I moved to my namesake family, some of my siblings began to treat me badly because they regarded me as an intruder when I went back on holidays. Sometimes, they isolated me and did not want me to play with them. Other times some told me to go back to my home (Ndapanda, 10/07/2012).

We recall that Ndapanda spoke of walking bare feet to school. At his new home and after the death of his name-sake, Ndapanda described how he felt being treated by his guardian:

Sometimes I asked my mother to buy me something I was in need of ... I used to feel bad when I ask for something which I did not get (Ndapanda, 10/07/2012).

... Other times, I do not get sufficient time to study because I have to do some household chores. It is really a struggle (Ndapanda, 10/07/2012).

What Ndapanda is concerned about is: "I thought of how life will look like without a job ... It is better to study hard and work for myself" (Ndapanda, 03/9/2012).

Shiwa and Kema are cousins who left their biological parents to live with their maternal uncle. Kema spoke of her experience of early separation from her biological family at the age of four in this way:

Parting with my biological parents at a young age was never easy. I could not understand why my parents took me to my uncle's house. I felt abandoned at the time when I needed their love and care the most (Kema, 10/07/2012).

Shiwa had no choice but to go and live with his uncle. "My mother could not take me with to Windhoek where she lives because she does not work. So, she left me with my uncle and grandmother" (Shiwa, 10/07/2012). Moving to their uncle's house meant losing some of the relational goods that their biological parents offered.

When I was with my mother, she took care of me. She bathed me, gave me food, washed my clothes, but when I moved to my uncle's house, there was a niece who took care of me although the attention I used to get from my mother was no longer there (Kema, 10/07/2012).

Similarly, Shiwa said:

I do not know the love that parents give to their children. I grew up believing that my parents did not love me. I learned when I grew up that they did not have the financial means to raise me. So, my mother wanted to give me a proper home (Shiwa, 10/07/2012).

Both Shiwa and Kema lived in a rural village without electricity although there was piped water in their home and relied on their uncle and extended relatives for financial support. They were day learners at the time of this study and both spoke of experiencing challenges in their family home in this way:

There were times when there was no paraffin at home for us to study. When it happened, I could not study (Shiwa, 10/07/2012).

If I went to look after cattle and allowed goats to get into someone else's field when there was pearl millet, I was normally told to spend a night on a hungry stomach because the food that I eat is what I allowed goats to eat. Sleeping on a hungry stomach made me feel very bad and sometimes I used to cry. I learned to be disciplined and responsible to avoid sleeping on a hungry stomach, yes (Kema, 10/07/2012).

Both Kema and Shiwa are motivated by the economic difficulties experienced by their parents and uncle which prompted them to desire a different life.

I am always concerned about my studies. I do not want to end up unemployed like my mother ... (Kema, 10/07/2012)

I am concerned about my future. If I do not pass Grade 12, I will live a difficult life like my parents. I will not get a good job. So, I must work hard to have a better life in future (Shiwa, 03/09/2012).

... I cannot get a job without education. Studying hard is the way to achieve education (Kema, 10/07/2012).

Unlike other learners, Meke fell pregnant when she was in Grade 10. At that time she was staying with a maternal grandmother. After realising that she was pregnant, she moved from her maternal grandmother to her paternal aunt where she gave birth to her son who is currently being raised by his father. However, Meke experienced stress when her son was born with two teeth in his lower jaw which are traditionally considered a curse to the family.

Oh, my son ... appeared in the Villager Newspaper. This was a stressful situation for me. Although I loved my son already before he was born, I felt it was a curse to give birth to a child with teeth. In our culture it is considered a curse and that is why my child made news headlines when he was born. I had to live with the stigma of being cursed and some people still talk about my son as a curse. Currently, my son is staying with his father while my aunt takes care of me. He visits during the holidays (Learner interview, 12/07/2012).

After her son was born, Meke's paternal uncle suggested that she went back to school which she did and was a boarder at ALSS at the time of this research. School was not easy for Meke as she experienced financial difficulties and other social difficulties.

Uh, I only have limited financial support from my unemployed aunt. Sometimes I asked teachers to assist me with basic necessities such as bathing soap and other essentials. I also felt I did not have a family that cares about me ... Mmmm, I, I also did not have stable friends, I could not keep friends ... (Meke, 12/07/2012).

One of the female teachers confirmed Meke's situation. "I know Meke experiences financial hardship. I often give her money to buy essentials at school" said one teacher (Teacher Focused Group discussion, 12/07/2012). The government pays Meke's school fees and have allocated a School Councillor to her:

You know, when I came to this school, life was not easy thinking about my child and a lot of financial problems although my school fees are taken care of by the government. I really thought of ending my life and swallowed a lot of Panado pills while on school holiday without thinking. I was in bad shape when the Ambulance was called to rush me to the hospital. The teachers were informed and they reported the case to the Inspector's Office. That is how I was allocated a School Counsellor (Meke, 12/07/2012).

Meke's aunt confirmed the incident.

There was a time when Meke thought of hanging herself. Instead she swallowed a lot of tablets when she was home on holiday. I called the Ambulance and she was rushed to the hospital in bad shape. I never thought she would survive, but she did and I am grateful to God. That was last year...When she came back from the hospital, I counselled her and thereafter she went back to school. That is when she wrote her grade 11 examinations and passed (Parent/guardian interview, 09/09/2012).

Meke reflected on the suicide attempt in this way:

I have realised that taking my life is not a solution to my problems. I have now decided to focus on my study for the sake of my son. I am currently working hard to make my study a success, uhu. That is what I am focusing on now. I am taking one day at a time (Learner interview, 09/09/2012).

Overall, learners narrated their ultimate concerns as emanating from their family economic circumstances, dearth of educational resources, the challenge with English and unserious teachers at school. Two of the 12 learners had concerns that stemmed from becoming mothers at a young age. In the next section, attention is focused on the various strategies that learners used to navigate structural and cultural constraint and enablement to achieve in socially disadvantaged and rural contexts.

9.5 Learners ‘coping strategies’

Archer (2000) recognises human agency as a way for individuals to change their positioning in society by engaging in individual and collective actions. The learners in this study had both family and school control mechanisms in place that constrained their choices and individual decisions. While both biological and social context explanations presented learners as unable to make their own choices to shape the causes of their lives, the learners in this study learned to negotiate their familial and school environments by employing specific strategies, often without the knowledge of the parents/guardians or the teachers. This section focuses on how, the 12 learners successfully confronted structural and cultural constraints to achieve in school. I used Archer’s (2000) concepts of agency and reflexivity to analyse individual and collective ‘coping strategies’ that the 12 learners used to achieve academically. The last part of the chapter focuses on reflexivity and how learners shaped their academic identities despite their socially disadvantaged and rural backgrounds.

9.5.1 Individual strategies

While both families and schools were presented in learners’ narratives as partly constraining due to the low socioeconomic status of their families, rurality, routinized practices, the use of stringent disciplinary measures, lack of resources, teacher attitude and time constraints, learners confronted these structural and cultural constraints in various ways, often without the knowledge of their parents or the teachers. Some learners saw themselves as able to achieve their goals as individuals which means that they did not have an understanding of themselves as corporate agents.

I want to go to university to qualify as a nurse. I want to come back to my village to assist the people here. There are not enough nurses and sometimes when you go to the hospital you stand in long queues. I want to contribute to ensuring the health of the people from my community [smiling] (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

When I finish school, I really do not want to go far from my area. I want to bring improvement to the area where I grew up. Home is home (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

When it comes to content subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science ... I have seen that I do a good job when I have prepared alone. I am good at these subjects. But,

with the subject I am struggling with, [pause], English, I ask my friends at school (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Individual strategies that learners used to confront structural constraint at school included doing school work on their own, studying on their own, individual participation during lessons e.g. asking questions, answering questions and making suggestions; using the library; planning (e.g. developing a personal time-table). Individual strategies also entailed making subject choices, making career choices, choosing friends and selecting preferred tertiary institutions and setting goals for themselves. Archer (2003) noted that when agents experience structural/cultural constraints, they work to realise their concerns by strategically adjusting them to practices which they conclude through internal conversations and which enable them to achieve what they care most about society. Even though the two schools employed routinized practices as indicated in Chapter 7, the narratives of the learners in this study suggested that learners have developed their own daily programmes around school routines which they followed to do schoolwork:

... After classes, I go to eat lunch. After that, I rest for 30 minutes and then it is study time. Study time is compulsory and everyone should be in their classrooms. That starts from 14h30 to 15h30. After that, I go to the library to search for additional information. Then ... it is dinner time at 17h00. After dinner, we have another study time for one hour; thereafter I go to the hostel. We are not allowed to leave the hostel after the evening study. I spend another hour studying or discussing schoolwork with some of my friends. Then, it's time to sleep. But, on Saturdays, I have more time for my schoolwork. I study independently, preferably under a tree within the school premises. It is useful to me. Sundays I go to church in the morning but also do some studying in the afternoons. I follow my own timetable which I revise each week depending on what I need to do (Kaoti, 04/08/2012).

I prepare by developing my own timetable for the subjects that I must study and also for doing homework. Teachers told us to develop our own timetables which we will follow when studying, but I decide when to do assignments, when to study, what to study and when (Angula, 12/10/2012).

I allocate the subjects I want to study on the personal timetable for each week depending on my own needs ... I strictly adhere to my timetable giving priority to

homework, I do the homework first, and then, I study. On holidays, ah, holiday time, I use a similar timetable. I allocate more time on the subjects I am struggling with such as English. I get some books from the library to read and improve my English (Elago, 02/09/2012).

I have a personal timetable where I have indicated that this time I will study this; here I should take a break. When I study, I take time to rest, and go back to my books when I feel rested. I have made a commitment to study hard and am self-disciplined (Magano, 08/09/2012).

For the four learners at ALSS namely, Kema, Ndapanda, Shiwa and Ndeumona who are not boarders, the challenges posed by their families in terms of household chores, absence of electricity in their homes and long distances to school indicated earlier in their narratives and those of their parents and guardians were real constraints. However, they too had devised strategies to confront these constraints.

I do most of my work during afternoon official study time at school. But if I do not finish, I do the rest at home after completing household chores. I also have a personal timetable for each week which I strictly follow (Kema, 11/09/2012).

I ... I am expected to do household chores when I get back home such as collecting cattle. I take my books with me and read while cattle are grazing before sunset. I also work at night when I have a candle or paraffin lamp. It is hard, but I try by all means to work on my schoolwork at night when I have lighting (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

Despite the curriculum requirement that all learners participate in Physical Education, some learners found a way to evade taking part in Physical Education and instead used the time to do their schoolwork.

I set time aside while at school for my school work which I respect. I do not go to Physical Education lessons. I always find an excuse not to participate and then use the time for studying. I also do not use my time at school to have fun even if other learners are having fun, like playing, ummm...yes, that is what I do (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

As indicated in both teachers' and parents/guardian stories, the rural landscape is another constraint to learners' schooling lives. In particular, walking long distances presented a real

challenge to learners as they navigate their way to school, but here too, they strategized to confront this challenge.

When I arrive home from school each day, I am tired of walking three kilometres. So ... I first take a rest for an hour or so ... then I complete the homework that I could not finish during study time. After dinner ... I normally just eat dinner and study. This is partly because of my mother. My mother does not ask me to do house chores during the week. I only do house chores on weekends. So, after school I just rest and thereafter study. I am not reminded by anyone because I know studying hard is the only way to university. So I do it mostly by myself. I study or...or do schoolwork. I use a paraffin lamp because there is no electricity at our home (Ndeumona, 30/08/2012).

Archer (2003, p. 7) affirms that "... the influences of constraints and enablements will only be tendential because of human reflexive abilities to withstand them and circumstantially to circumvent them ...". In this connection, shortages of materials such as textbooks at both schools are constraints that learners evade by finding alternatives.

It is hard but I try to find similar books in our library to supplement what I get from the teacher. Sometimes, I ask for permission to go to the circuit office library nearby but time is limited. We are given only three hours out of the hostel, you know (Kaoti, 04/08/2012).

... With school work ... I like struggling with my work before I ask anyone. I learn that way. Many times I go to the library to find extra books to supplement the notes from the teachers (Kema, 11/09/2012).

I collect notes from other learners. I get notes from learners who are at high performing schools. I have a few friends at Onegumbo Secondary School. There is also one student from Gabriel Taapopi in Ongwediva from whom I copy notes during school holidays, uhu. These notes are very helpful to my study (Magano, 08/09/2012).

At school, all 12 learners indicated that they listened to the teachers and did what the teachers expected of them, completed their classwork, answered questions and did tasks in groups. Others such as Angula, Nangula, Magano, Shikongo and Nelago had no time for leisure; they abstained from sport activities and chose friends that were interested in schoolwork; worked hard both at school, in class and home and showed respect for their teachers, parents and elders.

Nonetheless, complying to school rules did not necessarily mean that learners were unable to exercise their agentic possibilities. During school holidays and out-weekends, Nelago, Elago and Angula spent most of their time reading and completing schoolwork. Angula, Nangula and Magano who were boarders at MLSS refrained from sport activities to focus on their schoolwork. Angula gave up athletics which he said he enjoyed while at primary school.

I decided not to participate in any sport activities at secondary school. I love athletics but do not take part now. I want to concentrate on my studies. I use this time to read or do assignments. Ya ... the only way I will get what I want is if I study hard and pass with good marks (Angula, 18/07/2012).

Likewise, Nangula stopped performing traditional dances which she enjoyed with a group at school.

I could not continue practicing traditional dances with the group at school. This cultural Troupe travelled quite often to perform in different regions but I felt it was consuming a lot of my time... So ... I left the group to focus on my study. Sometimes I miss the group but I just cannot afford to lose time (Nangula, 09/09/2012).

Magano avoided getting a boyfriend at school. "I use my time to study. I do not have time for a boyfriend or having fun. That is a waste of time ... mmm ... a boyfriend or having fun can wait" (Magano, 08/09/2012). Narratives from a number of learners show that they have reflected about their objective circumstances and positions in society and have decided to study hard and achieve social mobility. "I must study hard now because if I fail my life becomes automatically bad [giggling] ..." (Magano, 08/09/2012).

At ALSS, learners violated some school rules to study.

Lights go off at 21h00 but at midnight dormitories are always lit with torches ... We study with torches when teachers are asleep because we are not allowed to switch on the lights after 21h00. I wish the school can allow us to decide when to study and when to sleep (Shikongo, 11/9/2012).

Archer (2000) takes cognisance of agents as being in position to make emotional commitments as strong evaluators of moral projects. While some of the learners applied to some of the best schools, they were not successful thus ended up at the two schools highlighted earlier. At secondary school, a number of learners experienced emotional difficulties. Angula was

admitted to the schools of his choice, but recognised that things are not what he thought they would be. “I thought I would continue to perform well as I did in primary school but I find secondary school difficult because the subjects are difficult to me. But I am trying” (Angula, 12/10/2012). Shikongo is frustrated by the quality of the school to which he is admitted.

I thought ALSS was a good school. I applied and got admitted, but it was not my first choice. I wanted to go to ... one of the best schools in Omusati region but competition was too tight. I did not get admitted. So, I ended up here. I am disappointed by the low quality of education that the school offers (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

As a member of the LRC, Shikongo also expressed dissatisfaction with control measures put in place to check the agenda before they hold their meetings and expressed how the LRC deal with issues not accommodated on the agenda.

I am a member of the LRC and do not like the fact that teachers have to approve our meeting agenda before we hold our meetings. They are really restraining us to think out of the box. Well, I guess they do not trust us. Then what is the purpose of the LRC, hmmm? They are not even aware that we meet secretly in the dormitories when the lights are off to discuss issues which are not allowed on the agendas of our meetings. Sometimes they are surprised by some of the things we do ... (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

Other learners’ frustrations pertain to lack of proficiency in English as indicated earlier but adopt various ways to confront the challenge.

It is very hard. I try to read a lot; I read novels hoping that my English will improve. I attend the English clinic at school where the English teacher assists us. I also review old English question papers and ask the teacher to assist me with the correct answers. Some of the things, I simply memorize especially the rules of grammar (Magano, 08/08/2012).

I get novels from the library ... uh, I believe my English can improve if I read novels in my own time (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Oh! I am really struggling with the English language. English is a real obstacle on my way. I perform very well in other subjects, getting A’s and B’s but the highest grade I have achieved in English so far is a C grade. I am truly worried about it. However, I

am reading a lot to ensure that I do very well in other subjects and at least attain a C in English so that I can proceed to university (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

I think it has to do with my background. The lower grades that I attended were taught in vernacular. I was also taught by old teachers, teachers who were trained in Afrikaans during the colonial time. Most of them can hardly speak English. During English lessons they taught us in Oshiwambo. They translated everything in vernacular, uhu. So, there was no way we could learn the English language (Magano, 08/09/2012).

Although English is a challenge for many learners at both ALSS and MLSS, they have developed strategies to help them improve their English language proficiency.

What I am trying to do with English is [silence] ... I make effort during the holiday and now to read newspapers with the hope that in October 2012 I will be able to achieve a better grade in English. It is really difficult for me. If I do not get a good grade like C in English, I will not be able to go to the university but am determined to redo it with NAMCOL until I pass it... it cannot stand in my way (Kaoti, 04/08/2012).

I ask my nephew at home who have completed Grade 12 to help me ... hmmm, English remains a serious problem for me (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Oh, reading novels ... I learn a lot. I learn how a child is raised and how his parents died, how he became a spy and how his parents were killed; that they were killed by someone. I also learn new words, how to remember things and how to think (Meke, 11/09/2012).

Narrating his personal learning strategy, Elago had the following to say:

I allocate the subjects I want to study on the personal timetable for each week depending on my own needs. I do not always rely on my friends. I strictly adhere to my timetable giving priority to home works, I do the home works first, and then, I study. On holidays, ah, holiday time, I use a similar timetable. I allocate more time on the subjects I am struggling with such as English. I get some books from the library to read and improve my English (Elago, 02/09/2012).

For some learners who are non-boarders, household chores take up much of their study time.

There is a lot of household chores which makes it difficult for me to study. You saw as you entered our homestead that I am uprooting some bushes and trees to make space for ploughing...The only time I study is at night (Ndapanda, 08/09/2012).

...At home, there is need for me to take care of our elderly uncle. I cook for him because there is no one else to do that for him when I am at school. So, I cook in the morning and leave him with food for lunch. Then, I cook dinner when I am back home in the evening (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Learners' narratives in this section show that individual strategies included studying alone, developing personal timetables, going to the library, studying while looking after cattle, reading novels to improve their English proficiency, leaving their families to stay in a boarding school and not partaking in some activities such as sport and cultural activities at school.

9.5.2 Collective strategies

Apart from individual actions highlighted in the previous section, all 12 learners' narratives show that they at times engaged in collective efforts. Collective effort is a form of what Archer (2000) regards as "corporate agency" where agents develop groups to critically reflect on their objective circumstances and engage in strategic actions to confront structural and cultural constraints. All twelve learners indicated that they exercised corporate agency by engaging with peers in order to achieve academic success. They have developed study groups at school and home where they share and assist each other with schoolwork and sought support from teachers and other learners. They meet with friends from their villages who are attending other schools to compare notes and assist each with schoolwork. Study groups were formed around friendships both at school and home.

With my school friends we assist each other when writing home works. We also assisted each other with class works ... I would ask them when I do not understand something and they did the same (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Well, I know everyone needs a friend. In my case, I made a conscious choice of the people with whom I hang out. I selected those who are well-performing, religious and serious with schoolwork. I also selected those who do not drink because I also do not take alcohol. These friends are important to me because we also study together,

mmm.... With my friends, we sometimes identify a topic where we need information and agree to go to different teachers for help. We assign each one of us a role to play in getting the information we need. We are four, so one might go to the school library, the other two to the School Circuit library and the other one to the teacher. We give each other at least a week or so, and then we meet to discuss what we found out. It really helps us (Elago, 02/09/2012).

Yes, my four friends and I have set up a study group. We meet on weekends and sometimes after the prescribed study time. We normally identify areas that we are struggling with in any subject, and then we assist each other. It helps us to keep up-to-date with school work. Sometimes we ask each other questions about what we are taught in different subjects. Through these we learn how to answer questions from each other. But, only serious friends attend our study group and we are very strict about that because we do not want those who are not serious (Nelago, 31/07/2012).

Learners who were non-boarders narrated how they worked with friends to do their schoolwork or study.

I have best friends from the same village with whom I study. We encourage each other. When I have schoolwork to do at home, we meet to assist each other. Sometimes, we work on candle light at home. I ask my guardian to allow them to stay over especially during examination time so that we can study together. We also study together on weekends and during holidays. We decide which subject to focus on each week. It is really helpful (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

My friend at secondary ... We came together from grade 8 and we are still friends. We are in the same grade and walked together home, although we are not from the same village. We also study together and assist each other on weekends and during PE at school. We stay away from PE activities to do schoolwork instead (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Some learners established study groups with learners from other schools and met during school holidays.

We have established a study group with my village friends. Yes...they attend secondary school elsewhere but we meet during holidays ... We meet under that big tree [pointing

at the tree] to share notes on different subjects. I find this study group very helpful (Elago, 02/09/2012).

In summary, collective strategies that learners used included study groups, studying with friends and sharing notes with learners from other schools.

9.5.3 The use of time

All 12 learners' narratives indicated that time was essential in achieving their projects. They reported using schooled or private time inside and outside their classrooms on their academic work. During school time, learners mostly participated in school routinized activities, attending classes and study time. They take notes during lessons, participate in class activities and make use of class time to do schoolwork when the teacher is absent.

During the week, we spend most of our time in the classrooms listening to the teachers. We follow what the school requires us to do. We cannot do much of our own things like studying on our own during official time...We use this time to interact with the teachers during lessons (Elago 24/07/2012).

I personally use PE [Physical Education] time to study or complete some of my home works. Sometimes I go to the library to read novels when I do not have classes to improve my English (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

For the subject ... Natural Science where there was no teacher during the first term, I studied in class. Sometimes I studied other subjects or read a novel. I studied the notes that I copied from a friend who passed Grade 12 the previous year (Shikongo, 11/09/2012)

I listen to the teacher, take notes, and ask questions where I do not understand and complete class activities as required by the teacher. Sometimes, I do not go for the break and instead remain in class to finish the task (Nangula, 09/09/2012).

Learners also spoke about spending some of their private time on studying or completing homework. Private time in this context referred to the time they are not attending classes or official functions. "I use my own time to read or do assignments. Ya. The only way I will get

what I want is if I study hard and pass with good marks” (Angula, 12/10/2012). Nelago study both at school and when she is home on holiday.

I study while at school and when I go on holiday at home. Like this upcoming holiday I plan to continue studying hard so that when examinations start, I have learned a lot of things. That is the only way I can achieve my future goals (Nelago, 31/09/2012).

Ndapanda who was a day learner at ALSS split his time between household chores and schoolwork:

I spend my time with my books, studying. But, when I get home after school, I sometimes go and look after cattle. I take my books with me and study there although it is not always conducive as you have to ensure that the cattle do not eat other people’s crops especially during the rainy season. But, that time is still important to my study (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

Apart from studying, all 12 learners sought support from teachers, not only for schoolwork but for some learners also emotional and financial as highlighted in the next section.

9.5.4 Support seeking practices

This section focuses on learner support seeking behaviour as a way to achieve in school. All 12 learners indicated that they sought some form of support from their teachers and colleagues with school work. Whereas all learners indicated that they sought support from the teacher or friends, not all the support sought was academic in nature.

When I am at school, I always ask the teachers who teach the subject in which I need help to assist me if there is something I do not understand. I go to them to ask. I do not go to other learners although I have assisted some of the learners with whom I study (Elago, 02/09/2012).

The support seeking behaviour for one learner entailed both school related work and finances.

I ask the teachers to assist with the work I find it difficult to understand. Sometimes I ask them to help me financially. There is a teacher in the school who supports me financially. Some teachers at ALSS give me money when I go for weekends or school holidays and that has encouraged me to work hard (Meke, 12/07/2012)

Learners support seeking behaviour included seeking support from the teachers and other learners. Support sought entailed both academic and personal.

9.6 Learners' reflexivity and shaping their academic identities

Unlike biological and social context research which views learner achievement as pre-determined by heredity or social context, Archer (2003) stresses that human subjectivity is dynamic and that people choose to shape their lives in a society which is not of their own making. While acknowledging that social context and class status expose agents differently, Archer (2003) affirms that reflexivity and the life choices that individuals make and their subjectivity are the ultimate causes of action. Archer (2007, p. 90) states:

Socialisation differently exposes different collectivities of young people to different experiences, but it cannot enforce endorsement of their natal context or suspend the power of observation and the ability to conclude that there is better to be had elsewhere in society

Archer (2007) has introduced the term reflexivity which can be observed in relation to how people conduct their internal communication. As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, Archer (2003, 2012) proposes four modes of reflexives which results from individual internal conversation pertaining to their natal context and their ultimate concerns. In this regard, some learners' conversations in terms of replication of their familial relationships (Archer, 2012). In accordance with their narratives, five of the twelve learners fall in Archer's communicative reflexives stance. Nangula, Ndeumona, Magano, Nelago and Kema's narratives depicted them as communicative reflexives that relied on others (family and friends) to complete their internal dialogue.

Nangula, a boarder at MLSS at the time of this study still lived at home with both parents and siblings where she spends her out weekends and school holidays. She retains her early relationship with her mother and described her relationship with her as "she is the first person I tell my secrets" which is a sign of trust. Nangula accepted her mother's advice to go to MLSS where her mother studied and wants to become a Medical Doctor to work at the hospital close to home. Similarly, Ndeumona, a non-boarder at the time of the study, never moved from her birthplace and still lived with her biological mother and relatives at their village family home. Her mother restricts her from the social network and confines her to the family micro-world.

“My mother tells me not to walk in teams and does not like me to go to other people’s homes ... She wants me to stay home” (Ndeumona, 31/09/2012). By listening to her mother, Ndeumona sacrifices for her family, thus endorsing “contextual continuity” (Archer, 2007, p. 177). Magano prioritises self-worth with family and friends and needs them to talk things through (Archer, 2012).

We encourage each other to study and talk about important things such as life in general. I trust my friends. We advise each other not to follow learners who are ill-mannered. That is what I like ... Sometimes I talk with my mom. It is good to have someone you can trust” (Magano, 31/07/2012).

This means that Magano needs “similar and familiars” with whom to talk things through (Archer, 2012). Like Nangula and Ndeumona, Magano left home to a boarding school because there was no Grade 8 at the village school which she attended but still lived with her mother and siblings at their rural family homestead; she tells her mother when she finds it difficult to study while at the boarding school; visits her family during out-weekends and school holidays and wants to find a job close to home after obtaining a university education and thus experience contextual continuity. She chose a career as there is nothing at home to replicate because her mother and elder siblings did not finish school and have no careers.

Nelago’s narratives also depict her as a communicative reflexive that relies on her mother’s support, hard work and God for achieving her project. Nelago’s storyline depicts her as a child who was sent away from home to a church boarding school at a young age but returned to her birthplace due to her single mother’s inability to pay school fees. By sending Nelago to a private boarding school at the age of six, her mother gave the impression that she should receive a good education, and that such education lies with private schools but withdrawing her from the school send a contradictory message altogether.

I am aware that I was too young to be away from home at the age of six but bringing me back home made me confused about the value of education in public schools ... up to now, I feel private education is more powerful than education in government schools and wished I had remained with the private school (Nelago, 31/08/2012).

This implies that Nelago received mixed messages pertaining to private schools as ideal for success while ending up in a public school associated with underperformance. Archer (2012,

p. 165) affirms that communicative reflexives receive “mixed messages from their interlocutors for confirmation and completion of their internal conversation.”

Kema left her natal context at a young age to stay with an uncle. While it was not her choice, moving to her uncle’s house meant losing some of the relational goods accrued at her biological parents’ family home.

When I was with my mother, she took care of me. She bathed me, gave me food, and washed my clothes, but when I moved to my uncle’s house, there was a niece who took care of me although the attention I used to get from my mother was no longer there (Kema, 10/07/2012).

While at her uncle’s house, Kema learned to depend on other young people in the same household (they played together, pounded pearl millet together and studied together). She made one friend from the village but abandoned her because she was “ill-mannered” (Kema, 04/09/2012). At school, Kema decided to have only one friend with whom she spent time doing schoolwork and asked for advice on personal matters. Kema wants to go to university to become a nurse to render services to her community and thus endorses contextual continuity.

Angula, Elago, Ndapanda, Shikongo, Kaoti and Shiwa’s narratives depicted them as autonomous reflexives. Angula experienced contextual discontinuity when he decided to go to a boarding school against his mother’s advice to go to a nearby secondary school as indicated earlier. Opting to go to a boarding school meant that he wanted to take full responsibility for his life and to be in charge. Angula’s ultimate concern for achieving tertiary education and finding a good job was the driving force for contextual discontinuity. He made his career choice (as an electrician or plumber) in an area which his elder siblings who were employed at the time of the study did not choose. He speaks as an autonomous reflexive who is achievement oriented and has desire to be independent.

I want to go to NIMT to study and qualify as an electrician or, or, ehm, a plumber. I really think a career in one of these fields will make a life for me ... That is the only way I can make a life for myself ... I do not want to struggle after finishing tertiary education ... (Angula, 12/10/2012).

Similarly, Elago's narrative depicts him as an autonomous reflexive. Although he was forced to go to MLSS boarding school, this was the beginning of contextual discontinuity for him. He seized the educational opportunity at MLSS to pursue his chosen career. Elago made a career choice as a Mechanical Engineer which is likely to promote his social mobility against his mother's suggestion that he joins the Namibian Defence Force (NDF).

My mother wants me to go to the NDF but I told her I will become a Chemical Engineer...I want to go and study abroad ... away from home and perhaps make a life there ... I will venture into establishing a private company to make a life for myself" (Elago, 02/09/2012).

By choosing to study abroad, Elago was ready to transcend geographical boundaries to make a life for himself which he saw as a means of survival. In other words, Elago has his own personal agenda which propelled him disassociate himself from the mode of operation in which he was brought up with the hope for a better life.

Ndapanda, also autonomous reflexive, left his birthplace at a young age to live with a nonrelative, his namesake, away from his unemployed biological parents and siblings as highlighted earlier. Although leaving was not his choice, Ndapanda has learned to be independent with his new family and endorses contextual discontinuity with his biological family. "Where I am now ... this is my home and I do not intend to go anywhere. My mother has helped me a lot and I must take care of her when I start working" (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012). Ndapanda's narratives also depict him as making independent decisions pertaining to his future.

Without my current mother's knowledge, I have already applied for government funding. They responded and told me that I should submit my examination results and an admissions letter from the university to be considered for a loan, uhu...I am aware of lack of finance at home (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

He has his own personal agenda and takes personal responsibilities to shape his future life. "My future is in my hands ... No one else can give me the future that I want" (Ndapanda, 03/09/2012).

Shikongo grew up with his grandparents as indicated earlier. Although both grandparents are still alive, his grandfather is blind and thus Shikongo learned to take responsibility for the domestic animals. Shikongo learned to be independent while still at primary school.

When I was in Grade seven, I learned Natural Science on my own because we did not have a teacher for the whole year. I felt that it was unfair to spend the whole year in school without a Natural science teacher ... mmm ... I took it upon myself to search for information on the subject by getting notes from those who completed Grade seven and using the school library to read about the subject. Some learners could not make it but I succeeded (Shikongo, 11/09/2012).

After completing primary school, Shikongo applied to a number of secondary schools including ALSS where he was admitted. Despite restrictive family finances which kept his elder brother at home after completing Grade 12, Shikongo is determined about what he wants to achieve. At the boarding school, he learned to be self-disciplined, resisted the influence of peers and immersed himself in his study. "I do not go out with friends on weekends to have fun ... Instead, I spend time on my schoolwork ... I would never follow bad behaviour although some learners follow" (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). Shikongo has learned to go the extra mile to take responsibility for his own learning. "If I do not get a satisfactory, mmmm ... convincing answer in class, I go to the library to read about it. Sometimes I get the correct answer" (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). He has everything figured out on how to proceed to achieve his project, he has plans to find a holiday job while waiting for his results, save money to pay if he does not pass any of the subjects and has applied for financial assistance to pay his university fees to qualify as a Mechanical Engineer. Shikongo envisions his future as "a Mechanical Engineer occupying a high position in a city away from home and making a good life for myself" (Shikongo, 11/09/2012). Like Magano, Shikongo does not have anyone at home to replicate in terms of career choice as he is the first person in his family who would be going to university. He has embraced the situational logic of opportunity and does not allow anything to stand in his way towards achieving his project.

Kaoti's narratives also depict her as an autonomous reflexive who does not know most of her siblings due to her mother's inability to take care of them. Although she grew up with her mother and younger brother when she was young, she left home when she was in Grade seven to live with a distant aunt after her mother arranged with an aunt. While at an aunt's place she

felt unhappy as a result of lack of relational goods especially the love that she initially received from her mother in her early school years.

I felt lonely because my aunt treated me differently from her own children ... mmm ... it was not easy ... I learned to rely on myself and focused on my study as a way of getting out of the situation because there was no secondary school in the area (Kaoti, 04/09/2012).

Kaoti developed a sense of self-reliance to survive within the domestic sphere because her family could not satisfy her “relational needs” for love and caring (Archer, 2012). After completing Grade 10, Kaoti moved to a distant secondary school for Grade 11, thus further endorsing contextual discontinuity. Life did not turn out the way she thought as she fell pregnant and moved back to her home. When her baby did not survive she decided to move to another school to repeat Grade 11. “I went back to school because I could not afford to live without a job” (Kaoti, 04/09/2012). Towards the end of Grade 12, Kaoti fell pregnant again. “I am more committed now than ever before. I must finish secondary education and go to a Vocational Training Centre to do fashion design” (Kaoti, 04/09/2012). She wants to own a tailoring shop and does not “mind working inside or outside the country. I am ready to go anywhere” (Kaoti, 04/09/2012). In other words, Kaoti has set herself to go after her own interests rather than serving the interests of the family. “I want to be different ... I want out of this family situation (Kaoti, 04/09/2012).

Shiwa also left home early in life to live with a maternal uncle because her mother could not take her with to the city leaving Shiwa to confront her situation without the support of her biological parents. This inability of her parents to give Shiwa a stable home affected her family dynamics. As indicated earlier, Shiwa and Kema are maternal cousins who went to live with a maternal uncle. Shiwa was denied relational goods by her father as indicated earlier and so decided to make a life for herself and her mother.

The state of affairs taught Shiwa to be realistic about her life and to do things independently. She learned to be self-disciplined and invested much of her time in pursuing her project.

I always make time to study on my own. During examinations, I stay up the whole night to study because I want to make a difference in my life ... a life which is different

from that of my mother. I am determined to study hard and reach the required points to get admitted to the field of medicine (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Shiwa chose to follow a career in medicine; she wants to become a medical doctor, a career which will see her moving up the social ladder. She further endorsed contextual discontinuity by planning to leave home in search of job opportunities “in hospitals in town away from home” (Shiwa, 11/09/2012).

Meke’s narrative portrayed her as a fractured reflexive. Early in life, Meke moved back and forth between her paternal and maternal family. Both of her parents died when she was young. She became what Archer (2003, p. 298) referred to as a “displaced person”, unable to converse internally about themselves in relation to their circumstances to determine what to do with her life in practice. Meke’s narrative depicts her as “disoriented” – moving back and forth aimlessly and does not know how to forge ahead, expressive of her emotional distress about her condition (e.g. the first time I met her, Meke talked a lot about her suffering having lost both her parents and how she experiences financial problems even though her father was a successful businessman while at the same time she said “it does no bother me”) and does not appear to have a clear project. Meke admits that her self-pity is a result of her inability to find a solution to her life. “I have suffered a lot since my parents died ... I do not know what to do to improve my life” (Meke, 09/09/2012). Her narrative also showed that she found it difficult to keep friends. “I have friends but just on a temporary basis” (Meke, 09/09/2012). Meke attended school far from home but after her parents died, her maternal family moved her to the village where she started school in Grade 10. Soon thereafter, Meke fell pregnant, left her maternal family and went to live with her paternal aunt. She failed Grade 10 and gave birth to her son. The following year she re-registered for Grade 10 and completed it. Meke’s paternal uncle suggested that she enrol at ALSS which she did. While in Grade 11, life became difficult, she lost control and attempted suicide but survived.

I have realised that taking my life is not a solution to my problems. I have now decided to focus on my study for the sake of my son. I am currently working hard to make my study a success, uhu. That is what I am focusing on now. I am taking one day at a time (Meke, 09/09/2012).

After she recovered from her suicide attempt, Meke went back to school to complete Grade 11 which she did and moved on to Grade 12. Meke was unsure about what she wants to do after completing Grade 12 but suggested that she will be happy being an office administrator or a nurse.

In summary, learners' narratives depicted them mainly as communicative and autonomous reflexives. One of the learners is fractured and none of the learners exhibited characteristics of meta-reflexives.

9.7 Chapter summary

The narratives of the 12 learners' subjective experiences of their family and schooling lives show that these lives have been shaped by socioeconomic deprivation; large extended families in rural households, lack of amenities and utilities in their families, participation in household chores, experience of family tragedies and of changes when they were young. Most of these factors are in line with those identified by social context explanations as influencing learning. In this study, although these factors are presented as constraints, they did not deter the academic achievement of the 12 learners as suggested in the social context research literature. Similarly, hereditary factors were not presented as posing a challenge to the academic achievement of these learners despite their socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances as reflected in the biological explanation highlighted in chapter 2. What concerns the 12 learners most are their family economic conditions, extended family dynamics, unsafe surroundings, and long distances to school, the rural landscape, and family hardships and for some absence of relational goods. In response to structural and cultural conditions, learners made career choices that will enable them to move up the social ladder. They also employed individual and collective strategies to concentrate on their schoolwork and achieve in school. In most cases, learners received the support of their parents in the choices they made in relation to schooling and future careers.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Previous research on learner achievement or underachievement has identified the causes of achievement as either biological or emanating from the social contexts in which learners found themselves. Biological explanations attributed achievement to cognitive factors associated with heritability. Conversely, social context explanations attribute achievement to terms of social context factors in which learners' found themselves such as poverty, type of school (public or private), school location (urban or rural), rurality and family socioeconomic status. Both biological and social explanations are underpinned by determinist principles which view learner achievement as determined by factors internal or external to the individual. These theoretical lenses have undermined human agency and the role of the interaction between structure, culture and agency in the achievement debate. Hence, there was a need for a different viewpoint underpinned by social realist principles as an alternative to studies pertaining to the achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances to understand why some learners from disadvantaged circumstances achieve in school while the majority are underachieving.

This study focused on factors accounting for learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural settings in Omusati region in Namibia. The findings of this study point to the structural and cultural conditions in which learners were involuntarily placed as having shaped their lives. The environments in learners' families and the schools they attended were portrayed in their narratives as real constraints which compelled learners to act in certain ways. In particular these conditions impinged on them in family and school have shaped their schooling lives and set the stage for the actions they took to achieve academically in disadvantaged rural circumstances.

In the context of the family, the data from this study show that learners were socially disadvantaged by their family's socioeconomic status. They experienced lack of material and financial resources, hardships, lack of amenities and utilities, lack of reading materials and walked long distances to school at a young age. Learners' stories and those of their parents and guardians exemplify the constrained discursive space that learners navigated on their way

to school and the structural and cultural conditions they confronted to achieve academic success.

In order to achieve, learners confronted limitations imposed on them by their family socioeconomic circumstances, the rural landscape and highly structured school environments. Of particular importance are the findings that show the choices and sacrifices that they made to navigate the rural landscape in the heat of the sun, flooded plains and long distances to school. Some went to school hungry or without a lunch box while others found alternatives by eating wild fruits on their way to school.

Within the context of schooling, learners' reflexive deliberations were based on the circumstances experienced at home and school. These experiences have shaped the 12 learners' actions both at an individual and collective level. In particular, learners' concerns for their current circumstances and the actions they took were shaped by conceptions of 'a good life' which is different from that of their families. In other words, conceptions of a 'better life in future' set the stage for actions to change their circumstances in future. In this connection, learners' identities are important and their ultimate concerns shaped their engagement in learning and achieving academic identities that contribute to what Archer (2003) refers to as a personal identity in terms of the role of education in their lives e.g. as a way out of poverty. The development of learners' personal identities is reflected in setting their own projects of obtaining a university qualification by using their personal powers to navigate structural and cultural constraints to achieve in rural schools.

The findings also indicate that learners have learned to adopt individual and collective strategies and made huge sacrifices in terms of their personal leisure time to focus on their schoolwork. They evaded some of the school rules such as using torches to study when the lights were off, or stayed in class during Physical Education lessons. They established study groups without the knowledge of the teachers and parents; some have lied to their parents in order to go and study with friends. Through hard work, self-discipline and agency, learners managed to achieve despite the enormously restrictive odds. Although all 12 learners belonged to study groups which can be equated to "promotive interests groups" in Archer's language, their actions are in line with the flow of modernity where they exploited a variety of available opportunities to shape their own lives for a better future.

The findings of this study show that the interplay between learner agency and structural/cultural conditions have shaped learners' achievement trajectories. The data has also demonstrated that even in socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances there are some learners who achieve academic success. In other words, one can conclude that in every situation, there are learners who achieve and those who underachieve, and that it is not a matter of being socially advantaged or disadvantaged. This is in contradiction with early biological and social context research which concluded that achievement is predetermined as explained in Chapters 2 and 3. Using Archer's social realist lens allowed us to analyse learners within their conditioning contexts, identify difference between individual learners, and arrive at different conclusions from that drawn in early research on achievement. It also allows us to analyse the actions that learners take to confront structural and cultural conditions to achieve academically.

Reflecting on the use of Archer's social realist theory, the theory of social change is a useful explanatory and analytic methodology for researching the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged settings. Unlike positivists and cognitivists expounded earlier, the social realist theory enabled the researcher to unearth the interaction between structure, culture and learner agency and its impact on learners' academic trajectories. The theory also helps with recognition of difference and the role of agency in learner achievement which earlier explanations have underplayed. Archer's concepts of agency was particularly helpful to this study for it makes it possible to present learners' actions as they navigate structural constraints of their families and schools to achieve academic success. What was challenging in using Archer's theory is the usefulness of the reflexive stances to this study because they are bound to change. For example, some of these learners might have exhibited characteristics of communicative reflexives at the time of the study but that can change as they get exposed to the world outside their communities.

Looking into the future, the analysis presented here points to the need for more nuanced studies on learner achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural circumstances that take cognisance of the challenges they experience and the conditioning context in which they find themselves in order to understand the role that learners play in shaping their own academic trajectories. In particular, future research on achievement should examine how the interaction between agency and rural contexts shapes learner success. This will provide a different perspective on

learner achievement which is not deterministic as is the case with the existing dominant explanation for learner achievement expounded in chapters 2 and 3.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Instruments

A. OMAPULAPULO GAAKULUNTU (INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS / GUARDIANS)

Omapulapulo ngaon oga nuniwa oku konga uuyelele wu na sha nomatompelo gena sha neyilongo lyaanona mboka hayeshi pondola nonande ya putukile monkalo yomomkunda. Uuyelele mbuno to ka pandje itawu ka longithwa wee shimwe shilwe kaa shishi of omapekapeko gena sha neilongo ndika. Omuntu keshe owuna uuthemba wu zemo momapekapeko ngaka shaa thimbo ngele owa tokola nokutya ino hala okutsikikila noku gandja omauyelele ngono taga pulwa. Kwaamboka taa kutha ombinga, omadhina nuukwatya wawo itawu ka tseyithwa nande. Omrepekapeki otaka longintha omadhina kage shi goshili opo a gamenene omaukwatya gaaoonakukuthat ombinga mepekapeko muka.

Ngashiingeyi onda hala oku ku pula omapulo kombinga yonkalamwenyo yoye, yofamili yoye, nosho wo kombinga yehala mpoka wa putukila. Otandi ke ku pula wo kombinga yeputuko lyaNokonima, otandi ke ku pula wu lombwele ndje kombinga yonkalamwenyo ye mekwatathano noskola. Omuthindo omunene ogu li unene kiiningwanima yi na sha nomatompelo gontumba nenge gongandi mofamili nomoskola kombinga ya

1. Owa valelwa peni?
2. Owa valwa momumvo guni?
3. Hokolola kombinga yonkalamwenyo yoye mwene nokombinga yonkalamwenyo yofamili yoye moka wa putukila?

Epekapeko: Owu na aamwanyoko yangapi? Aakuluntu yeni/yoye oya li haa longo shike? Oye mu kwatha ngiini kombinga yuuhupilo? Osha li sha tya ngiini mokuputuka nomokukokela mofamili yoye? Osha li sha tya ngiini mokukokela momukunda gweni?

4. Oshike to vulu okuhokolola sha li sha simana mofamili moka wa putukila?

Epekapeko:

- 4.1 Oto dhimbulukwa iinima we yini we yi lombwelwa kumeme gwoye ye ku kwatha monkalamwenyo yoye? Yi tumbula.
- 4.2 Oto dhimbulukwa iinima we yi lombwelwa kutate gwoye ye ku kwatha monkalamwenyo yoye? Yi tumbula.
5. Ngashingeyi hokololela ndje kombinga yofamili yoye mwene moka wu li kongashiingeyi.
 - 5.1 Owu na aanona yangapi?
 - 5.2 Oto tekula aanona yalwe yangapi mofamili yoye nenge aapambele?
 - 5.3 Oshike to vulu okulombwela ndje sha simana kombinga yofamili yoye?
6. Mehala moka wu li no family yoye olili momudhingoloko gwatya ngiini?
 - 6.1 Oho longo iilonga yashike opo wu hupithe ofamili yoye?

- 6.2 Aantu yomomudhingoloko gwoye ohaa hupu ngiini?
7. Omayoolokathano geni ge li pokati konkalamwenyo yofamili yoye mwene mokuyelekanitha naampoka wa putukila?
- 7.1 Oshike sha lunduluka?
8. Iinima yini yi na omupondo, ano ya simana kongashiingeyi mofamili yoye mwene?
9. Onda hala oku ku pula omapulo gamwe kombinga yonkalamwenyo yomumwoye
- 9.1 Owa koneke shike momadhimbulo goye kombinga yeputuko lyokuputuka kwe:
 - (i) Manga ina tameka oskola?
 - (ii) Pethimbo a li moondondo dhonetameko?
 - (iii) Sho a tameke oskola yopombanda?
10. Ekwatathano lyomunona gwoye naamwayina olya tya ngiini?
11. (i) Hokololela ndje kombinga yekwatathano lyokanona koye... nangoye mwene. (nahe nayina/naatekuli yako) osho wo naakwanezimo/naashiinda.
- 12 Tumbula gumwe gwomaamwoye ngoka oye e li oshiholelwa oshiwana? Omolwashike to tile kutya oye oshiholelwa oshiwana?
13. Hokololela ndje oshinima shontumba shoka wa koneke sha ningwa mofamili, yoye (megumbo lyeni) shoka sha eta elunduluko mu Osho mu pe enwethomo lya tya ngiini? Ewana nenge ewinayi?
Li hokololela ndje.
14. Omumwoye oha kandula po ngiini omaupyakadhi ge monkalamwenyo ye? Oshinima shini wa koneke osho ha ningi tango ngele okwaadhika kuupyakadhi?
15. Omunona gwoye oskola oku yi uvite ko ngiini?(Oha ti okwa hala eithano lini?)
16. Omumwoye ... oha piti ngiini iilonga ye moskola?
17. oha mono omakwatho genipo megumbo shi na sha niilonga ye yoskola? Olye he mu kwathele?
18. Lombwela ndje iinima mbyoka wu wete ya simana komunona gwoye. Omolwashike ya simana?
19. Hokololela kombinga yiinima mbyoka hayi piyaganeke omumwoye mekwatathano neilongo lye. Omolwashike wu wete oyo hayi mu piyaganeke?
20. Omumwoye ota dhiladhila a ka ninge shike monakuyiwa ye? Shoka ha dhiladhila ote ke shi tsakanitha po ngiini?
21. Omumwoye konima yomimvo ntano twa taalela ota ka kala ngiika a tya ngiini nenge e li peni?

Tangi unene sho wa longitha ethimbo lyoye mokuyamukula omapulo gandje neitulomo.

INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

This study investigates the factors shaping the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings. It is a PhD studies and thus all information is collected for this purpose and nothing else. All participants can exit from this research leave anytime if they so decide. Also be informed that the identities of all participants will be protected and the researcher will not use their real names or present any information that will disclose their identities.

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about your own life, your family life and the place where you grew up. Then I will ask you to talk about the childhood life of Thereafter, I will ask you to talk about her/his school life. The focus is on events that stand out for whatever reason in the family and schooling experiences of

1. Tell me about yourself and your family. (How many siblings do you have? What was it like to grow up in the village/town? What did your parents do for a living?
What was it like growing up in your family?)
2. What would you say was important to your family? Do you remember things your mother/father told you?
3. Now, tell me about your own family. How many children do you have? How many other children (relatives) are/were living with your family? How would you describe your family? What would you say is important to your family?
4. What is the place (village/town/neighbourhood) like where you live now with your family? What do you do for a living? What do other people in your area do for a living?
5. Are there differences in your family life now compare to when you were growing up with your parents? What changed?
6. What are the things you value now in your own family?
7. I would like to ask you some questions about your child ...'s life. What is the memory that stands out about him/her while she/he was growing up? (Before she/he started school, when she/he was in primary school, when she/he started high school).
8. How would you describe child ...'s relationship with her siblings, mother/father, other family members?
9. Who would you say is ...'s role model? Why do you say so?
10. Describe something that happened in the family which made ... think differently about him/herself. How do you think it influenced ... life?
11. How would you say your child handles challenges in life? What in your view is the first thing they do?
12. How would you describe your child's view of school?
13. What would you say are ...'s achievement in school?
14. What assistance does ... receive at home with schoolwork? Who assists him/her?
15. Tell me about things that you think are important to your child. Why are those things important?

16. Tell me about things that your child is most concerned about. Why is he/she concerned about them?
17. What would you say is your son/daughter's future plan? How does he/she plan to achieve it?

Thank you for using your time to answer my questions!

B. INTERVIEW WITH LEARNERS

Omapulapulo gomulongwa, Oshiwiliki sho- 1

Otandi pandula unene sho to ka kutha ombinga momapulapulo ngaka. Otandi ke ku pula omapulo kombinga yokuputuka koye, mpoka wa kala show a li omunona naashoka wa koneke mokupuka kwoye. Omauyelele ngoka to ka pa ndje, otandi keg a longitha mokuuva ko nomokufatulula onziililo ndjoka ye ku ningi wu kale wu li ngashi wu li nena. Uuyelele mbuka to pe ndje otandi wu kaleke mehaleko, nedhina lyoye itali ka holoka nando moshinyolwa shandje shahugunina.

Esiku lyevalo, ehala neputuko

1. Owa valwa uunake?
2. Owa valelwa peni?
3. Owu na aamwanyokokadhona naamwanyokomati yangapi?
4. Hokololela ndje ekwatathano lyoye pokati koye naamwanyoko mokuputuka kweni?

Epekapeko: Iinima yini mwa kala hamu ningi pamwe naamwanyoko?

5. Olye a li e ku sile oshimpwiyu show a li okanona? Olye he ku sile oshimpwiyu ngashingeyi?
6. Ngashingeyi natu popye kombinga yofamili yoye. Omwa putuka yangapi mofamili yoye?
7. Aakuluntu yoye ohaa longo shike opo ya vule oku mu palutha?
8. Iinima yini ya li ya simanekwa kaakuluntu yoye/kofamili yoye pethimbo lyeputuko lyoye?

Epekapeko: Iinima yini ya simana aakuluntu/aatekuli yoye ye ku lombwelele mokuputuka kwoye? Yi tumbula.

9. Hokolola egumbo moka wa putukila pethimbo lyuunona woye.

Epekapeko: Osha li sha tya ngiini okuputukila megumbo ndyoka? Omaudhigu geni wa tsakaneka mokuputukila megumbo ndyoka?

10. Iilonga yini wa kala ho longo mokuputuka kwoye? Yi tumbula.
11. Oshike to dhimbulukwa sha li shi li nenge hashi ningwa momudhingoloko moka wa putukila?

(Hokololela ndje omudhingoloko moka wa putukila)

Epekapeco: Iilonga yini aakuluntu ya li haa longo momudhingoloko moka wa putukila? Aanona oya li haa longo iilonga yini?

12. Uudhano wuni wa li ho dhana mokuputuka kwoye? Omwa li hamu wu dhana nalye?
13. Hokololela ndje ookuume koye mboka mwa putuka nayo? Oto dhimbulukwa shike kombinga yawo?
14. Holola ekwatathano pokati koye natate gwoye (nomutekuli gwoye ngono wa tala ko ongatate gwoye).
15. Holola ekwatathano pokati koye nameme gwoye gwoye (nomutekuli gwoye ngono wa tala ko ongameme gwoye)
16. Holola ekwatathano pokati koye naashiinda sheni mokuputuka kwoye.
17. Mokuputuka kwoye oye a li ha ningi omatokolo mofamili yen?

Epekapeco: Etokolo lini wa ningile mokuputuka kwoye, lye ku fala ponkatu ombwanawa nenge muupyakadhi?

18. Mokuputuka kwoye mofamili yoye iinima yini ya kala hayi ku uvitha nayi unene? Omolwashike ya li hayi ku uvitha nayi?

Tangi unene sho wa longitha ethimbo lyoye mokuyamukula omapulo gandje neitulomo!

LEARNER INTERVIEW –PART 1

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to find out the factors shaping the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings. It is a PhD studies and thus all information is collected for this purpose and nothing else. All participants can exit from this research leave anytime if they so decide. Also be informed that the identities of all participants will be protected and the researcher will not use their real names or present any information that will disclose their identities.

The learner interview consists of two parts. Part 1 focuses on your childhood life while part 2 focuses on your schooling life experiences. Today, I would like to ask you some questions about how your life has been like when you were growing up. I will let you know when the second part of the interview will take place.

1. Please tell me about yourself and your family (When and where were you born)?
2. What are some things that were important to your family when you were growing up?
3. What do you remember about the place in which you lived when you were a child?
What was it like growing up in this place?
4. Describe the home in which you lived when you were a child.
5. What were some of the things you remember doing when you were growing up?
6. What do you remember about the neighbourhood in which you grew up? Can you describe your childhood neighbourhood to me?
7. What type of games did you play when you were a child? With whom did you play?
8. Can you describe your childhood friends to me? What do you remember most about your friends?
9. Tell me a time in your childhood life which you will never forget. What happened?

10. How would you describe your relationship with your father/mother/guardians/siblings?
11. Are there things that concern you most in your family life? What are they? Why are you concerned about them?
12. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your family life? **Thank you!**

OMAPULAPULO GAALONGWA, OSHIWILIKI OSHITI- 2

Elalakano lyomapulapulo ngaka, olyo okuuva ko muule iiningwanima ya simana monkalamwenyo yoye yoskola, mbyoka tayi ku kwathele opo wu adhe esindano meilongo lyoye.

Ngashiingeyi, onda hala oku ku pula omapulo gamwe kombinga yonkalamwenyo yoye moskola, tandi tamekitha oskola yoye yeputudho/oprima, opo ihe tatu tsikile nonkalamwenyo yoye mosekundoskola.

OSKOLA YEPUTUDHO/OPRIMA (OONDONDO 1-7)

1. Oskola yeputudho owe yi tamekele uunake? Owa li ho skola peni? Owa li ho yi ko ngiini koskola?
2. Oskola yeputudho owe yi hita pomahala ge vulithe pulimwe? Omolwashike?
3. Oto dhimbulukwa shike kombinga yoskola/yooskola dheputudho moka wa longwa?
4. Owu na aalongi yoye mboka wa li wu hole? Omolwashike wa li wu ya hole? Oya li haye ku popi taa ti ngiini?
5. Opu na omulongi /aalongi wa li ku mu/ya hole? Omolwashike?
6. Aalongi yeni mboka wa li wu wete kutya oya li iiholelwa yoye iiwanawa, nomolwashike?
7. Opu na omulongi gumwe ngoka a li e ku pe enwethomo ewanawa? Okwa li ha ningi shike?
8. Oskola yeputudho owa li wu yi uvitile ngiini?
9. Oshike wa li ho kala wa nyanyukilwa/hokwa koskola?
10. Oshike wa li ho kala inoo hokwa/nyanyukilwa koskola?
11. Eilongo lyoye moskola yeputudho olya li lya tya ngiini?(Owa li ho ilongo ngiini moskola yeputudho?)
12. Owa li wu na ookume koye kopothingo koskola? Omwa li hamu ningi shike nayo?

OSEKUNDOSKOLA (ONDONDO 8-12)

Ngashingeyi natu popye kombinga yomimvo dhoje mOsekundoskola.

1. Kakele koskola mu wu li ngashiingeyi, owa skola ishewe palwe (ojuniolo nenge oseniolo) osekundoskola? Openi?
2. Oshike to vulu okuhokololela ndje kombinga yonkalamwenyo yoye mOsekundoskola? Osekundoskola oya yoolokathana ngiini noprima?

3. Oshike wa hokwa/nyanyukilwa mOsekundorskola? Oshike ino hokwa/nyanyukilwa?
Epekapeko: Oto vulu okuhokololela ndje kombinga yookuume koye kopothingo mosekundorskola? Ohamu ningi pamwe nayo shike moseko?
4. Eilongo lyoye moseko oli li pomuthika gwa tya ngiini?
5. Aalongi ohaa popi taa ti ngiini kombinga yoye? Aalongwa ooyakweni ohaa ku popi taa ti ngiini?
6. Oho longekidha/pulana ngiini okulonga iilonga yoye yorskola? Olye he ku kwathele?
7. Hokolola ethimbo limwe wa li wu na uupyakadhi noshilongadhalwa shimwe shorskola. Oshike shoka sha li uupyakadhi kungoye? Owa ningile ngiini?
8. Ompangela yoye oyini ngele wa piti Ondondo 12?
9. Ngiika oto ka kala wu li peni konima yomimvo ntano? Omadhiladhilo goye ogeni okutsakanitha po ompangela yoye ndjoka?
Epekapeko: Owa dhiladhila okukala momudhingoloko mono wu li ngashingeyi muule woomimvo ntano wa taalela? Omolwashike wa hala/omolwashike inoo hala okukala mo?
10. Oshike wu wete tashi kala endangalati mondjila yoye okwaadha ompangela yoye? Sho to dhiladhila ngiika endangalati ndyoka mondjila yoye oto li kandula mo ngiini?

Tangi unene sho wa longitha ethimbo lyoye mokuyamukula omapulo gandje.

LEARNER INTERVIEW – PART 2

This interview is a follow-up of the first which took place on Today I would like to ask you some questions about your schooling life, starting with primary school and then move to your secondary schooling experiences.

Primary school (grade 1-7)

13. When did you start primary school? What primary school (s) did you go to? How did you get there?
14. Did you attend more than one primary school? If so, Why?
15. What do you remember most about the primary school (s) you attended?
16. Did you have any favourite teachers? Why did you like them? What did they say about you?
17. Did you dislike any teacher (s)? Why?
18. Who would you say are your role models and why?
19. Was any teacher an important influence on you? What did he/she do?
20. How did you feel about primary school?

21. What did you enjoy most at school?
22. What did you enjoy least at school?
23. How would you describe your primary school performance?
24. Did you have closest friends at school?

Secondary school (Grade 8-12)

Let us now talk about your secondary school years.

11. Apart from the school you are attending now, did you attend any other (junior or senior) secondary school? Which school?
12. What can you tell me about your secondary school life? How has secondary school been like?
13. What do you enjoy most at secondary school? What do you enjoy least? 14. Can you tell me about your secondary school best friends? (probe)
15. How would you describe your secondary school performance?
16. What do the teachers at school say about you? What do other learners say about you?
17. How do you plan to do your school work? Who helps you?
18. Describe a time when you had to deal with a school work challenge. What did you do?
19. What do you plan to do after completing grade 12?
20. Where do you see yourself five years from now? How do you plan to get there?
21. What do you think will stand in your way?
22. Is there anything you would like to tell me that I have not asked

Thank you for your time!

B. TEACHER FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Thank you for your willingness to take part in this interview. This study investigates the factors shaping the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings. It is a PhD studies and thus all information is collected for this purpose and nothing else. All participants can exit from this research leave anytime if they so decide. Also be informed that the identities of all participants will be protected and the researcher will not use their real names or present any information that will disclose their identities.

I would like to ask you questions about learner X school experiences in relation to her/his academic achievement and general behaviour at school. The study is interested in understanding the factors that shape learners achievement in socially disadvantaged and rural settings.

1. Tell me what you know about learner ...
2. How would you describe learner as a person?
3. What do the teachers at the school say about learner....?
4. What can you tell me about how the learner carries him/herself at school?
5. What can you tell me about learner ...involvement in:
 - a) School activities
 - b) extra-curricular activities,
 - c) Why in your view is this learner able to do all this?
6. In which other activities doe learner ...participate?
7. What is it about learner ... that makes you proud and why?
8. How does learner ... plan to do his/her school work?
9. What challenges does learner ... experience with school work?
10. Describe an incident when learner ... had to deal with a school work challenge. What did he/she do?
11. Describe how the school assists learner ... to deal with school work challenges? Who assists him/her?
12. Where do you see learner ... five years from now?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2: Contextual Profile Survey for Grade 12 Learners

This study investigates the factors shaping the academic achievement of learners from socially disadvantaged and rural settings. It is a PhD studies and thus all information is collected for this purpose and nothing else. All participants can exit from this research anytime if they so decide. Also be informed that the identities of all participants will be protected and the researcher will not use their real names or present any information that will disclose their identities.

Instructions:

- Please complete the questionnaire survey to the best of your knowledge.
- Read each question carefully before you answer it
- Circle your choice for each question
- Write clear explanations where they are required

Name of school: _____

Learner's name: _____

Section A: Learner Profile			
No.	Question	Answer	Code
1.	How old are you?	16-17 18-19 20-21 22-23 24-25 26-27	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	What is your gender?	Male Female	1 2
3.	What is your current place of residence?	City (such as Windhoek)	1

		Rural area (village)	2
		Town (such as Oshakati, Outapi)	3
		Location in town (such as Uupindi, Shikopi)	4
4.	Nationality	Namibian	1
		Non-Namibian	2
5.	Are you a boarder?	Yes	1
		No	2
6.	Who do you live with at home? <i>(You can tick more than one option)</i>	Mother	1
		Father	2
		Aunt/uncle	3
		Father and mother	4
		Grandmother	5
		Siblings (without parents)	6
		Other: Specify	7
7.	How many brothers and sisters do you have?	1-3	1
		4-6	2
		7-9	3
		Other: specify	4

8.	In what type of house or dwelling do you live?	Homestead (house made o sticks)	1
		Brick house	2
		Dwelling made out of corrugated sheets	3
		Other: specify	4
9.	Where is your home? (e.g. Okafitu ka Kahala, Omagalanga)		
10.	How do you get to school every day?	walk	1
		cycle	2
		My parents drive me to school	3
		My neighbours give me a lift to school	4
		Other: specify	5
11.	How far is your school from home?	Near	1
		Far	2
		Very far	3
Section B: Parents/family profile			

12.	Are your biological parents alive?	My father and mother are alive	1
		My father alive	2
		My mother alive	3

		My father and mother are deceased (not alive)	4
13.	Marital status of parents/guardians	Married	1
		Divorced	2
		Never married	3
		Other: specify	4
14.	What is the highest level of education of your mother/female guardians?	Never went to school	1
		Completed grade 1-4	2
		Completed grade 5-7	3
		Completed grade 8-10	4
		Completed grade 11-12	5
		Completed a university degree	6

15.	What is the highest level of education of your father/ male guardian?	Never went to school	1
		Completed grade 1-4	2
		Completed grade 5-7	3
		Completed grade 8-10	4
		Completed grade 11-12	5
		Completed a university degree	6
16.	Specify the highest level of education obtained in your family (e.g. Grade 12, B.A. Master's degree, etc.		

17.	What is the employment status of your parents/guardians?	Both my parents/guardians are employed	1
		Only my father/male guardian is employed	2
		Only my mother/female guardian is employed	3
		Both my parents/guardians are unemployed	4
		Both my parents/guardians are pensioners	5
		Other: specify	6
18.	If one or both of your parents or guardians are employed, what do they do? <i>Please describe</i>)		

19.	What is the main source of income for your parents or guardians?	Subsistence farming	1
		Salaries/wages	2
		Pension/elderly grant	3
		Kapana (selling cooked meat or fish, fat cakes, etc.)	4
		Other: specify	5
20.	Family possessions (Circle more than one if applicable to your family)	Cattle (cow, goats/sheep)	1
		Poultry (chicken, pigeon)	2
		Pig	3

		Pearl millet (mahangu) field	4
		Other: specify	5

21.	Which of the following items are found in your home? (Circle more than one if applicable to your home)	Television (TV)	1
		Radio	2
		Car	3
		Bicycle	4
		Donkey cart	5
		Telephone/cell phone	6
		Refrigerator	7
		Other: specify	8
22.	What is the source of drinking water in your home?	Piped water (within the house)	1
		Piped water from a neighbour's yard	2
		Communal piped water	3
		Water from borehole	4
		Rain water tank	5
		Flowing water (e.g. canal, river)	6
		Protected well	7
		Unprotected well	

		Stagnant water	8
		Other: specify	9
			10
23.	What source of lighting do you use at home?	Electricity	1
		Candle	2
		Sun light	3
		Paraffin lamp	4
Section C: Educational and career aspirations			
24.	What are you plans after completing grade 12?	Go to university/college	1
		Get married	2
		Find employment	3
		Go to the cattle post (ohambo)	4
		Other: specify	5
25.	What do you plan to become in future? (Please describe clearly)		
26.	Who is role model?	Mother/father	1
		Brother/sister	2
		Teacher	3

		Uncle/aunt	4
		Other: specify	5
27.	Why do you think the person in question 25 is your role model? <i>(Please explain clearly)</i>		
Section D: Academic			
28.	Which Primary school did you attend? <i>(Provide the name of the school and where it is located)</i>		
29.	How would you rate your overall academic performance at school?	Excellent	1
		Very good	2
		Good	3
		Satisfactory	4
		Unsatisfactory	5
30.	Which subjects do you like most?		

31.	Why do you like the subjects?		
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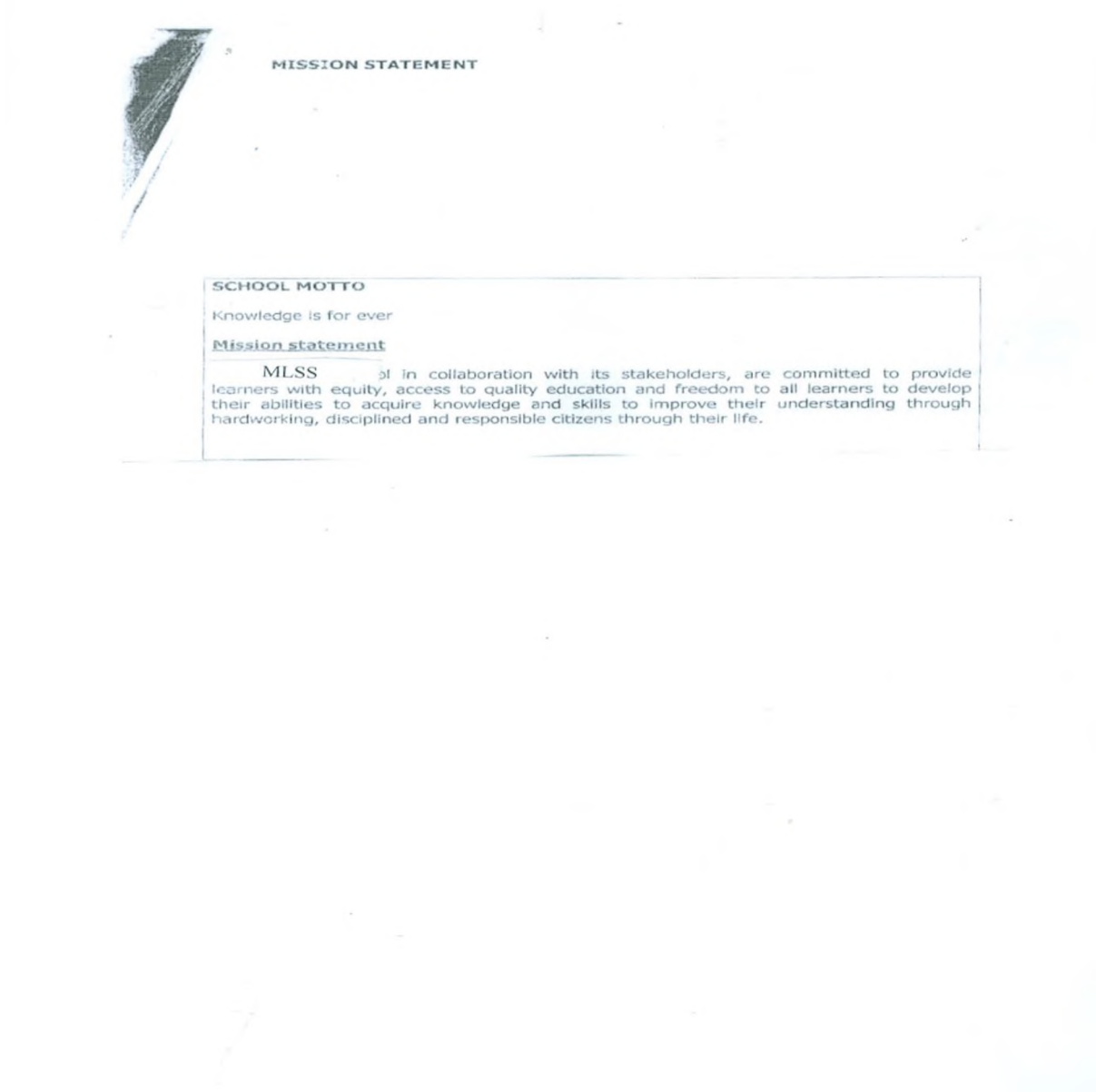
32.	Which subjects do you not like and why? <i>(Give the subjects and the reasons why you do not like them)</i>		
33.	How do you plan to do your school work? <i>(Explain clearly)</i>		
34.	What other activities do you engage in at school? (e. g. sport, my future my choice, etc.). <i>(Explain each activity clearly)</i>		
34.	What are your future educational goals?		

35.	How do you plan to achieve your future educational goals?		
Section E: Household chores			
36.	What household work do you perform before you go to school every day? <i>(Circle more than one if applicable).</i>	Pound mahangu (pearl millet) Fetching water Fetching firewood Till the land (during the rainy season) Other: specify	1 2 3 4 5
37.	How do you rate your relationship with your parents/guardians?	Very good Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory Other: specify	1 2 3 4 5

Thank you.

Appendix 3: Documents

MLSS INTERNAL SCHOOL POLICY



VALUES

- Mutual respect
- Honesty from within and towards others
- Unity of purpose
- Triangular educational approach
- Unwavering commitment

ENROLMENT CAPACITY

- a) School: The school can only enroll up to 574 learners
- b) Hostel: The hostel can accommodate up to.....

POLICY ON LEARNER'S PROFILE

There should be a computerized learner's database consisting of the following:

- Learner's name
- Learner's date of birth
- Parent's or guardians' names
- Contact details
- Occupation

POLICY ON SCHOOL ROUTINES

Morning assembly

The school conducts morning assembly on Mondays 7:00. Morning assembly is compulsory to all learners and teachers. Morning devotion is conducted by learners in class groups' rotation. It should last only for 10 minutes. Arrival time for learners: 7:00-6:50 and 14h45 doors are locked.

Teachers briefing

On Mondays starting at 06:45, on Wednesday and Fridays at 07:00. Other days when there is emergency.

Class registers period

Policy on learner's written work

People responsible:

1. Principal
2. HODs
3. Subject Head

- Learners are expected to keep all written work given and should be encouraged to keep flip files for work sheets and projects given.
- It is the responsibility of a subject teacher to monitor learner's written work regularly to avoid loopholes and mark 70% of learner's continuous assessment during a prescribed period.
- It is compulsory for all learners to do given work, and failure to do so will result into the following actions:
 - Redo the work
 - If transgression was repeated, depending on the magnitude of the offence, a learner shall be punished concurrently by signing a misconduct and redo the work get parents for further engagements.
 - If a learner continues not to comply, he / she should be referred for counseling or to the Disciplinary Committee (DC) and if he / she fail to improve completely then he /she should be referred to the School Board for a final decision
 - Subject teacher should keep records for learner's written work as well as behavioral records for references purposes.

Policy on Topic and Mastery Tests

Topic tests- Should be given on each topic covered and marking feedback must be given to learners not later than 3 days.

Mastery tests – There should be scheduled mastery tests in all subjects, across all grades once a term. These tests should be jointly set by relevant subject teachers should be moderated by the HOD concerned or by the Subject Head by taking into consideration the following points:

- Mark schemes should be jointly set before hand by the relevant subject's teachers and approved by subject head or concerned HOD.
- Mastery test should be conducted in the afternoons to avoid lesson disruptions
- Mastery test should weight from at least 50 marks and above.

- Marking feedbacks should be availed to learners not later than six days after the written date.
- Invigilators should report on time as prescribed in the time - table for mastery test, which should always be ready on notice board at the beginning of every academic trimester, by the time – table committee.
- Invigilators should ideally be a class teacher, on in absentia, should be substituted by available staff member.

Policy on Textbooks

All text books received must be registered in the main store register by the school secretary and then taken to the official responsible for "certification and numbers allocation."

Individual subject teachers should collect the textbooks and issue them to the learners. Textbooks must be issued/ distributed to the learners in the first week of the commencement of academic year or immediately upon received in the school.

The following guidelines must be adhered to by both teachers and learners when issuing textbooks:

1. Each Subject Teacher is expected to complete all text issuing forms as per textbook policy i.e on page 23- 26 and page 30.
2. Each learners is expected to sign a "User Agreement form" form 06.10

All textbooks issued to learners must be immediately issued to learners must top up with plastic cover available in local supermarkets with name tags (name,school,grade & year.)

NB: Strictly no newspaper/magazine covers are allowed.

3. Subject teachers should have the responsibility of collecting textbook at the end of academic year on the day the last paper of the specific subject has been taken and carefully audit the condition of the textbook must be replaced by the responsible learner.

Monday-Friday
08h00-13h00
14h00-17h00

Policy on computer laboratory

Learners are encouraged to make use of the computer laboratory to do internet surfing and improve their computer literacy skill, provide that they are supervised mainly by the computer instructor or the subject teacher. Learners should adhere to the computer room rules, available on each client (computer) in the lab. Class groups should make use of the lab at their scheduled times slot but however, individual learners' appointments in the afternoon are accepted.

- Teachers are not allowed to squeeze themselves into the computer laboratory while lessons are in progress.
- Internet should ideally be used for academic purposes.
- Only authorized users are allowed to use the computer center i.e. learners and teachers of Mwaala High School.
- Community member and interested parties who want to use the computer center for internet, typing, printing and e-mails should meet the following pre-conditions.
- Typing & printing N\$ 3 Per page
- Internet \$ E-mail \$ 10 for every 30 minutes
- Control of payments must be the responsibility of a computer teacher and computer instructor.
- Outsiders must only use the computer center with the consent of the school principal.

NB: To ensure the sustainability of the center and its facilities, regular cleaning of the lab and facilities should be done. Requests for maintenance must be referred to the regional office computer technician.

Policy on physical science and biology laboratories.

Laboratories should be used for practical and experiment purposes. Head of department concerned should see to it that necessary apparatus are available and ordered beforehand and must consider the following.

- Proper inventory must be kept and handling of apparatus and teaching aids must be carefully controlled and supervised by HOD
- Safety precautions (by the subject teacher) should be ensured when handling and storing chemicals.

- Each committee's composition should not be more than five members and committees are expected to meet 1-2 times a term and feedback should be given to the relevant authorities.
- Participation of each committee members is compulsory and if a member absents him / her to the meetings for three consecutive times, without prior notice to the chairperson, that members will be dismissed in writing and Staff Rules shall apply.

Policy on the teaching of Non- Promotional subjects

- The teaching of Non – Promotional subjects should be given equal emphasis as with the promotional subjects.
- Distribution of Non – promotional subjects should be given to teachers with less promotional subject allocations. Assessment of Non – Promotional subjects is compulsory and should reflect on the learner's report card.

Non Promotional Subjects JS phase (Gr.8- 10) is as follows

- Life skills – 1 lesson / 7 day cycle
- Library(Basic Information Science) non assessable – 1 lesson / 7 days circle
- ICT Literacy – assessable – 2 lessons / 7 days cycle
- Arts and Culture – 1 lesson / 7 days cycle – non assessable
- Physical Education – assessable 1 lesson / 7 days cycle
- Religious and Moral – assessable 1 lesson / 7 days cycle

*Non – Promotional Subject Senior Phase (Gr.11- 12) is as follows

- Life skills – 3 lessons / 7 days cycle – missing
- Physical Education - 2 lessons / 7 lessons / 7 days cycle – missing
- ICT Literacy - 2 lessons / 7 days cycle
- Teachers assigned for the teaching of Non – Promotional subjects should always do team planning and subject meetings (conference).

Policy on HIV / AIDS

- There should be a formalized school HIV and AIDS programme aimed to address, manage and mitigate the impacts of HIV / AIDS related diseases e.g. My Future is My choice (MFMC), HIV /AIDS awareness club, HIV /AIDS Awareness Week, World Aids Day and other scheduled programmed activities.
- The HIV / AIDS committee together with the office of the principal should always take lead in such activities.
- No one is allowed to disclose the HIV / AIDS status of a colleague / staff member / learner without a prior consent of the infected person, otherwise should it happens

the Public Services Staff Rule should be high applied. Therefore a high degree of confidentiality should be maintained at all times.

Policy on the OVCs (Orphans and Vulnerable Children)

- Registration of OVC should be regularly updated by class teachers. OVCs should be assisted on how to apply for exemptions (should & hostel) and other benefits such as social grants particularly during parents meeting.
- The school shall seek to advise, however possible, the parents and guardians of OVCs to optimally use the OVCs grants to the best interests of their education.
- The exemptions of VCOs from paying School Development Fund (SDF) and Hostel Development Fund should be done with prior and thorough assessment and approval by School Board provide prior recommendation and assessment from relevant parties has been forward.

Policy on Examinations

a) Internal examination policy

Examinations should be regarded Examinations should regarded as one of the most important school programmes. Therefore the following conditions should be taken into consideration prior, during after examinations.

*The office of the principal must converse a staff meeting three weeks before the commencement of the examinations to address among others.

- Timetabling of invigilation
- Collection and handing over of question papers
- Computing of learners examinations marks
- Verification and approval of promotional schedules
- Cross check of reports and schedules
- April test languages be written as from the 1st of April to the last 4 days before school classes to be written in the afternoon, a time – table to be drawn up .
- Other subjects to be written in the last 2 weeks of April.

Policy on admission

School admission

- Admission for grade 8 should be done by the Admission Committee headed by a senior teacher.
- Admission for grade 11 is done by the Regional Office Placement Committee
- Admission for grade 9,10 and 12 can be done through "guided transfers" with strong recommendations by the office of the principal and only special cases of transfers should be approved due either to the relocation of parents or guardians, death of the parents or guardians, learners chronic illness.
- * • There should be always an aptitude test for grade 8 admission and results of the test will determine the final admission and parents should be informed before 10th October of every year.
- All admitted learners are expected to be in possession of their identification documents and full school uniform.
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to inform the principal's office about cases of learners' ill health.
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to visit the school not only upon request but voluntary to familiarize with the learners academic and behavioral progress.

Hostel admission

- Admission to the hostel is a "privilege but not a right"
- * • Admission should be renewed by applicants every year to determine the fate of their application.
- Any applicant with serious offences shall automatically forfeit hostel admission for the following year.
- * • Priorities should be given to applicants from beyond a **5 km radius as stipulated in the Education Act, Act No: 16 of 2001.**
- Temporary withdraw of learners from the hostels during examination by the parents can result in learner forfeiting his / her place in the hostel due to competitive spaces.
- All learners admitted in the hostel are expected to report themselves not later than two days after the commencement of the term. Failure to report without prior notification to the office of the principal or hostel superintendent will result in forfeiting of the space.

Policy on activities in the hostel and the hostel

Policy on School Tour

There should be annual scheduled school tours for academic and leadership development. These tours can be within the school environment or outside. For outside tours, learners must make financial contributions and the school can meet them halfway.

For an outside tour to be authorized, a parent's consent should first be obtained by signing an **Indemnity Form**. These tours should be preferably taken by grade 10 and grade 12, preferably during second term. Local based tours are open to all grades. Far distant tours must be done over the school holidays, preferably in August holiday with a minimum of three (3) accompany teachers (that is one teacher for every 35 learners).

Whilst on tour, school rules and public Services Staff Rule should be adhered to and the visitors (teachers and learners) should respect all the rules and regulations of the visited site.

Each tour scheduled by the school shall not exceed a maximum of five (5) days. Each tour is expected to represent programmer of activities before departing and equally a report of all the activities undertaken.

NB: School Tours must be reflecting in both Departmental and School Development Plans. Hence the school will not approve a non – planned school tour (be it located or distant)

Policy on staff and professional Development programmes

There should be annual scheduled staff development and professional development programmes preferably in the first term. These programmes can either be addressed from within the school or other corporate organizations.

Focus on staff development:

- Public Staff Rules Act, Act of 1995
- Education Act, Act 16 of 2001
- Teachers Code of Conducts
- Leaves of absent
- Training of supervisors and hostel workers

Refer to school rules

Policy on cleaning

- There should be scheduled mass cleaning campaigns on a tremly basis with learners, teachers and institutional workers.
- Class teachers are expected to lead their respective class groups and cleaning equipment must be entrusted to class teachers and held responsible (class teacher) for any loss. In events of a class teacher not available substitute arrangements must be made either from the class teacher or office of the principal.
- The school is expected to jointly participate in a scheduled mass cleaning campaigns by local Authority provided they don't interfere with lessons.
- No burning.

Classroom cleaning

- Each classroom should have a cleaning list on a display and cleaning should be compulsory.
- Cleaning should be done every day after evening studies
- The school should provide each class group with a broom.
- Removal of spider webs and dust from the ceilings must be done by learners while mass classroom cleaning campaigns should be done before examination every term.
- Teacher should ensure the classes are cleaned before teaching commence.

Cleaning of the administration block

- Cleaning of the administration block should be done by the designated personnel and they should be encouraged to do the sweeping mainly in the afternoons while conducting small scale cleanings in the morning.
- Cleaning of the Computer Laboratory should be left under the supervision of teacher in charge.

Cleaning of the Teachers' houses

- Teachers' houses should always maintain an attractive clean environment and regular inspection shall be conducted by the principal.

Learner's presentation

- Learners should always appear presentable in clean and well dressed uniforms and well plited or cut hair as well as polished shoes. Learners should maintain general personal hygiene.

Policy on school furniture and facilities

- No one allowed to posses / own remove school assets without an approval of the treasury instruction (Ministry of finance)
- Learners shall not be allowed to remove chairs and tables from the classes.
- Vandalism of school properties shall not be tolerated and culprits shall be held accountable.
- Reporting of vandalism should be immediately done to the office of principal.
- For effective supervision of school assets, an updated inventory list should be kept by the responsible officials.
- A loan register must be maintained by the school internal / external borrowing of the school assets and in case of assets e.g sound system and video machine charges must be done as per the laid up standards.
- Abuse of school assets shall not be tolerated.
- Lost assets should be recovered.

Teaching Staff

Teachers should always dress professionally. Casual dress is only allowed on Friday when appropriate.

The following dressing should be discouraged.

- Tights clothes
- Jeans (except on Friday when appropriate)
- Short skirts
- Chains for males)
- All on training / job training should be dressed properly.

School Uniforms consists of:

Girls

- Grey skirts / trousers
- White or grey sock
- White shirt
- Grey jersey
- Grey tie
- Black shoes

Boys

- Grey trousers
- White or grey sock
- White shirt
- Grey jersey
- Grey tie
- Black shoes

LRC

School to buy school uniform for LRC & tie (retainable)

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For hair do, only black and white ribbons are allowed in the school during school hours.
No double ear rings for girls. Whilst no ear rings at all boys. Other jewelries e. g chains bracelets, rings toe rings, tongue rings, tattoos etc are not allowed in the school premises.

Policy on Automatic Promotion and Transfer

Automatic promotion (of learners) can be done as per Formal Education Circular NO: 7/2009. However the school shall have the power to:

Grade8 -9

- Reject borderline cases if a learner has been showing unacceptable pattern of behaviors, unacceptable absenteeism and lack of commitment to academic work.
- With references to Grade 11, 25 points in 6 subjects the school may retain (in the same grade) the candidate or the candidate may forfeit his /her place.
- To affect these conditions, records and evidence should be kept as proof.

Policy on job attachment, Teaching Practices and School Observation

- Approval for job attachment might only be done if request was made in writing from the training institution. Duration is determined by the training institutions.
- The school is not obliged to provide accommodation, meals and remuneration to the trainee or the student teacher in cases of teaching practice or teaching observation.
- * • No teacher shall be allowed to directly engage a student teacher on teaching observation in the actual teaching.
- Student teachers on teaching practice shall only be allowed to exercise their teaching expertise within their areas of specialization, with a constant monitoring from their support teachers.

Policy on school awards

There should be an annual planned school awards beginning of a third term of each academic year. For academic award, August "mock" examination results shall be used as a base. For the *potential recipients* to be considered, they should have obtain a minimum of
* 70% or more. In instances where more individuals have surpassed the set minimum only

Focus on professional development:

- Subject knowledge development
- Mentoring
- Handling of examinations
- Information Communication Technology training
- Classroom management
- Curriculum Interpretations and Implementations
- New teachers to be inducted by management

Policy on grievances procedures

Learners

Anything to be reported should be done via the class – captain to the class teacher. Class teacher should then take it up with teacher in question, and if it is not resolved then it should be reported to the relevant Head of Grade (HOG) and later on to the office of the principal. If the remains unsolved, it should be taken to the School Management committee or School Board (depending on the magnitude) and finally refer to the Circuit of office (Regional Director / Permanent Secretary who have the finally decision.

The nature if the grievances determine what channel the learner should follow, e.g learner – LRC support teacher.

Institutional workers

All the grievances pertaining to the institutional workers should be reported to the Chief Matron. If the Chief Matron cannot resolve the issue, it should then be reported to the office of the Hostel Superintendent. If the Superintendent cannot resolve the matter, I should, it should be reported the to the principal. If the matter remains unsolved, it should be reported to the office of the circuit inspector for further considerations. All cases of grievances must be dealt with promptly and with an utmost degree of fairness and confidentiality.

Institutional worker not under Chief Matron report to the HOD, then principal or straight to the principal.

MLSS CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS

All offences shall not be dealt with equally, offences are dealt with depending on the circumstances. Behaviour of learners can lead to consequences and the nature of the deal of the offence is considered. Minor offences can be treated as major ones as well. Principal Signature: Date: Parent Signature: Date: Learner signature: Date:	MARENGA SENIOR SECONDAR SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 THIS DOCUMENT IS COMPILED IN CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS
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MARENGA SENIOR SECONDAR SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT Marenga School is committed to providing all learners in the school with equitable access to quality education, cultural activities to develop the abilities of every learner to acquire the knowledge, understanding, skills, values, norms and attitudes required through their life time. SCHOOL VISION We aspire to achieve the following by the year 2019: - At least 80% pass rate in all the grades. - Have fully dedicated staff and learners. - Complete involvement and support by parents. - Educate learners to have respect, self confidence, a positive attitude towards work and environment.	SPORT RULES 116. All players must respect their coaches, fellow players and play mate. 117. Players must wear according to the sport codes they are involved in. 118. School properties e.g. balls, sweaters, kits must be respected and if lost replaced or paid for. 119. Players must report themselves on time to training, games exercises. Failure to do so may attract suspension, or suspension from the team. 120. Referring with other playmate is prohibited. RULES OF PARENTS TOWARDS SCHOOL AND TO THEIR CHILDREN 121. Parents must make sure that the learners have paid the school fees by pre-arranging to them on time. 122. If a parent cannot afford, he/she must come to the school to make payment arrangement. 123. Parents must familiarize themselves with the school's discipline (academic, social) and pedagogic situation of the school to enable themselves to provide transport money and other necessities to their children. 124. Parents must come to school when called for parents meeting, discipline's hearings, familiarizing and cultural events etc. 125. It is a sole responsibility of parents to report any sickness of a learner e.g. joint ache, headache etc. 126. Be school has an open-door policy therefore parents are free to come to school and monitor their children's progress.
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108. Refusing to do the punishment given to you by Principal, HODs Teachers, Institutional Workers, I.RC and Class Captain.

109. Misbehaviors during hostel / school function, events or activities whereby by misleading others into disobedience.

110. Being absent from study session at least three times without a permission understandable reasons. ✓

101. Found at the dormitories side of the opposite sexes.

102. Dodging classes without a valid reason /not under stable reasons.

103. Violation of study session, at least three times.

104. Refusing to write examination, test, assignment, home work, class work activities, etc.

105. Fighting.

106. Using intoxicating substances e.g. alcohol and drugs.

107. Beating up someone.

108. Cheating the examination (during examination session).

109. Harassment, intimidation and bullying.

110. Forcing others to do things against their will.

111. Sexual harassment of any kind e.g. touching one in appropriate e.g. touching of girls breast etc.

112. Sexual related activities.

113. Vandalism

114. Theft related activities or collaboration to actual theft.

115. Deliberate violation of schools rules.

SCHOOL AND HOSTEL RULES

GENERAL RULE

1. No learners is allowed to cause unnecessary disturbances in the hostel and classes.

2. Under no circumstances fighting can be allowed among learners.
- Report anyone disturbing you to the school authority.
- Do not take law into your hands otherwise you will also be a victim of punishment.

3. Sexual related activities among learners are not allowed.
- If a learner is impregnated by another they both will be asked to leave the school.

4. When there is cleaning campaign, all learners (borders and non borders) must Participate

5. Gambling as well as any form of money generating activities (including selling) is prohibited in the school.

6. No learner is allowed to leave the school premises and go out on a non-outing day without permission from a supervisor, HOD, superintendent and principal only.

7. Climbing the fence over/through or under the gates is prohibited.
- Learner found guilty of the offence will be suspended for one week from both classes and hostel and is punishable to pay N\$300.00.

8. Initiation practices of any kind will not be accepted in the school.

9. Extension of holiday and weekends is illegal.

10. Learners are only allowed to leave the school premises without having to ask for permission on Thursday as from 14H00-17H00 and when is home weekend.
- Church goers are allowed to go without permission, however they must return as soon as the church is out.

11. Borders are warned against sleeping out of hostel without permission from the superintendent

12. Vandalism of school properties and resources is prohibited e.g. breaking of desks, chairs, windows, notice board and writing on walls, doors and on notice boards.

13. Learners are not allowed to talk to their parents' visitor during school hours without a permission from the principal, HOD, and superintendent.

14. Talking over the fence is a serious offence, better let the person to come inside the school during the visiting hours at 19H30-11H00, 13H15-14H00 and at 16H00-17:00 or during weekends. A learner will be recorded three times and after that parents will be call at school.

15. Abortion in any form is prohibited in the school and is a police case.

16. If a learner fails at the end of the year she / he will be asked to leave the hostel.

17. No growing of beards / mustache. Hairs must be short and neat all time.
-No dreads locks, Afros, Twist or plaiting the heads / dying of hairs.

18. No braids / braided hairs, fancy, dyed extension (synthetic hair style, uncombed hairs.

19. Learners are prohibited from renting money or any other items to each other.
-Every learner is expected to have his / her student card at all times and is able to produce it when demanded.
-No electric devices in the school premises e.g. Cellular phones, Radios, Tapes, Walkmans, Discman, electric Kettle, hair dryer and tong. If a learner found guilty on the offence your device will be confiscated and will be given to the parent at the end of the final grade.

20. The following items are prohibited in the school premises.

✖ Cellular phones

✖ Knives

✖ Bunches

100. Abortion / police case.

101. Disrespectful attitude towards staff members.

103. Investigating violation against.

-Staff members

-Institutional workers

-Fellow learners

-Tempering with electricity.

104. Using other places for example showers, behind classes, bushes other than a toilet.

105. Leaving the hostel without permission.

106. Intention use of weapons.

107. Entering/ leaving the hostel through the windows or climbing the walls.

47. If the learner is recorded at least three (3) times for study violation he / she may sent home to bring the parents or may not be re - admitted in the hostel for the following academic year.

48. Remaining or staying in the hostel during study time without a permission from the supervisors on duty is prohibited and became an offence.

DINING HALL RULES

49. Only borders will be allowed to enter the dining hall.

50. Learners are prohibited to enter the dining hall with any other food or drink of some kind.

51. Learners are expected to use tables of their respective classes during eating time. It is prohibited for learners to use tables of others classes.

52. Meal times must be respected as no one will be allowed entry after the meal time has passed.

53. Learners must eat with spoons, forks, table knives but not with hands.

54. Learners are only allowed to eat inside the dining hall unless for some reasons supervisors on duties state otherwise.

55. No learner is allowed to use another learners' plate, spoon, fork or cup. Every learner must have his / her own utensils.

56. Entrance otherwise, must be used for exit and vice - versa unless supervisor on duty states otherwise.

57. During breakfast and lunch all learners must enter the dining hall in full uniform, properly dresses during classes.

58. No sandal type of shoes is allowed in the dining hall, unless the reason is known and approved by the supervisor on duty.

59. Clothes like vests and miniskirts are not allowed in the dining hall. Proper buttoning is compulsory.

60. No learner is allowed to eat twice unless the supervisor on duty state otherwise.

61. All learners are expected to sit properly and leave their table clean as possible.

62. Left - over food must be put in refuse bin only.

63. All learners must wash their plates in the dining hall only.

64. No learners are allowed to leave the dining hall with food unless the supervisors on duty state otherwise.

65. Under no circumstances food can be carried to dormitories. In case of sick learner the matron during the week will deliver the food for sick learners, and weekends IRC will deliver the food with a permission of a supervisor on duty.

66. No learner is allowed to enter the kitchen without permission with the exception of IRC during supervision.

67. Silence is highly recommended during meal time, storytelling, playing and singing is prohibited during eating.

HOSTEL RULES.

68. Learners are not allowed to leave dormitories while covering themselves with towel.
69. Learners are not allowed to use blanket / sheet to sleep under the trees.
70. Only borders of Mwanda Senior Secondary School are allowed to enter and stay in the hostel.
71. Non - borders or outsiders are prohibited to enter or sleep in the hostel unless permission from the relevant authority is granted.
72. All borders must report themselves to the hostel authorities upon arrival at the start of every term.
-This must be done on starting day.
73. Learners must not tamper with electric, wiring, switches or bulbs as tantamount to vandalism.
74. Learners must keep their dormitories clean as possible.
75. Toilets must be used properly and kept clean.
-Only toilet papers are allowed to be used on toilets.
-No sticks, mattress pieces, pads, pants liners, rucks or hard papers must be flushed into the toilets.
76. Littering in the rooms, hostel will not be tolerated.
-All litters must be put in garbage bins.
-Fighting is prohibited and report anyone disturbing you in the school aut. etc.

38. No rings, bracelets, necklace, earrings to boys, beads and caps or hats are not allowed during classes.
39. Nail paints and artificial nails and make up are prohibited in the school premises.
Belt should be worn properly and only black belt with no decoration.
Study Session
40. All learners must be in their respective classes during study session. ✖
41. Both evening and afternoon study are compulsory to all borders afternoon study is compulsory for both and non - borders.
42. Silence must prevail during study session.
- ✖ 43. Learners are prohibited to move around after the bell. Learners are strictly advised to visit taps and toilets before study time.
44. Visiting water taps during study is prohibited.
45. The following activities are classified as study violation.
-Not being in your class during study session without permission from supervisor.
-Noise making, playing talking while others are studying.
-Moving around from one class to the other. -Reading non - Educational material e.g. news paper magazines etc.
-Coming late to study.
46. If move is detected to come from one class and learners in that class fail to tell the supervisor on duty who the noisemaker is!, the whole class may be punished. ✖

91. No sport activities is allowed in the hostel e.g. mini soccer etc.
92. No learners are not allowed to leave the hostel block after the closing time without permission from relevant authorities.
93. If any learner contracts a contagious disease e.g. chicken pox, German measles, cholera etc prior arrangement can be made for a learner to be exempted from attending the classes.
94. Cooking in any form of food in the hostel / blocks is prohibited.
95. Electric kettle is prohibited at all cost in the hostel and on the school premises.
96. Selling in any form is prohibited.

MAJOR OFFENCES

The following offences are considered as major offences. The consequence of these offenses is an immediate suspension from both school and hostel with no prior warning.

97. Loss of school properties.
98. Dumping of food / left over's in the dining hall.
99. Passing through fence, climbing over the fence and cutting of the fence and a fine of \$5,300.00.

- ✖ Screw drivers
- ✖ Panga and Axes
- ✖ Knobkerries, bow and arrows and other sharp objects.

21. The following substances are prohibited to be brought in the school premises.
-Alcohol and other intoxicating substances.
-Cigarettes or cigar.
-Illegal drugs e.g. marijuana, cocaine etc.
22. The following activities and behavior are prohibited.
-Theft
-Bullying
-Harassment and intimidation
-Fighting
-Provocation and insulting others
-Stay outside classes during lesson e.g. sun basking dodging of lessons.

CLASSROOMS / ACADEMICS

23. Morning assembly is compulsory and must be attended by all learners at 7:00.
-Learners are expected to be in queue of their respective classes. ✓

- * 24. Class attendance is compulsory to all learners of Mwaala Senior Secondary School.
- * 25. All learners are expected to do their home works on time given to them.
- * 26. Learners are prohibited to take chairs / desks out of the classrooms.
- 27. Learners are not allowed to take chairs at the hostel.
- 28. No T- Shirt / blouse worn of top of school uniform during lessons.
- * 29. Classrooms must be kept neat and tidy at all time. Class Captain and teachers must monitor the daily cleaning.
- * 30. There should / must be a mutual respect among the school community e.g. Teachers, institutional workers, and learners.
- 31. The promotion of learners is not automatic, but must be based on academic merit, performance, attendance, behaviors and general conduct of a learner.
- * 32. All learners are expected to respond to time and respect the bell when it rings to be in their respective classes.
- 33. Learners going to be found idling outside after a bell ring will be dealt with
-Insulting teachers / institutional workers or answering them in a rude manner serious offence.

DRESSING AND APPEARANCES

- 34. All learners must have clean and orderly appearances.
- 35. School uniform is compulsory for all the learners in Mwaala Senior Secondary School.
- 36. The school uniform must be always properly put on buttoned and tucked in collars properly adjusted to the shirt.

Boys

A grey trouser, a white blouser (long or short sleeves) grey socks, tie and black school shoes.

Winter: A grey jersey is compulsory

Girls

A grey skirt / trouser, a white blouse (short / long sleeves, white socks / grey tie and black school shoes.

Winter: A grey Jersey is compulsory

NB: NO SLIPPERS, SANDALS, SNEAKERS(TACKIES) AND SLIP ON SHOES AT THE CLASSES

- 37. A learner may be send home to bring the parents if she / he is warned at least three times for improper dressing of school uniforms.

- 77. Hostel blocks are out of bounds to opposite sexes. Learners are not allowed and warned not to be on the block side of opposite sexes.

- 78. Permission to go home and overnight there, is only given by the Superintendent. This permission is only given to a parent of a learner if he / she contact the school in person, not by calling.

- 79. The closing time of the gate of the hostel blocks must be respected and adhered to.

- 80. When learners went for home weekends or holidays all borders are expected to be in the school premises before the school gate close.

- 81. All learners are expected to sleep in the registered blocks and in their own room and own beds unless the hostel authorities state otherwise.

- 82. Learners are only to enter the hostel through the gate. Getting in the hostel through the windows, climbing of the wall is prohibited.

- 83. Every border must have his / her own facilities e.g. clothes, plates, beddings. Sharing of facilities is prohibited.

- 84. Non- borders and suspended learners are not allowed to use the hostel facilities.

- 85. Learners are not ALLOWED to enter the hostel during the lesson without permission from the teacher's supervisor or Superintendent.

- 86. Learners must make their own beds and clean their rooms.

- * Wardrobe / lockers must be kept clean.

- 89. Hair cutting should be done in the laundry.

- 90. Clothes and beddings must be washed on the laundry rooms.

ALSS INTERNAL SCHOOL POLICY

ALUDHILU SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

School Rules and Regulations

1. School rules and regulations are necessary for order, harmony, leading to effective education training. School rules help to create a climate of order needed for a meaningful educational training to take place. Therefore, our school structure, functioning and educational objective necessitate a system of rules with an ultimate aim of self-discipline where our learners are provided with an opportunity to exercise self-control, solve problems, to learn and promote the welfare of the school. This positive approach to education and school problems should be the norm throughout the school. Moreover, our school rules should not be looked at as negative controls, but as a system of maintaining discipline, express disapproval to negative conducts and behaviours. Thus we are encouraging our learners to cultivate a habit of self-discipline at all times.
2. Our school rules are divided into Section A, B, C, D and E.

3. SECTION A: CLASSROOMS/SCHOOL

- 3.1. Morning assembly and devotion will be done collectively on Mondays and Fridays for a duration of 30 minutes.
- 3.2. Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays, it will be conducted in respective classrooms with class teachers.
- 3.3. Afternoon and evening studies are compulsory to all boarders and should only take place in the classroom. Day-learners are only allowed to attend afternoon studies including those who use to eat dinner at school.
- 3.4. Learners must comb/braid their hairs. Hairs must be shorter than 1cm. No artificial hairs are allowed. Braiding should be done with natural hairs and it should be done during weekends, not during studies or classes. (Only girls are allowed to braid their hairs)
- 3.5. Shirts and blouses should be tucked in during classes and all learners must wear their uniform properly.
- 3.6. Learners skirts and trousers must be completely zipped/buttoned up. No tight uniform is allowed.
- 3.7. No jewellery (i.e. earrings, necklaces, rings etc) are allowed in the school.
- 3.8. Learners are not allowed to wear trousers without belts.
- 3.9. Every learner should sit always at his/her place.
- 3.10. All books must be covered and taken care of.
- 3.11. Underlining of textbooks is strictly prohibited. (no writing/ marking in a textbook)
- 3.12. Chairs and Desks should not be removed from classes and they should not be tampered with scratching and/or drawings.
- 3.13. Writing/drawing and defacing of walls are not allowed.
- 3.14. Dusters should not be cleaned on the walls or the floors.
- 3.15. Homeworks are compulsory for every learner and must be done on time.
- 3.16. Classrooms must be kept clean and tidy everyday.
- 3.17. Clean the chalkboard after every lesson.
- 3.18. Unnecessary drawings and writing on the board are not allowed.
- 3.19. Sneakers are not allowed during classes except when there is a heavy rain, not during light shower/ few rain drops.
- 3.20. Short tight should be worn properly while long tight are allowed to be worn in winter, provided that it is grey and it is under the skirt.

- 3.21. Unnecessary singing and noises during class time are not allowed.
- ✓ 3.22. Orderliness and good behaviours must be observed at all time. Displaying of any form of indiscipline in the classroom is strictly prohibited.
- 3.23. Sport activities, such as mini-soccer (**okatshona ball**), netball and the likes, are not allowed at classrooms and its surroundings during lessons.
- ✓ 3.24. All learners should always communicate in English in the school premises.
- 3.25. Loitering around the school during classes and study is not allowed.
- ✓ 3.26. Learners should not leave the class without the permission from the subject teacher or teacher on supervision or from the class captain.
- ✓ 3.27. All learners should come to school on time.
- 3.28. The use of bad languages in the classroom and the entire school premises is not allowed and is punishable.
- 3.29. Learners are free to participate in any educational programs offered by/in the school.
- 3.30. When representing the school elsewhere, learners must wear full school uniform.

4. SECTION B: OFFICE

- ✓ 4.1. Learners are not allowed to leave the school premises without permission of the school officer or any delegated person by the Principal/HoDs /Superintendent.
- 4.2. Theft, fighting, smoking, drinking alcohol and drunkenness is strictly prohibited and can not be tolerated.
- ✓ 4.3. Always knock at the door before you enter any office.
- 4.4. Learners are not allowed to sit next to the administration block.
- 4.5. Entrance/Exit within the school premises must always be through the main gate.
- 4.6. Talking to friends and/relatives through the fence not allowed.
- ✓ 4.7. All learners are encouraged to attend any church services every Sunday.
- 4.8. Learners should report undesirable situation in the school and try to promote the welfare of the school.
- 4.9. Learners should guide and treat all visitors with respect.
- ✓ 4.10. Each and everybody must respect the hosting of the National Flag and singing of the National Anthem.
- * 4.11. All learners must take all instructions from the office with respect.
- 4.12. Learners are not allowed to rent money from other learners
- * 4.13. No communication devices, such as cellphones etc, are allowed.

5. SECTION C: HOSTELS

- 5.1. Instructions from the Superintendent, CH Matron, Supervisory Matrons, Supervisory teachers/persons must be strictly adhered to.
- 5.2. Every boarder must sleep on his/her bed and in the room allocated to him/her.
- 5.3. Beds must be neatly made up every morning and sleeping rooms must be cleaned everyday.
- 5.4. Window panes and floors should be cleaned after every two weeks.
- 5.5. Put all plastic carriers, fish/chips or fat cakes wrappers and all empty containers in the refuse bins all the time.
- 5.6. Knives, pangas, knob carries (all weapons) and dangerous instruments will not be allowed into the hostel.
- 5.7. Water cranes and taps should always be closed up after use.
- * 5.8. All learners must be in their sleeping rooms by 20H40 and light must be off by 21H00. This time is subjected to change.
- 5.9. Wandering, playing tape records and radios is not allowed after 21H00.
- 5.10. Learners should not leave the hostel/shower or walk in the hostel naked.
- 5.11. Use toilet papers, flush the toilet after use and keep the toilet always clean.
- 5.12. Learners are not allowed to enter the hostel of the opposite sex. (Boys are not allowed to enter girls hostel and vise-versa)

- ✓ 5.13. The wake up bell ring at 05H00 and the breakfast is at 06H00 in the morning. This time is subjected to change.
- 5.14. Boarders are not allowed to accommodate any outsiders
- 5.15. Gabbling (and any form of taking money from other learners) is strictly prohibited.
- 5.16. Sneaking in and out is strictly prohibited.
- 5.17. Getting off the school fence is vandalism in a serious sense and will not be tolerated.

6. SECTION D: KITCHEN / DINNING ROOM

- ✓ 6.1. Every boarder should attend all meals.
- 6.2. Distribution of food must only be done by Matrons and/or LRCs.
- 6.3. Scrabbling and grabbling of food (e.g breads) is not allowed. Each learner is entitled to eat the same amount of food, unless there is surplus.
- 6.4. Only LRC members will collect food from the kitchen.
- ✓ 6.5. Every learner is subjected to eat any kind of food prepared from the kitchen.
- 6.6. Learners will only be exempted from eating the food on the day's menu by the proof of a medical doctor and/or by the parent/guardian.
- 6.7. Utensils must be handled with care and should be cleaned at all times.
- 6.8. Learners are not allowed to share utensils, especially cups during breakfast, lunch or dinner. Tins, bottles or cut plastics are not allowed to be used as cups.
- 6.9. Only boarders/those who have paid are allowed to eat at the kitchen. Sick learners will eat in their dormitories.

7. SECTION E: DAY LEARNERS

This section is only for the day learners (non-boarders)

- 7.1. Apart from section C and D, all rules and regulations are applicable to day learners as well.
- 7.2. Day-learners must attend school everyday and all sessions
- ✓ 7.3. Day-learners must attend the morning devotion from Monday to Friday.
- ✓ 7.4. Day-learners should attend afternoon study and should adhere to rules of the study.
- 7.5. Day-learners are not allowed to enter the hostel and/or kitchen.
- 7.6. Day-learners are not allowed to eat at the kitchen.
- 7.7. Day-learners are advised to come with their lunch box.

This school rules and regulation were endorsed by the school board during their meeting held on the 10th January 2011 and by the parents in the meeting which was held on 5th March 2011.

Approved /Not Approved :
School Board Chairperson

.....
Date

ALSS

Approved/Not Approved:

.....
Date

ALSS DISCIPLINARY CODE FOR LEARNERS

ALUDHILU SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Tel:
Fax:

DISCIPLINARY CODES FOR LEARNERS

1. VADALISM	FIRST	1. Repairs to be effected at own cost. 2. Written warning.
	SECOND & BEYOND	1. Repairs to be effected at own cost. 2. Referral to the School Board. 3. Any other possible action.
2. SMOKING	FIRST	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Referral to the guidance and counselling. 3. Written warning.
	SECOND & BEYOND	1. Parents contacted. 2. Referral to the school Board. 3. Any other possible action.
3. PREGNANCY	ALWAYS	1. The Ministerial policy on pregnancy : Circular: Formal Education . 1/2010 (Dated 25 January 2010) will be followed.
4. THEFT	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Referral to the Counselling Committee. 3. Parents contacted. 4. Learner pay back the value of items stolen/refund. 5. If serious, referral to the police.
5. FIGHTING	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Pay N\$100-00 for fighting. 4. In serious cases, referral to the police.
6. CUTTING OF THE SCHOOL FENCE AND PASSING THROUGH THE HOLE	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Pays N\$100-00 for the offence. 4. Mend the fence at own cost.

		5. If a learner cut the school fence s/he will buy the whole roll of the netting fence.
7. COMMUNICATION DEVICES EITHER FOUND ON / OFF! (i.e cell phones, TVs, radios, i-pods, etc)	ALWAYS	1. Device confiscated. 2. Parents contacted. 3. N\$250-00 paid upon collection of the device. 4. Failing to comply with rule no. 3, a device will be auctioned.
8. WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS ITEMS (i.e. knives, pangas, sharp wires, spears, axes, screw drivers, guns etc)	ALWAYS	1. Weapon/s / item confiscated and never returned. 2. Referral to D.C. 3. Parents contacted. 4. Referral to the School Board / the police. 5. Suitable punishment.
9. ABORTION	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Police contacted.
10. UN AUTHORISED JEWELLERIES (i.e. necklaces, bracelets, earrings, chains etc)	ALWAYS	1. Jewellery confiscated 2. Verbal warning. 3. N\$100-00 upon the collection of the jewellery. 4. If it happen frequently, a learner is referred to the D.C / parents are involved. 5. Suitable punishment.
11. DRUNK NESS	FIRST	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Suspended for three weeks. 4. Counselling offered.
	SECOND & BEYOND	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Suspended and refer the School Board. 3. Parents contacted.
12. USE OF DEROGATORY LANGUAGES (INSULTS)	FIRST	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Suitable punishment given. 3. Written warning. 4. N\$50-00 is paid. 5. Apology made to the offended person.
	SECOND	1. Referral to D.C. 2. An offender apologises to the offended. 3. Parents contacted. 4. Pay N\$50-00 5. Extra punishment

13. LEAVING THE SCHOOL PREMISES WITHOUT PERMISSION.	FIRST	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Punishment given.
	SECOND & BEYOND	1. Referral to the D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Referral to the School Board. 4. Suspension / any other suitable action. 5. Counselling offered.
14. CHEATING DURING EXAMINATION.	ALWAYS	1. Results declared invalid for that subject. 2. D.C involved 3. Parents informed
* 15. INCOMPLETE / SUBSTANDARD HOME WORK	FIRST	1. Additional work is given. 2. Warnings given.
	SECOND	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Referral to the counselling committee. 3. Written warning.
	THIRD	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Referral to DC & Counselling Committee. 4. Punishment is given.
16. IMPROPER WEARING OF THE SCHOOL UNIFORM	FIRST	1. Ordered to wear it properly. 2. Verbal warning. 3. If the uniform is tight or with no zip, a learner is ordered to buy the proper one.
	SECOND	1. Referral to the D.C. 2. Suitable punishment. 3. Parents informed.
17. ENTERING BOYS OR GIRLS HOSTEL WITHOUT PERMISSION (TRESPASSING)	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parent/S contacted. 3. Referral to the School Board 4. Suspension / expulsion from the hostel determinant to the seriousness of the incident. 5. If anything got missing in the concerned hostel, the trespasser is the suspect no: 1.
18. FAILING TO BRING PARENTS UPON THE	ALWAYS	1. Refused to attend classes with the blessings of the

SCHOOL REQUEST		School Board & (or) D.C. 2. The inspector of education is notified. 3. Any other alternative method is used to contact the parent. 4. The ministerial policy on absenteeism will be followed as from the day you failed to comply with the instruction (bring parent).
19. MISBEHAVING (i.e. noising during classes, study, in hostel, disturbing a lesson etc)	FIRST	1. Reprimand and a verbal warning.
	SECOND	1. Punishment / referral to D.C. 2. Written warning. 3. Counselling
	THIRD	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Parents contacted. 3. Suspension (length of suspension determined by the seriousness of the offence). 4. Misconduct.
20. MISBEHAVING AND GRABBING OF FOOD AT THE DINNING HALL	FIRST	1. Referral to the hostel authority / superintendent. 2. Counselling. 3. Verbal warning.
	SECOND	1. Referral to D.C 2. Parents contacted. 3. Referral to G.C.C. 4. Suitable action according to the seriousness of the incident/s.
21. ACCOMMODATING VISITORS / OUTSIDERS IN THE SCHOOL PREMISES	ALWAYS	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Suspension from hostel for a certain length of time according to the sensitivity of the offence. 3. Parents & School Board involved.
22. L ATE COMING / ARRIVAL FROM WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS	FIRST	1. Warning (verbal / written) according to the seriousness of the incident.
	SECOND	1. Written warning & a punishment. 2. Referral to D.C.

	THIRD	1. Referral to D.C. 2. Counselling 3. Parents involved. 4. Suitable punishment.
23. LATE COMING TO CLASS FROM HOME / BREAK	FIRST	1. Verbal warning / reprimand
	SECOND	1. Serious verbal / written warning. 2. Punishment.
	THIRD	1. Written warning. 2. Referral to D.C. 3. Counselling offered. 4. Parents involved. 5. Suitable punishment.
24. DISRESPECT OF TEACHERS AND INSTITUTIONAL WORKERS	ALWAYS	1. Refer to the D.C. 2. Counselling offered. 3. Parents and School Board involved. 4. A suitable action taken (punishment / suspension).

These disciplinary codes were endorsed by the school board during their meeting held on the 10th January 2011 and by the parents during their meeting held on the 5th March.

Approved/Not Approved:

School Board Chairperson

Date

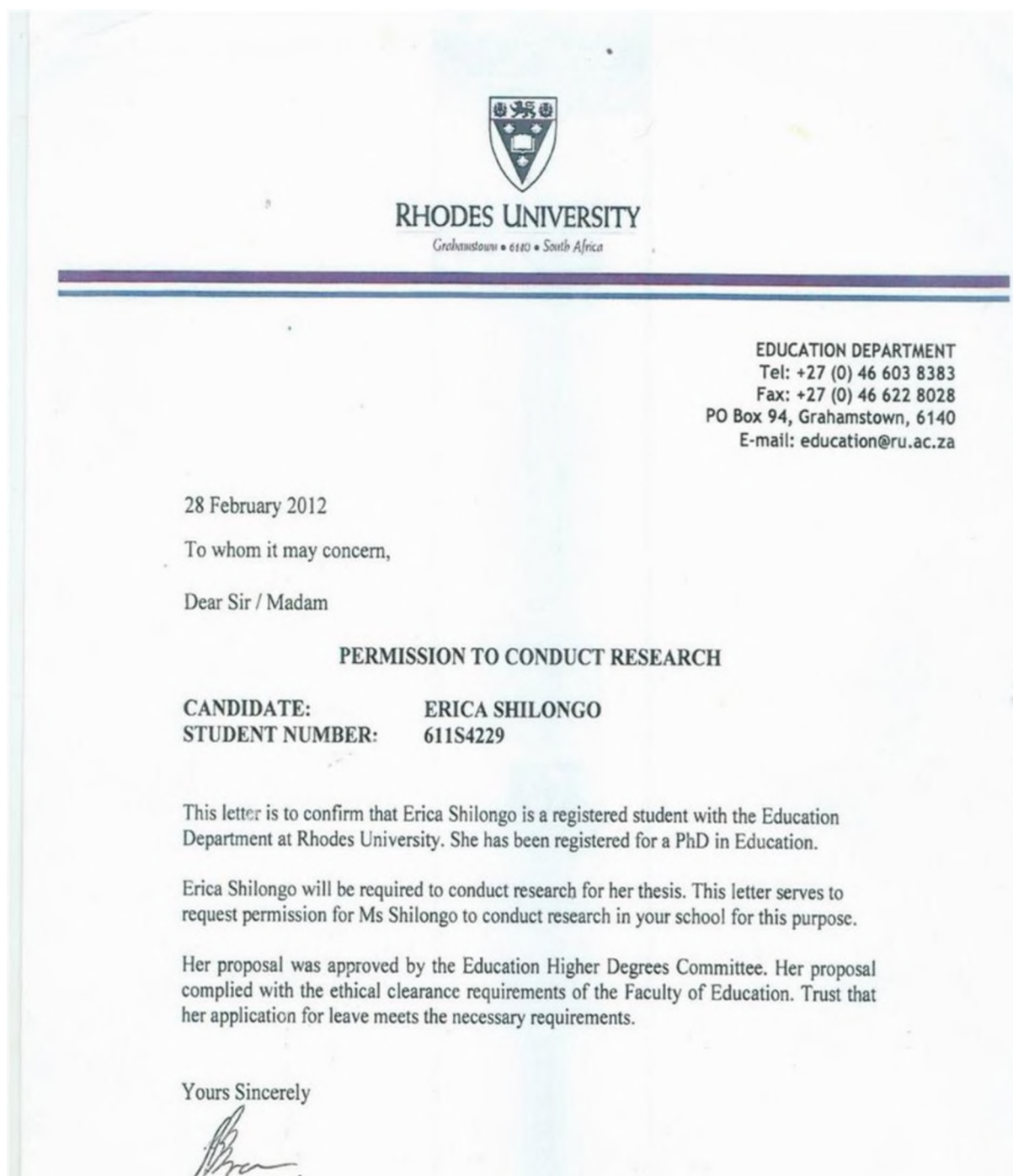
ALSS

Approved/Not Approved:

Inspector of Education

Date

Appendix 4: Permission to conduct Research





REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tel: 264 61 2933200 /
Fax: 264 61 2933922
E-mail: mshimho@mec.gov.na
Enquiries: MN Shimbopileni

Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
NAMIBIA
13 April 2012

File: 11/1/1

Ms Erica Shilongo
P. O. Box 99501
WINDHOEK

Dear Ms E. Shilongo

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT SOME
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OMUSATI REGION**

Your letter dated 28 February 2012, seeking permission to conduct a research at some schools in Omusati Region, has reference.

Kindly be informed that the Ministry does not have any objection, in principle, to your request to conduct a research at some schools in Omusati.

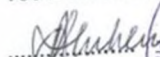
You are kindly advised to contact the Regional Council Office, Directorate of Education, for authorization to go into the schools as they are the immediate custodian of the schools.

Also take note that the research activities should not interfere with the normal school activities. Participation should be on a voluntary basis.

It will be highly appreciated if you would share your research findings with the Ministry.

By copy of this letter the Regional Director is made aware of your request.

Yours sincerely


A. Ilukena

PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc: Director: Omusati Education Directorate





-REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Team Work and Dedication for Quality Education

Tel: +264 65 251700

Fax: +264 65 251722

Private Bag 529

OUTAPI

30 May 2012

Enq: Ms. Apollonia Nakale

To: The Inspectors of Education
School principals of Secondary Schools
Omusati Region

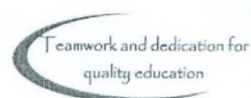
Re: Permission to conduct a research
in Omusati Region

This letter serves to notify your good office that **Ms. Erica Shilongo** has been granted permission to conduct the above said research at your school. The Omusati Education Directorate is pleased to inform you that permission is granted for the research to be undertaken at schools.

We hope and trust this exercise will enhance quality education in the region.

Yours faithfully


Mrs. Loide Shatiwa
Acting Director



All official correspondence must be addressed to the Regional Director.

Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSCENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	The purpose of the study has been explained to me.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the interview / study and my participation.	☐
3.	I agree to participate in the study voluntarily.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons.	☐
5.	The procedures pertaining to confidentiality such as the use of names, pseudonyms and anonymity has been clearly explained to me.	☐
6.	Consent was sought for the use of a tape recorder during interview.	☐
7.	I agree to the use of data I provide for study purposes only.	☐
10.	I, agree to sign and date this informed consent form voluntarily.	☐

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date