Language in Schools in Namibia

The Missing Link in Educational Achievement?

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 1  
Table of Contents 2  
Table of Charts 4  
Glossary 5  
Executive Summary 7  

Chapter 1 Introduction 9  
1.1 Introduction 9  
1.2 Context 9  
1.3 Education in Namibia 11  
1.4 Teachers and their Language Skills 14  
1.5 Aims of the Research 14  
1.6 Summary 15  

Chapter 2 Literature Review 17  
2.1 Introduction 17  
2.2 Language in Education 17  
2.3 Language Proficiency of Namibian Teachers 18  
2.4 Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education 19  
2.5 Mother Tongue Learning in South Africa 21  
2.6 Summary 23  

Chapter 3 Methodology 25  
3.1 Introduction 25  
3.2 Research Tools 25  
3.3 Timetable 27  
3.4 Pilot 27  
3.5 Sampling 27  
3.6 Summary 33
Chapter 4    Analysis of Findings    35
   4.1    Introduction    35
   4.2    Learners    35
   4.3    Teachers    40
   4.4    Parents    45
   4.5    Educationalists    48
   4.6    Focus groups    53
   4.7    Summary    55

Chapter 5    Conclusion and Recommendations    57
   5.1    Aims    57
   5.2    Conclusions    57
   5.3    Recommendations    59
   5.4    Further Research    59

References    61

Appendices    65
   Learners’ Questionnaire    65
   Teachers’ Questionnaire    67
   Parents’ Questionnaire    70
   Educationalists’ Questionnaire    72
   Focus Group Guide - Teachers    75
   Questionnaire Responses by School    76
Table of Charts

Chart 1: Map of Namibia 10
Chart 2: Home language background of the teachers and learners in Khomas compared with 2001 Census profile 25
Chart 3: Home language background of the teachers and learners in Omaheke compared with 2001 Census profile 26
Chart 4: % of learners who prefer to use their home language for learning 31
Chart 5: % of learners preferring to use their Home Language when talking to teachers 32
Chart 6: % of learners prefer to read in English 32
Chart 7: % of learners prefer to write tests in English 33
Chart 8: Subjects that learners find most difficult 33
Chart 9: Subjects that learners most named that they liked 34
Chart 10: Main Environmental factors that learners named they liked about school 35
Chart 11: % of learners that teachers report have difficulty with language 36
Chart 12: % of learners that teachers report have difficulty with maths 37
Chart 13: % of learners do not learn in their home language 38
Chart 14: Focus of teachers in relation to learners’ problems 39
Chart 15: Subjects the parents report that the child finds difficult 40
Chart 16: Languages in which the parents say the child struggles 41
Chart 17: Languages in which the parent says the child performs well 41
Chart 18: Language in which the parent says the child prefers to learn 42
Chart 19: Languages the parents support for learning 42
Chart 20: Educationalists attitudes to educational challenges, in rank order 44
Chart 21: Human Resource Reasons for education failure 44
Chart 22: Resource problems in education 45
Chart 23: Educationalists attitudes to home language in education 45
Chart 24: Challenges relating to current home language policy 46
Chart 25: Areas where politicians diverge .5 points or more from the overall 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>ETSIP</td>
<td>Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme</td>
</tr>
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<td>MGECW</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>NIED</td>
<td>National Institute for Education Development</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
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<td>OSISA</td>
<td>Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa</td>
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<td>SACMEQ</td>
<td>Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality</td>
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<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West Africa People’s Organisation</td>
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<td>UNAM</td>
<td>University of Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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At Independence Namibia chose English as its main national language although it had no history of English as a colonial language and few citizens who spoke it as their first language. The decision has been well supported and there is an expectation among Namibians that learning English as early as possible is important because it will open many doors to the future.

The decision was supported by a language policy for schools that sets down that learners be taught in their home language from grades 1-3 and in English from grade 4 onwards. However, despite high levels of spending on education, failure rates in education as a whole remain high. For example, only four in ten (39%) learners starting school in 2009 are expected to reach grade 12.

The literature review suggests that the longer a child learns in his or her home language the more successful she or he will be at school.

The research itself used questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions among learners, teachers, parents and educationalists to discover attitudes to home language learning and to link these attitudes to the success of learners. In this way, an understanding of how the different categories of people in education see home language learning was gained.

The research shows that a high proportion of learners are confused by the second language (English) in which they are taught. They want to succeed at school generally and in English in particular but do not understand their subjects well enough because of the problems of language. The research also shows that teachers, parents and educationalists do not fully understand the problems learners face with language and often attribute poor learner performance to lack of interest and commitment. Parents are keen to see their children succeed in English but are divided as to how best this can be achieved. Educationalists are divided as to the correctness of the language policy, with those in the regions seeing the language policy as failing learners.

The research concludes that a major review of the language policy is needed to stop continuing failure among learners and reflects on how policy makers might see the challenge of mother tongue learning and encourage its stronger use to achieve better educational results.
An Urban Trust of Namibia (UTN) assessment and consultative workshop on key linguistic challenges and how they affect literacy levels in December 2009 found that the lack of a clear policy that is translated into action is a factor in poor educational results in Namibia. While Namibia consistently invests about 25% of its national budget in education there are major challenges, one of which is literacy. Compared to other countries in East and Southern Africa, Namibia performs poorly in literacy and this has mainly been attributed to linguistic challenges related to the implementation of its Language Policy for schools. While the workshop made a series of recommendations for action, underlying the proceedings and the recommendations were two key issues:

- Given the strong educational case for mother tongue teaching in line with the 2003 national draft policy, why has the policy not been officially adopted?
- The UTN 2009 consultation indicated that resistance to full implementation of the policy comes from political leaders, educational managers, school boards and an articulate group of parents who strongly hold to the notion that English is the key to empowerment. Accordingly, UTN wishes to establish what actions can be undertaken to strengthen the community case to convince education decision makers to adopt and implement the 2003 Discussion Document on local language policy.

With support of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), UTN followed these questions through 2010 and 2011 with a language project, which explored existing research and promoted the case for mother tongue based education. But it quickly became clear that it was not simply a question of promoting the educational case for mother tongue based education. A much clearer picture of attitudes in schools, homes and among decision makers was needed.

The opportunity for generating that picture arose in the studies of the author of this report who chose to research the subject as part of her studies towards her Masters in International Education. She chose this topic because when teaching in different schools in Namibia, she noticed that many students performed poorly. In particular, their reading and language abilities were poor.

### 1.2 Context

Namibia is located on the south west of Africa bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It has borders with four countries - Angola and Zambia to the north, Botswana on the east (sharing the
Kalahari Desert) with South Africa completing the southern border. It covers some 824,000 km² and is 1,440 km at its widest point (including the Caprivi Strip) and is 1,320 km from north to south (Office of the President, 2004). Namibia is regarded as one of the most arid countries south of the Sahara and only 2% of the land can be cultivated for crops.

Chart 1: Map of Namibia

The population of Namibia was estimated in 2007 as 2.2 million with a growth rate of 2.6%. Like many other developing countries, two thirds of the population live in rural areas (Office of the President, 2004). The size of the country compared to its population means that only about 2 people live per square kilometre, the second lowest population density in the world. The north and north east have higher rates of rainfall and so the majority of the country’s population lives in the more densely populated regions of Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena and Oshikoto in the North and in Windhoek, the country’s capital, leaving the remaining areas of the country almost unoccupied.

Before independence Namibia was called South West Africa under German colonial control until the First World War, when it became a protectorate of South Africa until Independence in 1990. The first government was formed by the political party South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) after 30 years of fighting against the apartheid rule of the South African Mandate. The SWAPO government has remained in power until today.

UNICEF (2010) argues that the stability the country has enjoyed since independence has allowed progress in social, economic and institutional development. Today the country is
classed as an upper middle income economy, driven by a capital intensive mining sector (World Bank) and the export of other primary products, such as diamonds, gold and agricultural products.

Namibia has 13 ethnic groups with 13 different languages and dialects. During the early 19th century Afrikaans (Cape Dutch) became the dominant language in south and central Southern Africa. By the 1950s the majority of the population in Namibia could communicate in Afrikaans. In 1925 the Finnish Mission selected Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in Namibia (Tötemeyer, 2010). Today English is not widely spoken in Namibian communities and rarely in the regions. Only in the capital city Windhoek and in the workplace is it used more regularly (Trewby, 1999).

As part of the preparation for independence a conference was held to consider English as an official language for Namibia (Brock-Utne, 1995). A background document was used, financed by the Ford Foundation and based on the work of three English expatriate scholars, who were attached to United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka. There was British and American representation at the conference. The conference recommended that English should be the National Language for Namibia after Independence.

English was never a colonial language in Namibia. However, English was chosen by SWAPO as the official language at Independence for reasons arising from the conference findings and because of a wish to have a language other than Afrikaans and German, as both these languages were part of Namibia’s colonial and apartheid history. This decision was made clear in the 1990 Constitution and also in The language policy for schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

### 1.3 Education in Namibia

The school education system since Independence is a 12 year system, ranging from Grade 1-4 Primary, Grade 5-7 Junior Primary and Grade 8-12 Senior Secondary (Freidrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010).

“Education for all” became a rallying cry of the Ministry of Education (MoE) after Independence as the government set out to improve education everywhere. The Namibian Constitution sought to guarantee the right to free and compulsory education for 10 years until a child is 16. This policy was, however, reversed in 2000 when the government was not able to pay for everything. Schools and school boards were allowed to collect a “school development fund” from parents as a way of meeting the shortages (Murimba, 2004).

There are 1,677 schools - 1,571 public state schools and 106 private schools with an estimated 535,507 learners nationally of which 529,540 are in state schools and 5,967 are in private schools (Education Ministry Information Service, 2008). The average learners: teacher ratio is
29:1 for Primary and 24:1 for Secondary. But there are differences among regions and among
schools (influenced by the number of learners and teachers available in individual schools). Classes of 45-50 learners are quite common.

Private schools have a national curriculum which runs concurrently with the government’s
standards, but at a higher level than in government schools. Kindergartens and pre-schooling
is mostly privately owned. General education is ineffective partly because of lack of access
to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and pre-primary education programmes. 68% of
children in Namibia enter primary education without being prepared for learning in pre-
primary schools.

Under a recent policy decision, the MoE is to provide state pre-primary education for the
year immediately before Grade 1. The MoE started to offer pre-primary schools for the
first time in 2008 (Education Ministry Information Service, 2008) but there are not enough
buildings for classes or trained teachers to accommodate all learners preparing for grade 1
to attend pre-primary.

For earlier years the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) is responsible
for policy and practice in ECD. To meet this role, it has developed a “progressive ECD policy”
to improve or assist in looking after all young children in Namibia (Ministry of Education 2008:
p1). Despite all this documentation being in place, the resources for the policy (infrastructure
and running costs) are not there. The policy said that the money for this would come from the
ECD schools. But studies show that most kindergartens are overcrowded, without resources
and materials and have badly paid teachers, because parents cannot afford higher fees than
they pay at the moment.

In order to meet the vision “Education for all”, as pointed out by the United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the government has allocated
the MoE the highest spending share of the budget since independence, well over 20% of
the annual budget (Oyugi, 2008). However, almost 90% of the money allocated for primary
education is spent on personnel costs, leaving only about 10% for the other services and
school supplies. Personnel costs include salaries and subsidies to teachers in a number of
private schools.

The results of this high spending have been disappointing. After the reform of the education
system in 1993 the results of the first public examinations for Grade 10 were devastating. The
examination was administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
and written in English. Only 15% of learners who sat for the Cambridge O Levels (Grade 10)
examinations passed at the end of 1993 (Florida State University and SIAPAC - Namibia with
the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture as quoted by Tötemeyer (2010)).
Following these poor results so soon after independence, literacy and numeracy skills levels were tested among Grade 8 learners in Windhoek; it was found that 22.4% of learners were not functionally literate in English and only marginally skilled at Grade 6 level. Further, 49.2% of learners had numeracy skills lower than Grade 7 level. An interesting fact is that learners who did not achieve the required literacy or numeracy level for Grade 8 came from schools where English and not the home language was chosen as the medium of instruction (Jones, 1996).

Since then, improvement in the percentage of learners who succeeded in Grade 10 has been slow. For example, in 2007, of 36,633 learners who sat for the Grade 10 Junior Secondary Examination, only 49% were permitted to progress to Grade 11. Grades for English as a second language were low. Only 20% of learners gained A, B or C while 70% received D, E or F grades. Results for the Geography, History and Life Science were similar to those for English (Education Ministry Information Service, 2007).

Although enrolment in primary school is high at 90%, around 20% of children fail school in their first year. In 2001 to 2007 the repetition of grade 1 had increased from between 18% to 21% with high failure rates recorded in grade 5 and 8 (Education Ministry Information Service, 2008). This led to a policy decision that learners older than 16 years must not repeat grade 10, which has reduced the failure rate in grade 10. Because they cannot repeat the year, most learners leave school without the adequate mathematics, reading and foundation skills and competencies they should have acquired (Marope, 2005).

The study by Marope showed differences in outcomes in Mathematics and English reading and writing between the Namibian learner performance and Southern African Development Community countries. Namibian performance figures were worse than other countries in Southern Africa. In neighbouring Botswana, for instance, the repetition and drop-out rates are far lower - 70% of children go to secondary education but in Namibia only 38% go to secondary schools (Marope, 2005).

The private sector has expressed concerns about the adequacy for the labour market of the skills and knowledge acquired at school. Only 4% of learners go on to tertiary education in technical and science subjects. This means that higher education also fails to supply the needed technical leaders. Only a small number make it through vocational and tertiary education. Due to the poor quality of results the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate is not accepted for study at Universities outside Namibia and the University of Namibia has to provide English improvement courses or allow students to attend private institutions for extra English classes before entering University.
1.4 Teachers and their Language Skills

Even though the MoE has managed to increase the number of trained teachers to 80%, 69% of college students do not have adequate English language proficiency to understand their study courses properly. The entry qualification to the Windhoek Teacher Training College is a combination of Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education and International General Certificate of Secondary Education subjects or other recognised senior certificate. A minimum of 25 points for entry has been set, to include English to level E at International General Certificate of Secondary Education. The college reserves the right to lower entry requirements as part of affirmative action. This right has been used widely, weakening the quality of teachers produced by the College (Wolfaardt 2005).

Schools are short of resources but this includes a big shortage of reading and teaching materials in home languages. School libraries do not contain books in African languages to offer children and teachers extra reading to improve their understanding and use of home language. There is no coverage of magazines or newspapers in most of African languages accept in Afrikaans. There are no advisors in home language guidance for teachers in language and subject teaching.

1.5 Aims of the Research

Namibia has poor results in education despite investing more than 20% of the annual government budget investment in education. Children’s reading abilities are still poor compared with neighbouring countries. The government has invested heavily to improve the situation but 50% of grade 10 learners still fail and many more drop out before grade 10. The one education policy that has not been changed in education since independence is that dealing with language in education.

With this background, the aim of the research has been to:

- Understand how the different categories of people in education see home language learning
- Reflect on how policy makers see the challenges of mother tongue
- See how to encourage the stronger use of home language.
1.6 Summary

The discussions so far have shown that the MoE is taking steps to improve students’ performance. However, my experience as a teacher and having consulted with most of my colleagues suggests that the medium of instruction used in schools is a major cause of concern which the government has overlooked. There is no standardised medium of instruction used in primary schools despite English being the official language. The value of English as a medium of instruction is highly dependent on the ethnicity of that community, which means that the most popular language each community speaks becomes the medium of instruction for children in grades 1-3. This becomes a complex and critical problem for the citizens of Namibia and good planning is required for effective teaching. Learners who are not taught in their home language find themselves struggling to comprehend. Some learners even get confused or take time to grip the learning process which leads to difficulties in later school.

As I looked at research on the various failures that lead to the fall of the pillar of education, I realised how the issue of language is to be found throughout and this is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review gives a broad perspective of different opinions of researchers about the importance of the use of home language in education and what they see are the problems and solutions. It highlights the important contribution home language has in learners’ educational success and how policy can fail if it is not thoroughly thought through before implementation. It also shows how the qualification, use and training of teachers in language can help learners to succeed in education.

2.2 Language in Education

Töttmeyer (2010) quotes research by Bradley (2001: p42) that established that “69% of Namibian college students did not have the required levels of English understanding to cope effectively with study courses”. He goes on to argue that the “poor reading skills affect all areas of teaching and learning and this has a serious impact on higher education in Namibia”.

The 1993 MoE language policy states that home language (the child’s mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction through to grade 3. English as the medium of instruction starts in grade 4 and remains so up to grade 12, the end of senior secondary school. In grade 4 the mother tongue becomes the second language. Grade 4 teachers will need extra training to become experts in bilingual teaching. The policy was not explicit in its guidelines on how the different home languages should be used in schools but concentrated on how English as the medium of instruction should be phased in between 1992 and 1996.

Wolfaardt (2005) describes how the implementation of the language policy was different from region to region, as those in charge of implementing the policy mainly preferred teaching in English rather than through the mother tongue. Non-English speaking teachers were expected to teach through the medium of English and this meant that many learners suffered because the teachers were not fluent.

This policy was written in 1992 and has not been changed since. Reasons are said to include the cost of implementing the existing or any new policy, fears of encouraging tribalism and lack of political commitment, despite the recognition of how language contributes to high levels of failure among learners.

The government drew up a new language policy for schools in 2002 but this was never implemented (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2002). From 2000-2008 the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) raised the home language issue several times to try to convince the government to extend its teaching until Grade 7. The final attempt by
NIED was during the drafting of the National Curriculum for Basic Education in 2008. All these efforts to review and change the 1991 policy were without success (Tötemeyer, 2010).

The Policy only makes provision that the language of the majority group in that community could be selected as the medium of instruction for the first three school years of school. Hence not all learners are taught in their home language. Children from minority groups are forced by lack of human resources to learn in another language if they cannot find schools which teach in their home language – perhaps in another town.

2.3 Language Proficiency of Namibian Teachers

UTN is an NGO that is engaged on a programme to improve learning outcomes of grades 1 to 4 for all learners in Namibia. A meeting between NIED and UTN on 23 September 2010 about language policy discussed the problems that hamper learning in schools. One issue was the language proficiency of Namibia’s teachers. NIED indicated that the government is aware that low English language proficiency among teachers contributes to low English language proficiency among learners. Special MoE training courses in English for teachers are planned from 2010.

In relation to language itself, the programme of the Diploma for Education in African Languages which is being offered to serving teachers by means of distance training by the Centre of External Studies of the University of Namibia (UNAM) includes only three languages out of the thirteen main African languages spoken in Namibia: Oshiwambo, Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab. The courses were offered to respond to concern about the decline of language courses in secondary schools and tertiary education and the lack of teachers teaching African languages in their schools.

Initially many students registered for the diploma but student numbers dwindled to 20 in 2008 and 9 in 2009. As a consequence, the diploma will be phased out. Yet schools teaching mother tongue make use of under-qualified or unqualified mother tongue speakers of these languages appointed as school teachers for these languages even if their training level in the language is less than Grade 12. Of teachers teaching English as a first language, 43.7% had not studied the language itself up to Grade 12 (Education Ministry Information Service, 2008).

The meeting between NIED and UTN also touched on barriers to mother tongue based learning that arise because educators and politicians do not want their children to be taught in their home language, believing that immersing a child in English is the best way for a child to learn English. Additionally, those learners who find themselves in an urban district with a mixed ethnic community but do not find schools teaching their home language typically fall on the option of taking English as their medium of instruction.
2.4 *Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education*

“Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education” means learning in the mother tongue first, with another language added gradually. Both languages are used simultaneously for teaching and learning (Tötemeyer, 2010).

Cummins (1984) argues that second language achievement is influenced considerably by the extent to which the first language has developed. When the first language has developed sufficiently well for the child to understand what the teacher is saying without having to guess the meaning from the pictures, story or lesson the teacher is giving, then a child can learn a second language quite easily. Before the first language is developed to this point, or where the teacher tries to replace the first language with a second language the development of the second language is slowed down.

Threshold, quoted in Baker, C. (1993) indicates that children who are taught in their second language fail to build up enough skills in the second language and thus fail to benefit from bilingual education. The lack of good second language skills leads to failure of learners because they cannot cope with the curriculum. Threshold further suggests that children should follow programmes that will establish the home language very well as this leads to better performance compared with teaching a child completely from the start in a second language or using bilingual education from the start but phasing out to the official language.

It is often argued that for learners to be fluent and competent in language then an English foundation should begin early (6 -7 years) but the teachers must be qualified, the family background should be strong, there should be sufficient educational resources and the first language should be used as long as possible.

Berliner, also quoted in Baker, C. (1993) refers to the different languages in a bilingual system as interest languages or legacy languages. He says that many different issues can affect the results of bilingual education. These include the awareness of parents, their concern in their children’s education and whether parents work together with teachers. The state of resource materials, e.g. books, curriculum, library, stationery, classroom, is important. Accordingly these are the types of things that can lead to differences in progress in a curriculum within existing bilingual teaching programmes as compared with different types of programmes (Berliner 1988: page 289).

Alexander (1999) and Heugh (2000) say that as long learners are limited by how much they can use their home language in school, their school performance will be always slower, even as late as grade 12.

Learners who have been allowed to use their home language longer and have been encouraged to learn their home language tend to perform better in all subjects, including English (Heugh
et al., 2007). My reading of the many arguments for and against local language learning suggests that mother tongue education is very important in a learner’s success.

To support this argument, Prophet and Dow, (1994) quoted in Brock-Utne et al (2006) found that the students taught in Setswana understood science concepts better than the students taught in English. They found this in an experiment with form 1 groups taught in Setswana and in English as a control group. A study in Tanzania showed similar results where secondary school students taught science in Kiswahili did better than those taught in English (Mwinsheikhe (2003) quoted by Ouane and Glanz (2010)).

Tötemeyer (2010) argues that in Namibia English, Afrikaans and German groups taught from grade 1-12 by qualified staff in their mother tongue tend to achieve better results at grade 12 and after school. The South African Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation National Report of 2005 indicated that learners who learn in their mother-tongue obtain a national average achievement score of 69% in language. Learners who learn in a language that is different from their home language obtain only 32% (Ouane & Glanz, 2010).

Children whose home language is different from that of the school show lower literacy in all countries (Warwich, 1992). It may be as much as five years before children who enter school without English learn English skills comparable to their English speaking peers. Learning a language is a long process and unless the development of English is supported in all areas of the curriculum, these children will continue to be disadvantaged throughout their schooling and beyond (Gibbons, 1993).

Fisher (1999) says that it is very important to focus on the first language and to establish it correctly. When this is done then a child can go on to deal with the problems he or she finds in a second language.

Ellis (1985) argues that a lot problems lead or influence the growth of second language learning and the argument of Trewby (1999) that English can be used as a medium of instruction in Namibia is not valid because English is not well spoken or used inside or outside the school environment.

“Pupil’s attainments in their use and understanding of the English language can be higher than they are but only if the expectations of those who teach them are higher” (Kingman, 1988). He goes on to describe various aspects of skills in language that teachers need if they are to be successful: knowledge of different ways of writing; knowledge of how language is acquired and developed; “word choice in relation to words, meaning and context;” use of pronouns, punctuation and how they affect meaning; and how to structure phrases and sentences, including correct choice of verb tenses and choice of adverbs.
Rose and Tembon (2003) argue that poor quality in education (lack of resources, lack of training, lack of teaching materials, etc.) is associated with poor academic results, higher levels of repetition and drop-outs, and lower rates of progression to higher levels in an education system.

On the other hand, Warwick (1992) asserts that where students come from educated families, well-off homes and attend well-resourced schools with well trained teachers one would expect higher rates of achievement. However Alderman et al (2001) state that, in many countries, children who attend ECD are well fed and achieve better results in primary school. In countries where 60% of children go to pre-primary school, 84% of children reached fifth grade. Penn (2005) also argues that children attending ECD progress well in the school system with a better understanding of numeracy and literacy. This is seen as a very important step in contributing to children’s success.

This report has already highlighted how concentrating on the private sector for provision for early childhood development does not work in Namibia where levels of poverty are so high. Parents who can pay can secure relatively good conditions for their children. Parents who are poor have either very poor services or none at all and live in miserable conditions (Justice, 2000).

### 2.5 Mother Tongue Learning in South Africa

#### 2.5.1 Historical Background of Education System of South Africa

As indicated by the researchers Mothata, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius, the South African education system before independence allowed certain ethnic groups like the whites, coloured and Indians their own education system. After Independence in 1994 the new government changed the system using conditions stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. The Education System is now divided into national, provincial and local level schools.

There are 11 official languages in South Africa and it is assumed that everybody in South African can master more than two languages. Reid (1993) argues that children in South Africa, India, China and other countries such as Namibia are expected to be smooth in a second language like English from their own efforts. A majority of schools in South Africa where a learner’s second language of learning is English reflects a similar situation of that of Namibian schools. The lack of home language teaching can mean learners leaving schools without good literacy and numeracy skills. Both countries’ leaders give a picture that home language is inferior to English.
2.5.2 Current Situation in South Africa Schools

Regardless of the efforts the government made to implement multilingualism in every community in the education system, it has not conquered the reality of multilingualism language in a diverse South Africa. The 2010 census estimated that South Africa had around 12.3 million learners with 386,000 teachers in approximately 48,000 schools. Of these 390 are special needs schools and 1,000 are private schools with an estimated 340,000 students. South African private schools are generally better off when measured by their size and number of learners in a class and offer a higher standard in education. The private schools are mostly funded by fees where government public schools are funded by the government. The schools system is divided from grade 1-7 grade and higher schools starts from grade 8 to grade 12. The literacy rate in South Africa is 88%, standing in world literacy ranks at 107 out of 180 countries in the world.

2.5.3 Curriculum

In 1995 the South Africa Education System adopted a new curriculum and teaching approach called the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to be applied in all schools. The idea is to go away from methods that were used in the apartheid education system and introduce a system that helps learners with a teaching approach that includes activities that will impact on learners' skills and give them real life experience when leaving school. The Africa National Congress endorsed the OBE approach in 1997 and the system has been implemented in South Africa schools. There are three Learning Areas in the Foundation Phase: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. The subjects making up the Literacy Learning Area - the eleven official languages as subjects - are written in the particular languages themselves. But the Numeracy and Life Skills Learning Areas have not yet been written in the African languages. One reason is that subject specific terminology in the African languages has to be developed along with their capacity for generic academic discourse. In other words, the African languages need to be developed as academic and scientific languages, at least to a certain level, before the Foundation Phase curriculum can be translated, and, consequently, before one can expect teachers to teach the curriculum well in their learners’ mother tongues (Foley A).

2.5.4 Particular Regional Experiences of Mother Tongue Learning

The Western Cape Education Department Language-In-Education project, launched in 2007, saw very clearly the disadvantage of dropping the home language too early. The transition from the home language to English as a language of instruction should be carefully planned to avoid “subtractive bilingualism” i.e. confusion between languages. This means not switching from the home language immediately to English. Instead there should be a systematic process of laying the learning foundation solidly in the home language first and then introducing
English as second language early but delaying the change to full English. English should be added, but it should not replace the home language as language of instruction too early as this tends to lead to confusion in learning arising from language difficulties (UNESCO, 2008).

The South Africa Urban Coast region made the decision to move from English teaching to home language learning and this has helped learners who show better progress in their learning than when they learnt in an “unknown language” (Wilmot 2003).

These are two examples of regions where a switch has been made to mother tongue learning, alongside a clear national approach to use home languages more actively in South African education.

2.6 Summary

This literature review has shown how different researchers emphasise how important the home language of a child is in relation to learning and how it helps to develop the learner’s ability to perform better in all subjects. In countries where home language is used for a longer period of time learners do better in their school work, learner failure rates are lower and learners leave school equipped with literacy and numeracy skills. Children who attend early childhood development at an early stage are more successful in later school years than learners who do not attend pre-primary school.

The existence of a language policy in Namibia shows that the government is well aware that this is one issue that hampers the learning progress of most Namibian learners and wishes to address this. This research sets out to learn whether the policy is succeeding.
Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Swain and Lapkin (1991) established that learners educated in their home language will advance better in written and oral work in their second language if they have a strong grounding in their home language. I wanted to find if second language and home language cognitive, educational skills and language are well enough developed in proficiency for learners to feel confident enough to express themselves and feel relaxed in their daily use of the English language. I wanted to see their attitudes and to see if these attitudes matched in any way their home language background.

More generally, I wanted to understand how the different categories of people in education see home language learning, to reflect on how the policy makers see the challenges of mother tongue and to see how to encourage the stronger use of home language. I also wanted to see whether administrators and politicians see home language as important and whether they might commit themselves to a stronger home language policy.

3.2 Research Tools

The instruments I used to collect data were qualitative and quantitative, being questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. A separate questionnaire was prepared for each of the four groups that I approached – learners, teachers, parents and educationalists.

Questionnaires supply data from which the researcher can make his or her investigations. Questionnaires facilitate the collection of large amounts of information from more extensive samples using a ‘consistent set of questions’ Newton (2003) and, indeed, are most used with large numbers of respondents. The respondent needs to understand the questionnaire, so it should be very simple in terms of its structure and relevant to his or knowledge, experience and expertise. I knew, for example, that I had to be very careful with the parents’ questionnaire as many of them are not good at reading or writing. So I made the questionnaire simple and was available to help them with their answers.

All the questionnaires took the same form – a few questions on the background of the person answering and some questions on the attitudes of the different groups to home language. I hoped to be able to see whether different backgrounds reflected different attitudes.

The advantage of written questionnaires is that they are self-administered and provide anonymity, helping to give honest responses as Isaac and Michael (1994) put it. Questionnaires tend to be cost effective and save the researcher’s time. At the same time, questionnaires can be too prescriptive as they do not portray the diverse experiences the participants face,
leaving them with no choice to explore their feelings. To reduce the impact of this, I included in each of the questionnaires two open-ended questions where they could give their views on home language learning.

For the administrators, politicians and inspectors (“educationalists”) I used a 5 point scale in the questionnaire to gather their views on how education should operate, how it should be managed, how they see the shortcomings in the education system and also about their attitudes to home language learning. The respondents were asked to indicate by scoring statements on a scale - 1 if you strongly disagree, 2 agree, 3 neutral, 4 disagree, and 5 if you strongly agree.

The questionnaires were standardised so that every respondent was asked the same questions in the same way. Thus I could be sure that everyone in the sample answers the same question, making it a very reliable method that would produce similar results under constant conditions on all occasions. However as Bell (1999) points out, a factual question which may produce one type of answer on one occasion but a different answer on another is unreliable.

The questionnaires allowed me to collect a large amount of standard data, particularly from learners and teachers. In total I collected information from 384 respondents.

In addition I organised interviews with groups of learners and teachers. The major advantage of interviews is flexibility (Bell, 1999). Through interviews the researcher can explore issues further but may ask questions that lead to answers the researcher wants to hear. Semi-structured interviews help to shape a response and have the advantage that they allow the participants to explore the subject themselves. Interviews are comparatively easy to organise, they provide a great deal of rich, interesting data and are generally enjoyable for participants, both researcher and the respondent. They can be adapted to the needs of different locations and situations.

In my case, the semi structured interviews took 30-45 minutes during school breaks for teachers and learners separately. Learners were asked general questions to let them feel relaxed and to participate easily, like “What do you children like about school?” This sequence was followed by questions like “What do you think about school?”

The teachers’ focus group discussions also started with background experience questions to involve every individual in the discussion, for example “What do you understand in the words ‘education for all’?”, followed by “What is the benefit of home language teaching to learners?”

While interviews can be very important, they have lots of disadvantages. One of these that I experienced was that teachers were not on time for their appointment. Another was that participants tended to talk about issues that were not related to the topic or question or gave
responses they felt that I wanted to hear but often were not representative of their personal experience. Hel and Moule (2006) highlight that this can often happen but the researcher must be aware of what is taking place. They further argue that the simple presence of the researcher during the interview can prejudice the participants’ responses and that questions should not attract closed responses that do not portray or describe the needs of the sample group.

3.3 Timetable

The research was conducted in Namibia in June and July 2011. The first step was to plan the questionnaires and interview frameworks. At the same time, I contacted the MoE Head Office for permission to visit the schools for my research explaining my intentions and that I was studying at Huddersfield University. With the permission letter, I phoned the different schools for appointments and sent the participant consent letter with the permission letter by fax to allow me to visit the schools and deliver the questionnaires by hand. Three schools refused and two schools failed to act on their promises. These preparations took two weeks after which I travelled on my field trip to the Omaheke region and the central rural schools (204 kms) and from there 180 kms to the rural area schools. I spent three weeks in Omaheke and three weeks in urban schools in Khomas.

3.4 Pilot

Time prevented a full pilot and review of the research tools. However, I reviewed the first questionnaires and made some small changes that were needed. Concern was expressed as to whether the parents would be able to answer their questionnaires. I dealt with this by arranging that all the parents answer their questionnaire in my presence. This proved to be necessary because most of the parents did not have much schooling and I was able to guide them.

3.5 Sampling

The purpose of sampling was to draw conclusions about the language problems facing learners and teachers in schools in general by looking at teachers, pupils and learners in different places.

The inferential statistical approach enables the researcher to determine the characteristic of a group or population by directly observing only a small group (or sample) of the population on which generalisations can be made. Researchers who work on small samples tend to produce negative results (Borg and Gall, 1996). A large number of samples produce better results. For this research I tried to have a minimum of 30 responses for each set or sub-set
to avoid negative results. Where the number of samples was much lower than 30, I did not feel that I could have confidence in the results. So it was interesting that all the 23 teachers in rural schools reported that every learner had problems with maths. However, I could not be sure that this was not a result of too small a sample. So I combined the rural and market town results to make a sample of 62 teachers from all rural communities. With this sample size I could be confident in the finding that more children (66%) in rural communities experience problems with maths than children in urban schools (57%).

Poor sampling compromises validity and can happen if the representation is not sufficiently diverse, so that the findings cannot be generalised (Borg and Gall, 1996). To avoid this, I spread my sampling across 19 schools, of which 9 were urban, 6 were central rural and 3 were rural.

Namibia is divided into 13 regions and with 13 ethnic groups with 13 different languages and dialects. I selected Windhoek (which is the capital city of Namibia and is in a largely urban region called Khomas) as my urban centre and Gobabis which is a small town that is the centre for the rural communities that fall in the Omaheke region. Both locations are clearly marked on the map in the Introduction. I wanted to see whether there were differences between rural and urban communities.

The schools selected were those where the management was flexible enough to assist me in this study without any delay. 18 of the schools were government schools and 1 was a white private urban school.

This private school, Windhoek Gymnasium Primary School, is an Afrikaner school with well qualified staff, a high standard of facilities and plenty of resources like books and reading materials. Afrikaans is the one African language into which the national curriculum is translated, so they teach learners in the Afrikaans home language for longer than the 3 years indicated in the national policy until each child has a good grip of the language. Children start with good (private) pre-primary experience as all learners have attended ECD in their home language and continue from grade 1 to grade 7. In the second half of primary school they gradually change to English as the medium of instruction. However, they continue to prosper in their home language up to University level and their learners are accommodated in their home language in South Africa Universities.

### 3.5.1 The Learners’ Sample

167 learners from 19 schools took part in the research with a maximum of 12 learners from each primary school answering the questionnaire. Supervision of 60% of the questionnaires was done by teachers and 40% by me. The age range of learners was from 10-14 years, drawn from grades 4-7. This is when learners are expected to have changed from home language to
English as the medium of instruction. 54% of learners (90) came from an urban area, 28% of learners (47) were from a central rural location and 17% (29) came from rural areas.

36% of learners spoke Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara) at home (59), 29% (48) spoke Otjiherero, 16% (26) spoke Oshiwambo and 12% spoke Afrikaans (20). The rest were small groups - English and Setswana (3 learners each) and 1 learner each spoke German, Portuguese and Lozi at home.

I wished to see what learning challenges learners faced and asked how many children had repeated a grade. 23% (37) – nearly one in four – had had to repeat a grade. Of these, 7% (11) had repeated twice. Most repeats were in grade 1 (30%) followed by 19% in grade 3 and 16% in grade 2. Among those learners who repeated for a second time 55% of learners repeated in grade 5 and 36% in grade 6. This experience of repeating reflects the policy that learners may not fail twice in the lower primary but must transfer until they reach upper primary (grade 5) when they can fail again.

3.5.2 The Teachers’ Sample

To start, I asked 10 primary teachers from 20 schools to answer the teachers’ questionnaire but could only collect full responses from 138 teachers. Of these, 25% (35) were male teachers and 75% (103) were female teachers. 55% of teachers were at urban schools (76), 28% at central rural schools (38) and 17% at rural schools (24). To be confident about the sample size I combined the central school and rural school samples into a single “all rural” sample.

Of the respondents, 80% were teachers (111), 16% were Heads of Department (22) and 4% were Principals (5). These last two groups combined to a total of 27, very close to my minimum sample size of 30. Years of teaching experience ranged from 1-9 years: 34% of teachers (47); 10-19 years: 21% of teachers (29); 20-29 years: 31% of teachers (42); and 30+ years: 13% teachers (19). These last two groups were combined into a single group of 61 who had been teaching for more than 20 years and thus came to teaching before independence and the abolition of apartheid.

The home language background of the teachers, compared with the learners’ sample and the 2001 Census data is as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Teachers sample</th>
<th>Khomas 2001 Census</th>
<th>Learners sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Chart 2: Home language background of the teachers and learners in Khomas compared with 2001 Census profile

As may be seen from the above table there is a higher proportion of teachers with a home language background of Afrikaans and Otjiherero in the Khomas sample, compared with 2001 census data. Oshiwambo speaking teachers are few compared with the census and the number of Oshiwambo learners is also below the census average. On the other hand, there were many more Otjiherero and Khoekhoegowab learners in the sample when compared with census percentages.

For Omaheke, it may be seen in chart 3 on the following page that there were far fewer Khoekhoegowab speaking teachers when compared with learners in the sample and a higher proportion of Otjiherero teachers compared with the learners’ sample and with the census data. While the proportion of Afrikaans speaking teachers matched the regional profile, there were no Afrikaans speaking learners in the Omaheke sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Teachers sample</th>
<th>Omaheke 2001 Census</th>
<th>Learners sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setswana</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Chart 3: Home language background of the teachers and learners in Omaheke compared with 2001 Census profile
These comparisons of the teacher and learner samples with regional census data shows how the schools are very mixed in relation to home language background, with little matching of learners to teacher backgrounds. This is borne out by the fact that only 41% teachers (56) taught in their home language.

I grouped teachers into 4 age bands. 28% (39) were 50+ years old, 28% (39) were 40-49 years old, 22% (31) were 30-39 years old and 21% (29) were below 30.

The teachers ranged from the very well qualified to unqualified (grade 10 or 12). The highest qualification was that of PhD (1 teacher). 12% (16) had higher degrees in teaching, 10% (14) had degrees in teaching or degrees in other fields and 4% (5) had a higher or advanced Teachers Diploma. Most - 61% (82) - had a diploma in teaching and 7% (10) had a diploma in other fields. 4% (6) had only grade 12, grade 10 or a certificate in teaching. I combined the samples into teachers up to diploma level – 75% (101) and teachers above diploma level – 25% (33).

3.5.3 The Parents’ Sample

Unfortunately I could only reach 40 parents because of constraints of time and distance. 45% (18) were from the rural area and 55% (22) from the central rural area.

Most of the parents from the central rural area were shopkeepers, domestic workers and cleaners. The rural parents were self-employed farmers, domestic workers and cleaners. Two of the parents were also teachers. 20% (8) were male and 80% (32) were female. 58% (23) spoke Otjiherero, 33% (13) spoke Khoekhoegowab. 1 spoke Setsawana and 1 spoke Oshiwambo.

3.5.4 The Educationalists’ Sample

38 educationalists took part in the research. 29% (11) were administrators, 24% (9) were politicians responsible for policy direction and 47% (18) were directors, regional directors or inspectors who give guidance to teachers and management. 64% were urban based and 36% based in central rural and rural areas. 49% were male and 51% female (which may be contrasted with the teacher sample where 25% were male and 75% female). 74% were aged over 45 years. 76% (28) had a qualification at Masters level or above. The largest home language group was Oshiwambo (24%), with quite an even spread across other language groups. The percentage of Oshiwambo speakers was surprisingly low, given the fact that Oshiwambo speakers were recorded as 48.5% of the population in the 2001 Census and dominate the ruling party.
3.5.5 Secondary Resources

Other resources I collected included a variety of relevant documents and teaching materials. These materials were collected from MoE (for example Education Ministry Information System (EMIS) 2005-2010) and curricula at schools with assessment policy documents. Resources from the internet were journal articles and other relevant materials about Namibian education. I used these resources to develop a better understanding of the current situation in Namibian primary schools.

3.5.6 Triangulation

Triangulated measurement tries to pinpoint the values of a phenomenon more accurately by looking at it from different directions. To be useful, a measuring instrument must be used that both gives consistent results and measures the occurrence that it purports to measure (Web et.al, 1966; Denzin, 1978). When two reliable instruments yield conflicting results then the validity of each is cast into doubt. When the findings of different methods agree we can be more confident about the results. Multi-method approaches to such contradictions accept the fact that no single method measures perfectly and to exploit the fact that multiple measurement offers the chance to assess each method’s validity in the light of other methods.

In my research, where my findings look mainly at attitudes, I used the focus group discussions and the interviews to see whether what I found through the questionnaires was supported by what people said in the interviews.

3.5.7 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are two criteria used to evaluate research project design and implementation (Newton 2003). Newton further highlights reliability as being a quality control issue. I used face to face interviews and focus group discussions to see if the respondents consider they ‘have been either too positive or too negative towards an issue’ (Kumar 1996).

A number of factors may affect reliability, including the location of an interview or focus group, bias on the part of either the researcher or the participant and the type of question (open/closed). Questions seeking opinions may result in a range of different answers for various reasons Bell (2005). Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure gives similar results under constant conditions on all occasions. In very formal, structured interviews the interviewer effects may be reduced, but in informal interviews in which there is little predictable structure there will tend to be much lower levels of reliability. Reliability refers to consistency in measurement.
Validity is considered to be the more ‘complex concept’ (Bell 2005) referring to the quality of the results of the process. Validity is important in the design of research to provide credible conclusions - whether the evidence of the research bears the weight of the interpretation put on it.

3.5.8 Ethical Issues

For this research I used the following general universal ethical standards that are generally used to protect respondents, as described by (Robson, 2002; Bell, 2005; Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007; Denscombe, 2007). The principles seek to ensure that:

- Risk to a participant is minimised by following a research procedure that does not unnecessarily expose a participant to risk;
- Risk to participants is outweighed by the anticipated benefit of the research;
- The rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected;
- Informed consent is obtained and appropriately documented, particularly in relation to minors;
- The researchers also consider the above basic elements when seeking permission from persons consenting for themselves;
- Explanation is given of the purpose of the research and procedures to be used;
- A description is given of any risk and discomfort that subjects might reasonably expect;
- An offer is made to answer any question concerning the procedures; and
- A statement is made that participation is voluntary and that the subject is free to withdraw from the study at any time

In particular, I made sure that I had the permission of school inspectors, head teachers and parents before approaching the learners.

3.6 Summary

I used qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data, being questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. I gathered data from 383 learners, teachers, parents and administrators drawn from 20 schools located in urban, central rural and rural areas. At the same time I used the focus groups and interviews to further triangulate the data and test its reliability and validity. As I was working with learners aged between 12 and 14 I was particularly careful to use ethical principles in my research.
Chapter 4  Analysis of Findings

4.1 Introduction

Educationally, Marope (2005) says that Omaheke is a region where the net enrolment rate of language groups Khoekhoegowab (83%), Otjiherero (84.2%) and the San (20%) are significantly lower than the National standard Net Enrolment Rate of 89.1%. Omaheke is also one of the regions where there are high failure rates. Omaheke learners’ reading ability levels were 1.2% to 5% lower compared with the national average of 25% and 35% in Khomas and Erongo (SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II (2000)). So my sample captured an educational region where there are high rates of educational success (Khomas) and one where there are low success rates (Omaheke).

O’Sullivan, (2002) found that in most rural communities in Namibia, learners do not communicate in English outside school and, at school, only in the classroom when the teachers are teaching them. As will be seen in the detailed findings below, learners overwhelming indicated a preference for their home language. Only one said that she did not like her home language.

On the teachers’ side Omaheke is one the regions where teachers reading category was between I and 3 (SACMEQ 2005).

According to Pienaar-Louw (1997) in a survey of language preferences of Namibian school leavers, percentages of school leavers who wanted their children to be taught in the mother tongue as their first language were 100% for German speakers, 49% for Afrikaans speakers and only 17.4% for Khoekhoegowab speakers. 41% of this last group denied their mother tongue and insisted that they were English speaking, 47% of Otjiherero speakers did the same. In comparison 75% of all parents in Holland want their children to be instructed in the mother tongue for their whole school career; generally mother tongue education is accepted worldwide without argument other than in Africa. Brock-Utne (1995 p11) states that “the decision to abandon one’s own language always derives from a change in self-esteem of the speech community ... It is one possible strategy for members of minority groups who have developed a ‘negative’ social identity to change an inferior position.” My findings, which include large samples of Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero speakers, throw light on these previous research findings.

4.2 Learners

I asked 167 learners from 19 schools about their experience in learning and using a second language and about their attitudes to their home language. I wanted to know if learners can
realise or understand which language is better to learn in and in which language they feel comfortable to express themselves clearly. I also asked about which subjects they like and which they find difficult and about their attitudes to teachers and school.

All but 2% (3) reported that their main teaching language was English. 47% (78) reported being taught in a second language. Of these 23% (38) of the total sample were also taught in Afrikaans, 14% (23) in Khoekhoegowab and 10% (17) in Otjiherero. This suggests that Afrikaans is actively used as a second teaching language in schools with a large mix of language groups and in schools which see themselves as having a strong Afrikaans background.

65% learners (109) had attended ECD. Of these, 28% (30) had attended from 1-4 years, 32% (35) had attended in at the age of 6 and 40% (44) at the age of 5. Most of the children (85%) who had attended ECD had only attended for one learning period. Only 2 children had attended continuously from the age of 1 until starting school.

83% of learners prefer to use their home language for learning. The rest, 17%, prefer to use English with none preferring to use Afrikaans as a second language for learning (in the study, a child whose home language is Afrikaans was recorded as a home language learner). As the chart below shows, learners in rural schools (86%) or who have Khoekhoegowab as their home language (88%) prefer their home language for learning even more. Only learners from other language groups (78%) have a lower preference for their home language for learning.

**Chart 4: % of learners who prefer to use their home language for learning**

Even higher proportions of learners (87%) prefer to use their home language to address the teacher within or outside the class. Just 9% prefer to express themselves in English and 4% to use Afrikaans to talk to their teachers.
Chart 5: % of learners preferring to use their Home Language when talking to teachers

Once again, learners in rural schools (97%) or who have Khoekhoegowab as their home language (95%) prefer their home language for talking to their teachers the most but other groups such as Otjiherero speakers (90%), learners in central rural schools (91%) and those without ECD experience (91%) also mostly prefer to their teachers in their home language. Only learners in urban schools (83%) and from other language groups (79%) fall below the overall average of 87%.

Despite these very high preferences for the use of home language, 89% of learners still want to read in English. In the focus groups and in the questionnaires the learners’ comments make it clear that this was because they understand the importance of being good in English for their future.

Chart 6: % of learners prefer to read in English

Only the learners in the rural schools (69%), the Otjiherero speakers (81%) and the learners without ECD experience (82%) were less interested in reading in English.

Learners were also clear that they want to be tested in English. 81% chose this language with just 13% choosing their home language and 6% preferring Afrikaans. Only the boys (77%), Otjiherero speakers (73%) and particularly learners in rural schools (52%) were less strong in this view.
On average 81% of learners prefer to write tests in English

Chart 7: % of learners prefer to write tests in English

This response can be influenced by the fact that all their subjects are taught in English as it is the medium of instruction. Or it may be that the home language foundation is not strongly laid down as a subject and learners do not see that they can do their tests better in their home language.

The subjects learners find most difficult in school are mathematics (25% of learners), Afrikaans (19%), Natural Science (15%) and Social Studies (13%).

Chart 8: Subjects that learners find most difficult

With maths, some of the variations reflect the findings elsewhere in this study that learners in rural communities find maths more difficult than other groups of children. Children without ECD experience (28%) also find greater difficulty with maths.

For Afrikaans, the wide variations among children probably reflect the way in which Afrikaans is used in the community. The history of apartheid means that Afrikaans remains the language
spoken among people of different language backgrounds. In urban areas and among children with ECD experience, English is slowly taking over from Afrikaans as the language to use among mixed language groups. It also reflects the difference between being able to speak a language and being able to use it as a subject – reading, writing and comprehension.

The low variations among children in relation to Natural Science and Social Studies gives an idea that learners do not understand English as a language well or cannot manage the meaning of words in English, form systems of words and grip their structure, or understand the content or message of a subject in English.

This is supported by the answers that learners gave to the open ended questions at the end of the questionnaire. Only 30% of learners could clearly express themselves in fully structured sentences as to why they like school or why they find some subject difficult or easy. 70% of children could only name subjects that they found difficult or easy without being able to explain why. I could observe through their written answers that learners struggle to put words into sentences. A major reason for this is likely to be that the learners’ foundation in language is poor.

The subjects that learners most like in school range from English reading (27%), English (15%) and Maths (14%). This is a curious set of most liked subjects because the teachers’ findings show that these are the subject areas where most learners have difficulty.

Chart 9: Subjects that learners most named that they liked

What is also interesting is the wide variations among the different learner groups, particularly in relation to reading.
Learners were also asked what they liked about school. Not all learners answered this question and so the only sub-group analysis that is possible is the differences between boys and girls. As the chart above shows, personal growth was the biggest benefit that learners saw in school, followed by supportive teachers, career benefits, peer contact and skilled teachers. Quite distinct differences can be seen between boys and girls, with girls putting greater value on supportive and skilled teachers while boys value personal growth and career benefits. What is notable is that the five factors are all about benefits that directly impact on the esteem of learners. It may be contrasted with the many teachers who described their learners as lacking motivation, interest and commitment. But where learners are confused by the language of their teachers and are unable to express themselves as they wish it is perhaps predictable that they will present themselves to their teachers in a negative way. Once again, language is suggested as a barrier to a learner gaining as much from education as is possible.

4.3 Teachers

The nature and size of the teachers’ sample has been described above. It has already been noted that 41% of teachers (56) were teaching in their home language. 55% (76) of teachers had a language qualification.

Just fewer than half the teachers - 42% (58) – said they preferred to teach in both English and their home language. The others were evenly divided between those who preferred to teach in English – 30% (41) and those who preferred to teach in their home language – 28% (39).
The different ethnic groups teachers have in their class reflect the mixed language reality in Namibia. While 36% of teachers taught only up to three language groups in their classes, 43% reported teaching 4 or 5 language groups and 22% were teaching 6 or more language groups in a class.

The teachers were asked to say what percentage of their learners had difficulty with language or maths by bands (0-24%, 25-49%, 50-74% and 75%+). For this analysis, the last 3 bands were analysed i.e. the band 0-24% was excluded as these classes do not have material difficulties with a subject.

On average, teachers reported that 61% of learners have difficulty with language. This is shown in Chart 11 overleaf. There were quite big differences among the sub-groups. The highest proportions of those with language difficulties were learners of teachers who said that they prefer to teach in both English and the home language (70%) while teachers who prefer teaching in English reported only 50% of their learners as having language problems. Otjiherero speaking teachers also reported high levels of language problems (69%) but Afrikaans speaking teachers reported that only 44% of their learners had language problems. Those with more than 20 years teaching experience (i.e. who started teaching before independence) recorded 66% of their learners as having language problems, compared with only 55% of learners among teachers who have 10-19 years teaching experience.

Teachers with a language qualification recorded a slightly lower level of language problems among their learners (57%).
Many more learners (on average 79%) were reported as having problems with maths, as the next chart shows. Other language speaking teachers and Otjiherero speaking teachers both recorded 85% of their learners as having maths problems compared with just 62% of Afrikaans speaking teachers. 90% of learners of teachers who are above 50 years old are reported as having maths problems, compared with 69% among teachers who are below 30 years. Learners in rural communities had high levels of maths learning problems (85%) compared with urban based learners (74%).

Heads of Department and Principals reported higher levels of language problems and maths problems than teachers in general. It is not clear why this is but it may reflect a more critical attitude among senior school staff.

**Chart 12: % of learners that teachers report have difficulty with maths**

On average over two thirds (69%) of learners do not learn in their home language. This is shown in the following chart.

There were, however, large differences among the groups. Other home language speaking teachers recorded that 81% of their learners did not learn in their home language, reflecting classes where there is a big mix of language backgrounds. Otjiherero teachers recorded the lowest proportion of learners not in a home language environment (48%), with teachers with an Afrikaans background in between at 62%. Teachers with language qualifications were not well deployed, reporting lower levels of learners (63%) not learning in a home language environment. The difference of levels of learners in a home language background...
between teachers who prefer home language teaching (56%) compared with teachers who prefer English teaching (80%) suggests that teachers adapt to the circumstances they find themselves in.

![Chart 13: % of learners do not learn in their home language](image)

**Chart 13: % of learners do not learn in their home language**

Teachers were asked to say why learners had problems in learning. These comments were analysed according to whether they related to learners, the school environment, the home environment, lack of reading skills or lack of language skills.

Overall, teachers saw the home environment (44% made comments), the attitude and circumstances of learners (44% made comments) and learners’ language skills (42% made comments) as the main reasons for learners’ difficulties. The school environment (20%) and reading skills (19%) were seen as much less important. The results are shown in the following chart.

Most learners are confronted with a second language before they have acquired the skills to learn in their home language. A typical comment about language skills was “Learners can’t express themselves in English. Lack of understanding in the language” or “They don’t understand the English language in class”. Teachers felt that learners do not master the basic
competencies in their lower primary phase and that the change from home language was a problem. Learners have difficulties in the pronunciation of words and cannot recall the correct sounds of certain letters. The groups that saw language skills as more important than other groups were teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience (56%) and Principals and Heads of Departments (52%). Male teachers (29%) and those with less than 10 years teaching experience (30%) made the fewest comments relating to language skills.

Chart 14: Focus of teachers in relation to learners’ problems

The problems that teachers saw in relation to the learners’ home environment also often had a language dimension. Although poverty was commonly mentioned, so was the ability of parents to engage with the challenges that their children faced at school. “Parents involvement very poor” was a typical comment. But the findings in relation to parents show that the parents’ lack of education and their inability to understand what their children are learning because they (the parents) do not have English skills suggest that lack of involvement may not be just laziness or lack of interest.

The comments about learners may also lead back to language issues. A typical comment was “Lack of interest in learning. Learners are not open with their teachers especially to ask questions when they don’t understand.” This study has already shown how most learners wish to communicate with their teachers in their mother tongue. So a lack of interest may hide a lack of ability to communicate. Similarly, the positive attitudes that learners expressed towards school contradict the low opinions that teachers held of learners.
Teachers made fewer comments about the school environment. When they did, these typically related to the many challenges that they feel they face such as the conditions under which they work, the overcrowded classes, the many ethnic groups, low salaries, limited resources, language difficulties, classroom violence, classroom disrepair and poor pedagogical resources. In short, they point to a lack of comprehensive approach to teaching as whole. Even so, the problems that can relate to poor communication, such as many ethnic groups, language difficulties and classroom violence, come through.

4.4 Parents

As noted before, the 40 parents came from the central rural and rural areas. They are in low income jobs and are poorly educated. 71% (22) of the parents had no school or left school below grade 10. 48% (5) had attended up to grade 10 or grade 12. Just 9% (3) had some type of diploma.

The parents reported that 38% (15) of the children had never attended ECD. 33% (13) had attended one year of pre-primary school and 28% (11) had attended two years of pre-primary school. Just 1 child had completed all three ECD stages.

The language in which most children received their pre-primary education was mostly different from the language used at the first school attended. For 70% (16) of children pre-primary was in English, 26% (6) attended in home language and just 1 in Afrikaans. But the child’s first language at primary was only 20% (8) in English, with 75% of children being taught in home language. In other words, the ECD language is not matching and supporting the language in the first years of school.

The subjects indicated by parents that their children find difficult in school were Maths (58%), English (36%), Social Studies (6%), Afrikaans (9%) and Home Ecology (3%). The two most difficult subjects, Maths and English, are analysed in the chart below, although the small numbers make this analysis unreliable. In any event, the differences among sub-groups are not great.
85% of the children were reported to be struggling with language. Most (54%) reported English to be the problem but a few struggle in Afrikaans (15%) and Home language (15%).

Children with parents who did not reach grade 10 at school, those who did not attend ECD and Otjiherero speakers struggle the most with English, while other language speakers had the least difficulty, probably because they use English as a unifying language.

The parents indicated their children performed well in their home language. 72% (28) did so, with Otjiherero speakers reporting the highest levels of performance. Other language speakers reported much lower levels of performance (53%) in their home language.
Chart 17: Languages in which the parent says the child performs well

Chart 18: Language in which the parent says the child prefers to learn

72% of the children were reported as preferring to learn in their home language, with particularly high levels for children of parents with less than grade 10 education (82%), 88% of other language learners and 86% of those without any crèche experience.
In spite of these preferences and difficulties, parents were split about which language they should support for learning. All parents (100%) want their children to learn English from grade 1. Typically parents were looking forward “It is very important to know English, because upper grades are taught in English”. So 42% of all parents wanted English to be the language in which their child learnt. On the other hand, 54% wanted their child to learn in his or her home language “The child will understand better and learn better in home language” was a typical comment. The differences of opinion varied widely among groups, as can be seen from the chart on the previous page. For example, those whose children had repeated a year were strongly in favour of home language learning. But those who had an education of grade 10 or above were strongly in favour of English as the language of teaching.

**4.5 Educationalists**

The preliminary research objectives were to understand why learners are failing in such big numbers and why so many learners are leaving schools without adequate literacy and numeracy skills. I was also interested to know how our politicians see these problems. So the last group of people that I contacted were administrators, managers and politicians.

The ranking approach that was taken to the questionnaire has been described earlier.
Chart 20: Educationalists attitudes to educational challenges, in rank order

As may be seen from the chart above, responses ranged from the highest score of 4.8 for the statement “education is very important” to a lowest score of 2.2 for the statement “changing current [language] policy is too expensive”. The second highest score (4.7) was given to the statement “home language is important” and the statement “current language policy is correct” was ranked fourth at 3.7. Thereafter comments relating to language do not stand out above other educational issues.

The statements that educationalists were invited to score can be broken down into different reasons for educational failure. One category relates to human resource issues:
Chart 21: Human Resource Reasons for education failure

A second category relates to resource problems in education.

Chart 22: Resource problems in education

In relation to language issues in education, the questions can be divided into attitudes and challenges. In relation to attitudes:
While in the earlier charts little difference can be seen among the different groups within the sample (other than younger educationalists having a more positive view of Principals and a more critical view of teacher skills), there is a much wider spread of opinions in relation to educationalists’ attitudes to home language in education. Above all, educationalists outside Khomas see the importance of home language in education as a top issue and it is also ranked highly by educationalists over the age of 45. Younger educationalists feel strongly that English should be the language of instruction and that home language issues do not particularly affect results. On the other hand, they are the group that is least sure that the current language policy is correct.

These strong attitudes of younger educationalists against the importance of language policy in education are also reflected in their assessment of the challenges of the current language policy. Here they feel more strongly than other groups that changing the current policy is too expensive, that there are sufficient language teachers and that there are too many ethnic groups, as may be seen in the chart overleaf:

Chart 23: Educationalists attitudes to home language in education

While in the earlier charts little difference can be seen among the different groups within the sample (other than younger educationalists having a more positive view of Principals and a more critical view of teacher skills), there is a much wider spread of opinions in relation to educationalists’ attitudes to home language in education. Above all, educationalists outside Khomas see the importance of home language in education as a top issue and it is also ranked highly by educationalists over the age of 45. Younger educationalists feel strongly that English should be the language of education and that home language issues do not particularly affect results. On the other hand, they are the group that is least sure that the current language policy is correct.

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Challenges relating to current home language policy

The number of politicians (9) in the sample is too small to draw good conclusions about their attitudes when compared to other educationalists. However, with some statements the differences between politician scores and the average is quite large and this is shown in the next chart.

Chart 25: Areas where politicians diverge 0.5 points or more from all educationalists

As may be seen from the chart, 5 of the 7 areas of large difference in opinion relate to language policy. In particular, politicians are much stronger in their opinion that English...
should be the language of instruction compared with the average and they are very clear in their views that the current language policy is correct.

4.6 Focus groups

4.6.1 Learners

Ten focus groups were held with learners in schools where learners answered the questionnaires. Learners answered the questionnaire first and so the focus groups were an opportunity to share their views amongst themselves. The feedback supports the messages that come out of the questionnaires.

In particular, learners emphasise the problems they experience in understanding the teachers:

- Maths is difficult because sometimes teachers explain in such way that I don’t understand. They explain sometimes very fast [so that] I don’t understand. They explain problem solving in such way I don’t understand. Some of them find English difficult. In social studies the teacher is always making jokes. When he comes back to the topic I become confused.

- I struggle in English; the teachers explain very fast. Teacher writes a summary on chalkboard without explaining the topic.

Learners describe how they use home language to support their learning and their learning environment:

- Even in the English class we use our home language among ourselves to communicate fluently with each other.

They value school:

- Teachers teach us about things we do not know. She gives us an idea of what is going around the world. The social studies teacher explains the subject very well.

English is important:

- Learners like to learn in their home language but are worried if they go to High School that they have to learn in English. That is why they prefer to be taught in English.

- English is well spoken language outside our country. Europe people communicate with us only in English. We don’t use English with our friends and teachers outside class. Most of us communicate in Afrikaans or with learners of the same ethnic group in our home language. I don’t know much in English.
Afrikaans, while used widely, is a difficult language:

Afrikaans is difficult. I did have Afrikaans in grade 1. I did not study in Afrikaans.

Like other home languages, it is mainly spoken:

At home we use as our home language to communicate with our family. I cannot write and read in my home language, I only speak it.

### 4.6.2 Teachers

As revealed in the questionnaires, teachers see many issues behind learning problems:

Not enough resources, the confusion of languages, pronunciation of words. Learners’ environment at home, a poor education background. Some learners learn with a hungry stomach and this leads to a lack of concentration.

However the problems of language dominated the discussions:

We have to solve language before we start with the learning problem. Every problem we experience is because of language.

Maybe one reason [for language difficulties] is we change language too quickly. Learners take time to absorb English as a language, The child was thinking in his or her home language, writing it and now he has to adopt another’s language to think in, to be tested in.

I observe learners during learning in class. They will be positively involved in oral discussion but if it comes to writing I see a different side that learners are struggle with writing and reading.

Teachers’ experience and background is important:

Most teachers are trained in English, not qualified to teach in their home language. They use school experience to teach their home language.

Most of our teachers are not trained in their home language they just read and write language

But teachers do not have the support that they need to be better language teachers:

We don’t have advisors who guide teachers if pronunciation they teach to learners is correct but at the end teachers are getting blamed and are without resources.
4.7 Summary

83% of learners prefer to use their home language for learning. Even higher proportions wish to address their teacher in their home language. They have these preferences not because they do not understand the importance of English for their future (they clearly do) but because they struggle to understand their teachers and find it difficult to express themselves in English. More generally, they are very positive about school and what it offers them.

Teachers say that 61% of their children have difficulty with language and 79% with maths. There were big variations in the levels of difficulty reported, relating to the home language of the teacher, the teacher’s age, training and experience and the location of the schools, with rural schools reporting much higher levels of problems with maths.

The parents in the sample had low levels of education but were united in their view of the importance of English for their children’s future. However, they were equally split as to the part that home language learning might play in this.

Educationalists put the issue of home language high on their agenda. However, there were sharp differences among them as to the implications of this for the current language policy and politicians seem to be quite clear that the current policy was the right one.

Together these findings suggest that there is a very strong case for reviewing a policy that is now 20 years old to take much greater account of the educational arguments for stronger home language learning, the views of learners themselves and the significant variations of geography and the mix of language groups.
Chapter 5  Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Aims

In chapter 1 it was suggested that the medium of instruction used in schools is a major cause of concern which the government has overlooked. While there is a policy (that has not changed since 1992) the way the policy is used means that there is no standardised medium of instruction used in primary schools despite English being the official language. With some communities there is a dominant ethnic group, which can mean the most popular language each community speaks becomes the medium of instruction for children in Grades 1-3. In other communities, the ethnic groups are very mixed. This report shows what teachers, parents and children think about this and how they respond to the challenges. The report also throws clear light on the question of whether learners who are not taught in their home language struggle to comprehend or even get confused and thus take longer to grip the learning process which leads to difficulties in later school.

5.2 Conclusions

In 1990 the government made a major decision to use English as a national language in the place of Afrikaans. That has benefited the country well. Today Namibia is an upper middle income country. It was a good decision from the point of view of business and economic development.

But it was a challenging decision in a country where only 8% are English speakers and where the rest of population use their home language and Afrikaans as the language of communication in their daily life. The 1993 language policy for schools was essential to drive the strategic decision for English in education. But this massive decision was made without all the required resources being in place. Teachers were not ready, could not express themselves and were not trained in English. Curriculum, syllabus and materials that are linked to a successful outcome were not available. Only Afrikaans materials were visible in schools. Schools outside urban areas used home language in their classes.

The literature review that forms the background to this study provides strong evidence that learners who are taught in their home language for a longer period of time achieve better results than those who are taught early in a second language. Educationalist argument shows how important is the foundation of a child in her or his home language. Namibia’s neighbours South Africa and Botswana both offer examples of better success where children learn in their home language.
The research findings show that the problems in education that have been reported since Independence continue, in spite of heavy government investment. 61% of learners in the sample covered by this report struggle in English as a language and 79% struggle in maths.

After 21 years of independence, the challenge of the decision to use English as the national language still deeply affects the levels of success in education. Some of these difficulties relate to skills. For example older teachers reported a higher proportion of learners in their classes with maths difficulties and younger teachers who are better trained or received an English based training have fewer learners with maths difficulties. But language as an issue comes out throughout the research as a major problem. 83% of learners want to learn in their home language and 87% of children want to talk to teachers in their home language. Many teachers say that learners are not motivated or interested in their school work and feel that this is one of the main reasons for educational failure. But learners make it very clear that they do not understand their teachers or the subject matter. It is not surprising, therefore, that they come across as unmotivated and uninterested.

Parents, for their part drive towards English, with 100% of parents wanting their children to be taught in English even though they do not use English at home or in the community. Opinion is divided among them about whether a strong foundation in home language can provide a strong grasp of English later on.

Educationalists recognise that language is very important in education. However, the politicians in particular are firmly in favour of driving English as the medium of learning, as are the younger educationalists that see reform as too expensive.

Yet the research also shows that where home language is more consistently in use there are better results. The strongest example is in Afrikaans schools with qualified teachers using their home language backed with adequate resources; these schools show significantly good results in maths and english. Teachers trained in language show better results in maths.

There is no dispute among all the different groups seen during the research about the importance of learning in English and learning English well. The uncertainty and failure comes from home language learning ending too early or being inadequate or unavailable. These findings point to the urgent need to review a language policy that is now 20 years old, to strengthen the framework and resource of home language learning and shape it and its implementation to the different circumstances of schools in different parts of the country.
5.3 **Recommendations**

There are a number of issues that have emerged as a result of undertaking this study and the following recommendations are made:

The MoE should re-address the 1992 language policy to reflect the needs on the ground after 20 years of independence and address the failures of the education system that arise because the challenges of language are not fully addressed by the current policy.

In a review of the language policy the MoE and NIED should fully engage teachers, parents and learners to capture their ideas and reflect the reality of schools in the different parts of the country.

Teachers who teach home language should receive urgent in-service training and pre-service training and be able to access technical support in language with time and resources set aside for appropriate study leave.

The review of the language policy should consider how teaching in home language can be extended to grade 7, using the evidence of successful schools that already do so.

A language policy review should address the resources needed for implementation.

The curriculum for lower primary should be more focussed in subjects and topic to give enough time to thoroughly drill and test learners.

The MoE and schools management should ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary materials to ensure that home language teaching is adequately resourced, including resources for remedial work where required and for extra-curricular support where parents are unable to give adequate support to their children.

The MoE should run a campaign to inform parents about how strong home language learning can lead to better school results in general and better mastery of English in particular.

5.4 **Further Research**

The possibilities of further research fall into two areas.

Firstly, completing this study reveals a number of areas where the research could be strengthened:

Another region should be covered in a mainly Oshiwambo speaking area to improve the findings in relation to the largest home language group, show home language
mechanisms in such an area and increase the size of the parents’ and the rural sample

A sample of parents in the urban area should be interviewed

More politicians should be interviewed to strengthen the findings in relation to key decision makers and to identify how their concerns in relation to home language can be addressed

Beyond these small improvements to this study, further work should address the questions that seem to hold back a fundamental review of the language policy in education:

Mixed communities: Case studies of particular home language practice to show how the practical problems of strong home language learning can be dealt with in a society as mixed in Namibia. This should involve showing how the home language identity of schools in mixed communities can be strengthened and used as a positive issue in parental choice of schools

Promotion of African home languages: Greater emphasis seems to be placed among decision makers on the risks of language promoting tribalism as opposed to pride in language strengthening cultural identity and personal self-confidence. An emphasis on English as a unifying language thus becomes divisive between those who are confident in English and those who are not. Typically, those who are self-confident in English are better off and thus the use of language becomes part of economic division. A pilot campaign to promote pride in home languages would start to address this

Cost: A cost benefit analysis of the implementation of an updated language policy is needed so that decision makers can see whether and how the present neglect of language in education costs more (for example in high drop-out rates, poor results, repeat grades and higher costs in remedial education at school and after school) than properly resourcing a strong home language policy. The cost benefit analysis should be practical, by taking sample schools and their communities and showing how building strong foundations built on home language learning will cost less than the huge costs of wasted educational opportunity

ECD: With ECD being largely privately financed, ECD providers typically follow the wishes of parents with regard to language used. By using case studies, the educational case for home language learning in ECD has to be presented to parents
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References

Learners’ Questionnaire

Language - The Missing link in Education Achievement?

Aim: To understand how the different categories of people in education see mother tongue learning.

To reflect on how the policy makers see the challenges of mother tongue learning at a policy level.

To indicate how we can encourage stronger use of mother tongue learning.

Date: ______________________

School: ______________________

Region: ______________________

Name: ______________________

(If you do not want to give your name, please leave blank. If you give your name it will only be used to keep track of the questionnaires. Any views that you express in this questionnaire will not be linked to you.)

Please tick the appropriate response indicate with √

1. Gender    Female    Male

2. In what language are you mainly taught at school?

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<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Oshiwambo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tswana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (name)</td>
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3. Which grade (if any) have you had to repeat?

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<td>Grade 4</td>
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<td>Grade 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
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4. Did you attend a crèche or nursery?

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<th>Tick any that apply</th>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Tick any that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. In which language do you like to be taught in for you to understand the teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Tick the language you use at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Do you like your home language?

8. In which language do you feeling most comfortable to express yourself clearly to teachers to? (Tick one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. In which language do you perform better when teacher tests you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. In which language do you like to read? (Tick one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. In which subject do you have learning difficulty? (List as many as you like)

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

12. What do you like best about learning at school?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Teachers’ Questionnaire

Language - The Missing link in Education Achievement?

Aim: To understand how the different categories of people in education see mother tongue learning.

To reflect on how the policy makers see the challenges of mother tongue learning at a policy level.

To indicate how we can encourage stronger use of mother tongue learning.

Date: _______________________________

School: ______________________________

Region: ______________________________

Name: ________________________________

(if you do not want to give your name, please leave blank. If you give your name it will only be used to keep track of the questionnaires. Any views that you express in this questionnaire will not be linked to you.)

Please tick the appropriate response indicate with √

1. Gender     Female    Male

2. Position in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>HOD</th>
<th>Class/ subject teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Length of experience in professional role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of years of teaching</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>No. of years of teaching</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>25-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>35+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. In which age band are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>45-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What is your highest qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade 10</td>
<td>Diploma in teaching</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>Degree in teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Higher degree in teaching</td>
<td>Certificate in Teaching</td>
<td>Diploma (other - state)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What is the main ethnic group you are teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Tick any that applies</th>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Tick any that applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>Others (name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. What other ethnic groups are you teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Tick any that applies</th>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Tick any that applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>Others (name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Which ethnic group are you from?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>Other (name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Are you qualified to teach in your mother tongue?

Indicate Yes or No

10. In which language do you feeling most comfortable to express yourself clearly to learners to? (Tick one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
11. What proportion of learners in your class struggle with reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50-74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49%</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What proportion of learners in your class struggle with maths?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-24%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50-74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49%</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. What do you think are the main reasons for learning problems among learners? (List as many as you like)

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

14. Is the language policy that you follow in your school clear to you?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

15. Please describe in a few words.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Parents’ Questionnaire

Language - The Missing link in Education Achievement?

Aim: To understand how the different categories of people in education see mother tongue learning.

To reflect on how the policy makers see the challenges of mother tongue learning at a policy level.

To indicate how we can encourage stronger use of mother tongue learning.

Date: ________________________________

School: ________________________________

Region: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

(If you do not want to give your name, please leave blank. If you give your name it will only be used to keep track of the questionnaires. Any views that you express in this questionnaire will not be linked to you.)

Please tick the appropriate response indicate with ✓

Gender     Female     Male

1. What was the highest education level you reached

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Grade 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma in teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher degree in teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade.........working experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Which language do you use at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (name)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking about just one of your children who is nearest to grade 7
3. Has the child repeated any grade?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade repeat</th>
<th>Tick all that apply</th>
<th>Grade repeat</th>
<th>Tick all that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Did your child attend a crèche or pre-school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age stage</th>
<th>Tick any that apply</th>
<th>Age band</th>
<th>Tick any that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. In which language did your child learn at the crèche?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. In which language did your child learn when he/she went to school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. In which language, if any, is your child struggling to read in the language he/she been taught in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. In which language are your child performing better at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. In which language do you want your child to learn at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Afrikaans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Do you think that the language your child learns in is important? Say why

11. In which subjects does your child have learning problems (if any)? (List as many as you like)

12. Which is the best grade when a child should start to be taught all the time in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Tick the grade</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Tick the grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you have any general comments about the teaching of your child?

*Language in Schools in Namibia - Priscilla G. Harris* 71
Educationalists’ Questionnaire

Language - The Missing link in Education Achievement?

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To indicate how we can encourage stronger use of mother tongue learning.

Date: ______________________________

Institution: ______________________________

Region: ______________________________

Name: _______________________________

(If you do not want to give your name, please leave blank. If you give your name it will only be used to keep track of the questionnaires. Any views that you express in this questionnaire will not be linked to you.)

Please tick the appropriate response indicate with √

1. Gender  Female     Male

2. Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspector</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Educational Administrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. In which age band do you fall? (Tick one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under 45</th>
<th>45 or above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Which language do you use most at home with your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Tick the one that applies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>Khoekhoegowab</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Oshiwambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td>Otjiherero</td>
<td>Other (name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What is your highest qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
<th>Last qualification</th>
<th>Tick right one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Degree of any sort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher degree of any sort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate or diploma in Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What do you think are the main reasons for the high failure rate of learners? (List as many as you like)

Please score the following statements by circling the number you think is best. 1 is where you strongly disagree, 3 is neither agree or disagree, 5 is where you strongly agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education is very important for every child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that class sizes are too big</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that there are not enough classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that teachers are not skilled enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that teachers do not work hard enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that principals are not effective enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that there are not enough books and teaching resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that the curriculum is still not right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that parents do not encourage their children enough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that too many children drop out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important reason for high failure rates among learners is that children do not learn in the language that they speak at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The national policy on language in education is that a child should be taught in his or her home language until Grade 3. Grade 4 is the year when a child is to be taught in English with his or her home language being taught as a second language. The policy was approved in 1992 and has never been changed, although there have been several attempts to review it. With this background, please answer the following questions, ranking your answers as you did in the previous question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe that the official language in education policy is the correct one</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>(circle the one for you)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The education research which shows that teaching learners in their home language does not apply to Namibia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think that the implementation of the current language policy has a big effect on learners results</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that it is just as important for learners to be able to speak and write in their home language as in English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the policy should be changed so that all learners are taught in English, the official language, from Grade 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the policy should be changed so that all learners are taught in their home language until Grade 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that it is too expensive to change the current policy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not have enough trained teachers to implement the policy properly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making home language teaching stronger will lead to more ethnic division</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents do not want their children to be taught in their home language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are too many ethnic groups for the policy to work properly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our population is too mixed for the policy to work properly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Is there anything else you would like to say about education in Namibia in general or the question of home language learning in particular?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Appendices
Focus Group Guide - Teachers

Date: __________________________

School: _________________________

Position in school: ___________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>HOD</th>
<th>Class/ subject teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. What do you think are the main reasons for learning problems among learners?
2. Are there enough resources that can help teachers assist learners in their learning? Where are the gaps?
3. Why has the school chosen the language policy it uses?
4. Do you think if learners are taught in their home language it makes a difference in their learning performance?
5. When do you think is the best age for learners to use English as the main learning language?
6. Do you think there are enough qualified teachers to teach home language in your school?
7. Are there enough reading materials for home language teaching?
8. What do you think we have to do to solve language learning problems in Namibia?
9. Is it possible to find a solution for language barriers?
### Questionnaire Responses by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I. Steenkamp Primary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Van Der Walt Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bet-el Primary School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Hosea Kutako Primary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Fisher Primary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elim Primary School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma Hoogenhout Primary School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gammas Primary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gobabis Primary School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunichas R.C. Primary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermann Gmeiner Primary School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippo Primary School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkhoandawes Primary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martti Ahtsaari Primary School</td>
<td>9</td>
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