



*“We are the architects of our own destiny!”*

# **Study of Positive Deviant Schools in Namibia**

**Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture  
and United Nations Children’s Fund  
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**





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Study commissioned by  
**Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture  
and UNICEF Namibia**

Study conducted and report produced by  
**Mzabalazo Advisory Services**  
(South Africa)

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**A digital version (PDF) of this document is available at [www.moe.gov.na](http://www.moe.gov.na) and [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).**

ISBN 978-99916-893-5-7



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# Foreword



Since independence, the Government of the Republic of Namibia has committed efforts and investment to ensure that all children have access to quality inclusive education. Since the enactment of the Education Act, 2001 (Act No. 16 of 2001), Namibia has made good progress in providing education for all children, and continues to improve, especially in the areas needing the most attention, such as inequities in access to education. A big challenge still to be overcome is poor educational performance across the phases of education. Our Fourth National Development Plan expresses concern in this regard, and recommends that the education sector take drastic steps to address this challenge.

The purpose of the Positive Deviance study was to find out why some schools perform better than others serving the same regions and communities, and to use this knowledge to catalyse improvement in those that perform less well. These best practices will be shared across Namibia and beyond.

This study involved research in 14 schools in selected regions. The selection of regions and schools was based on previous examination results as well as recommendations from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The study findings elucidate the factors that distinguish the positive deviants from other schools facing the same situations. Primarily it is the school leaders and positive school environments which have led to better performance. This report highlights the contributions of principals who set standards and policies regardless of external factors; who lead and manage with strong commitment and a democratic approach; who foster school environments and relationships which are safe and trusting; and who strive for continuous improvement. The positive deviant schools are also characterised by teachers who have a strong work ethic, and focus on “time on task” and on performance targets for the learners and themselves, proving that teachers are a powerful resource which cannot be underestimated in the provision of quality education. Further, these schools exhibit a strong team spirit, and set high expectations of all within the school community, and rise to challenges despite the odds.

I wish to express my Ministry’s gratitude to UNICEF for providing both technical and financial support for the implementation of this study and the printing of this report, and to Mzabalazo Advisory Services for conducting the study and producing this report. It is not often that we celebrate the successes in our education system. This report makes clear that we have cause for celebration as we move steadfastly towards quality education for all children in Namibia.

A purple ink signature of Katrina Hanse-Himarwa is written over a circular official seal. The seal features the coat of arms of Namibia and the text 'MINISTER OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE'.

**Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, MP**  
Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

# Abbreviations

<b>BCA</b>	Behaviour Change Approach
<b>CASS</b>	Continual Assessment
<b>CCT</b>	Coordinating Centre Tutor
<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
<b>CS</b>	Combined School
<b>DNEA</b>	Directorate of National Examinations and Assessments
<b>HoD</b>	Head of Department
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>JSC</b>	Junior Secondary Certificate
<b>JSS</b>	Junior Secondary School
<b>MAS</b>	Mzabalazo Advisory Services
<b>MoEAC</b>	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
<b>NSATs</b>	National Standardised Achievement Tests
<b>NSSC(H)</b>	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (Higher Level)
<b>NSSC(O)</b>	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (Ordinary Level)
<b>PD</b>	Positive Deviance
<b>PDI</b>	Positive Deviance Inquiry
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>PS</b>	Primary School
<b>RD</b>	Regional Director
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
<b>SD</b>	School Development
<b>SDP</b>	School Development Plan
<b>SE</b>	School Effectiveness
<b>SI</b>	School Improvement
<b>TIMSS</b>	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

# 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Positive Deviant report, commissioned by Namibia's Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) from Mzabalazo Advisory Services (MAS) in late 2015, is intended to understand why some schools perform much better than others serving similar communities – in mathematical terms, why they 'deviate positively from the norm'.

The objectives of the consultancy are to:

- (i) identify positive deviant (PD) primary and secondary schools;
- (ii) investigate these schools to identify and elucidate the factors which are believed to lead to their high performance;
- (iii) analyse these factors against the school population as a whole and particularly similarly resourced and sited schools; and
- (iv) draw tentative conclusions for the MoEAC and UNICEF to consider as to the key elements of high-performing schools which could be rolled out or fostered in lower-performing schools.

To explore these objectives the key research question is, "***What are the features that typify high-performing schools in contexts where other schools struggle to perform?***"

The sub-questions which guided the research are as follows:

- What are the management and governance arrangements in the PD schools that stand out as unusually effective?
- Are the teachers in the PD schools unusual in their teaching strategies or abilities?
- Is high performance in the PD schools related to the resourcing levels in those schools?
- Is the higher performance in the PD schools related to explicit or hidden forms of selection of learners?
- What other elements found in the PD schools are related to these schools' high performance?

MAS used a case study methodology with a mixed-method approach to explore the key research question and a number of sub-questions which are detailed in Section 5 in 12 high-performing schools. The schools were selected through a purposive and convenience sampling process from schools in five of Namibia's regions. They included both urban and rural schools and all types of schools from primary to senior secondary. In general, only schools which serve poor communities were selected. This was a decision designed to better focus on, and understand, how schools which serve communities that normally do not perform well in school according to earlier UNICEF research (UNICEF 2011) were able to perform exceptionally well in PD schools.

Data was collected during January 2016 when the schools opened after the summer break by two teams of data collectors, each including an MAS researcher and a local researcher.

The literature review indicated that the reasons for the PD schools performing better than their neighbouring schools were likely to revolve around the quality of the principal and the teachers and the provision of resources, as well as the relationship with the local community.

The study thus posited that the four main factors in the success of these schools was likely to be:

- the principal's school leadership skills and the setting of high expectations;
- educator practices and time on task;
- development of a supportive school environment which is safe and nurturing; and
- internal and external cooperation and consensus.

Although these factors were important elements in the findings, in fact the reality was more complex than anticipated. The main findings were as follows:

- There was nothing extraordinary about the infrastructure in the PD schools; they varied but most were under-resourced.
- Effective leadership with high levels of trust and accountability is key to the success of the PD schools.
- The PD schools maximise teaching time and time on task, and are high-performing schools in national exams and regional tests.
- Most of the PD schools are not selective in their enrolment.
- Few of the 40 lessons observed were rated highly, and most were mediocre teacher-centred lessons with little innovation.
- The schools take control of their environment and manage external pressures while having a culture of constant improvement.
- The schools provide a caring and safe environment.

This report concludes that what make these schools different is not their resources or the quality of their teachers or even the charisma of their principal. The key is that they have a principal who acts as a role model and ensures that the school community is protected against external challenges, fosters a strong team spirit which celebrates high performance and time on task, and aims for constant improvement. These schools assume that every learner can succeed, and there is great trust in the motivation and dedication of the learners who respond in kind. In addition, the PD schools see their community – even though it is in part illiterate and poor – as a resource and source of support. Ultimately the PD schools are prime examples of how success breeds success. Their success means that community members and school staff alike want to be associated with the school.

The implications for the MoEAC are that the key success factors that these schools manifest are learnable. Team work, a work ethic, time on task and developing a caring and safe environment can all be taught and learned. However, these factors are also rooted in behaviour change, which is difficult to transfer from site to site. Perhaps most encouraging is that these schools are staffed by patently normal staff; they do not stand out in the classroom as being excellent or even innovative educators. What makes them and their schools' principals extraordinary is how they approach their work, their dedication and their sense of being a successful education community.



# 2

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

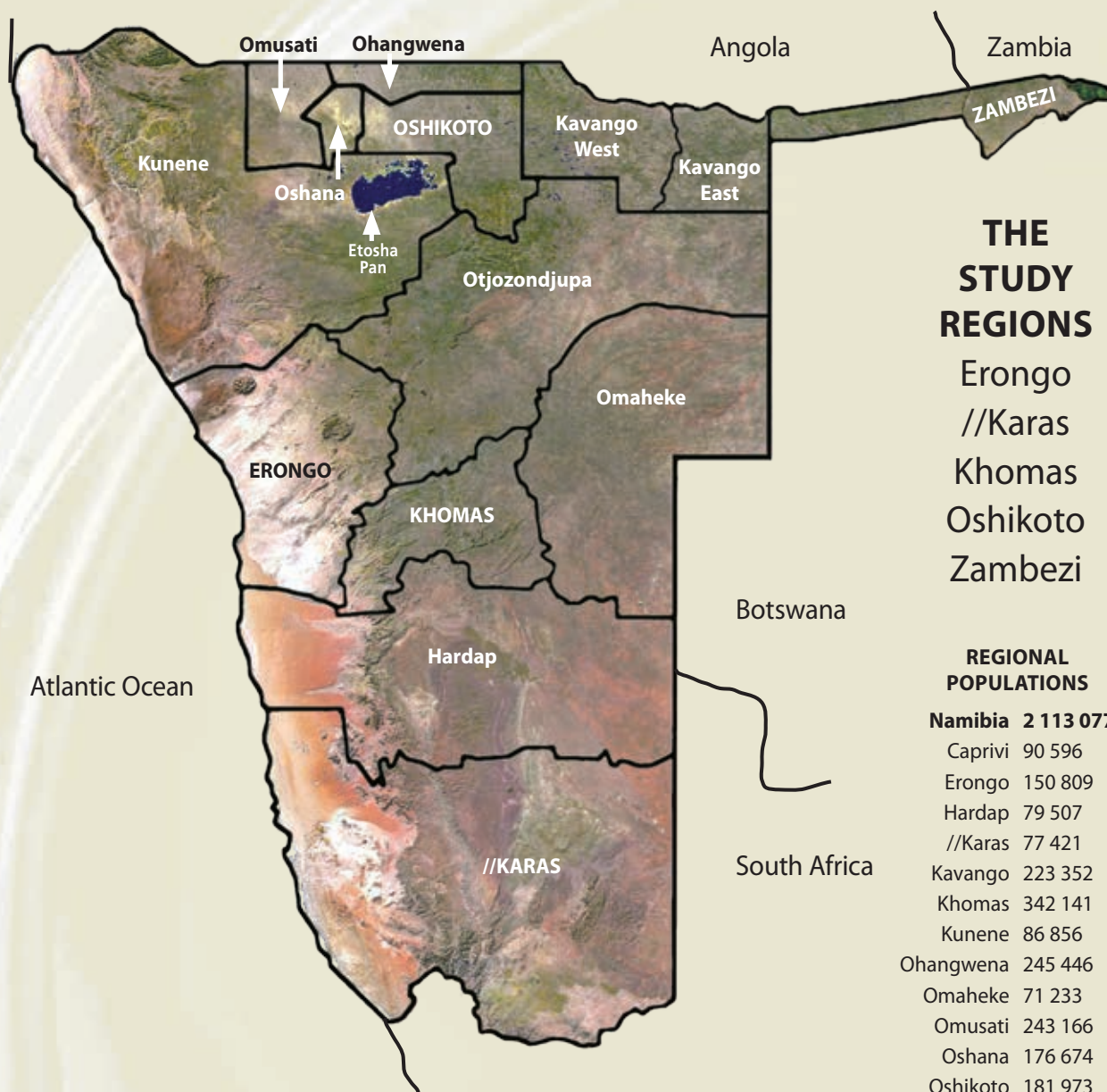


### 2.1 Introduction

Namibia's Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC), with the support of UNICEF Namibia, contracted Mzabalazo Advisory Services (MAS) in late 2015 to conduct a Positive Deviancy (PD) study in five regions of the country to help understand why some schools do much better than others when serving the same communities and populations. The focus was on high-performing schools serving the rural poor and under-resourced urban areas.

The sample size was set at 14 schools, 12 being high performing and two being 'comparative' average-performing schools situated in five regions. The latter two schools were meant to be control or comparison schools.

# Namibia's Regions and the Study Regions



**THE STUDY REGIONS**  
 Erongo  
 //Karas  
 Khomas  
 Oshikoto  
 Zambezi

**REGIONAL POPULATIONS**

**Namibia 2 113 077**

Caprivi	90 596
Erongo	150 809
Hardap	79 507
//Karas	77 421
Kavango	223 352
Khomas	342 141
Kunene	86 856
Ohangwena	245 446
Omaheke	71 233
Omusati	243 166
Oshana	176 674
Oshikoto	181 973
Otjozondjupa	143 903

*Source: Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census Main Report, Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012*

Two teams of researchers employed by MAS collected data in the field across the five focus regions (//Karas, Khomas, Erongo, Oshikoto and Zambezi) between 19 and 29 January 2016. Each team was led by a senior researcher from MAS accompanied by a Namibian national with limited research experience.

Each team spent a day in each school, and then developed a case study profile of that school. Interviews were also held with the Regional Director and senior staff members in the five Regional Offices of the MoEAC. The case studies of the schools are attached to this report as Annex F. This report presents the most significant findings with analysis of the features which typify the PD schools and set them apart from the average schools. The last section of the report attempts to identify the policy and practice implications of the findings.

## 2.2 Overview of Namibia

According to the 2011 national census, Namibia has a population of 2.1 million, with a very low population density as much of the country is desert or mountainous. Nationally, about 28% of households are classified as poor and 14% as severely poor, with poverty focused in rural areas where 58% of the population resides (*New Era* 12/4/2012), with 60% of the population – almost entirely black African – being concentrated in the northern belt which is predominantly rural ([www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/namibia](http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/namibia) – accessed 1/11/2015). Typically rural populations in Namibia are dependent on subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing with the important addition of pensions and other social pay-outs. The rural poor are typically under-educated, with limited access to electricity, water, sanitation and health care. Food security is weak in many of these communities and the selected schools in Oshikoto Region are in areas which are in the second year of a severe drought. The drought has not hit the other four regions so badly, but all are affected by the rising food prices related to drought across the SADC region and the recent collapse of the South African Rand (to which the Namibian Dollar is tied) against the US Dollar.

## 2.3 Brief Overview of the Education System

Since Namibia's independence in 1990, there has been considerable investment in education. Education receives the largest share of the budget. In the 2015/16 financial year, the government allocated N\$11.3 billion to education, making it the single largest item on the national budget (MoEAC 2015a). Well over half of this budget is to be spent on pre-primary and primary schools with N\$6.8 billion allocated, and N\$3.5 billion was provided for secondary education. The small increase for secondary education (N\$3.4 billion allocated in 2014/15) is surprising given the introduction of fee-free secondary education (Universal Secondary Education – USE) in public schools this year (2016), following the introduction of fee-free primary education in January 2013. The cost to the state of compensating secondary schools for the loss of their fees has been reflected in the State of Education speech, with an initial allocation of N\$30 million for the period January to March 2016 and a request for Treasury to allocate a further N\$120 million for the 2016/17 financial year (MoEAC 2015b). Equally, the Minister of Education, Arts and Culture pointed out in her budget speech that the allocation for capital expenditure is very low, despite the huge needs that schools have in new classrooms, libraries, administration buildings and so

on (MoEAC 2015a). The earlier large increases in education spending have slowed down due to the financial downturn, weakness of the Namibian Dollar (which is tied to the South African Rand) and the impact of the drought on production.

In total the public education system in Namibia has 1 723 primary schools with 467 748 learners and 694 secondary schools with 201 531 learners (MoEAC 2015b). This means that the average primary school has 271 learners and the average secondary school 290 learners – the schools being generally small by international standards, particularly secondary schools. The fact that secondary school enrolment is less than 40% of primary school enrolment indicates that there is a relatively low transition rate from primary to secondary schools. In total, 217 schools have hostels (MoEAC 2015a).

There is a common belief in Namibia that the spending on education is not being matched by the performance in exams and the quality of outputs required and expected, which are relatively poor given so much investment (Kolofu 2015). This frustration at the performance of schools is reflected by the government, such as in the Minister of Education Arts and Culture’s recent budget and state of education speeches (MoEAC 2015a and 2015b). It is against this background that the Ministry is supporting this PD research project.

The Namibian Constitution, along with the Education Act (2001), sets the frame for the education system: there is compulsory education for the whole primary phase, from Grades 1 to 7, for children between 6 and 16 years of age (Fischer & Stiftung 2010).

The pre-primary phase caters for children who are under seven years old. This year of schooling has been integrated into public primary schools recently.



National exams are held only in the secondary phase. At the end of junior secondary schooling at Grade 10, learners sit the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC), and at the end of senior secondary schooling in Grade 12, exams are written to obtain the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSC (O)) or the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher Level (NSSC (H)) (Kolofu 2015).

After finishing school at Grade 10 or 12, learners can enter a range of tertiary institutions based on their school-leaving level and results. These include the country's three universities (including the polytechnic which was recently turned into a university) and five vocational training centres (Kolofu 2015).

## 2.4 Terms of Reference for the Study

The terms of reference (ToR) were revised during the inception period. The revised ToR required collecting data from 14 schools, i.e. 12 high-performing schools and two comparison schools which should be performing but are not outstanding. Performance was based on national exam results in the secondary, junior secondary and combined schools and on Regional Office and national MoEAC perceptions of schools which were performing above expectations in exams and in other areas such as providing a rounded education. The selection of primary schools was based mainly on Regional Office recommendations, but National Standardised Achievement Tests (NSATs) results were also referenced where available. The sampling is discussed in Section 6. The sample of high-performing schools was drawn from the four main categories of schools in Namibia: primary, combined, junior secondary and senior secondary. The exact range of grades that a particular type of school offers varies; it is possible to find a 'junior secondary' school which only offers Grades 8 to 10 and another which offers Grades 11 and 12 as well.

MAS used the data from the school visits to develop 14 case studies. This data was interpreted in order to help understand what the conditions were in these schools which made them perform better than their neighbouring schools – in other words to understand what makes these schools outliers or positive deviants. The working hypothesis is that if the MoEAC, UNICEF and other education providers know what factors led to this positive deviance, they can use this knowledge to better target school improvement programmes in less well-performing regions and schools.

It is important that the lessons from the 1990s school effectiveness debate be brought to bear on this project. School effectiveness theorists argued that examination of successful schools will show what elements and behaviours make schools succeed. They argued that struggling schools should be presented with this list of the elements of successful schools and challenged to introduce these elements (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore 1997). While accepting the critique of the school effectiveness movement mounted by the school improvement movement, that schools are innately different and so trying to elucidate what works in one school and transfer it to another school is not likely to improve the second school (Alexander 2000; Hamilton 1997), there is evidence that careful transfer of approaches and ideas between schools, particularly when the schools have similar characteristics and serve similar socio-economic communities, can be effective. This is particularly the case where practitioners from the first school assist in transferring good practice to their sister schools (Prew 2004).

## 2.5 The Study Objectives

The objectives of the consultancy are to:

- (i) identify positive deviant primary and secondary schools;
- (ii) investigate these schools to identify and elucidate the factors which are believed to lead to their high performance;
- (iii) analyse these factors against the school population as a whole and particularly similarly resourced and sited schools; and
- (iv) draw tentative conclusions for the MoEAC and UNICEF to consider as to the key elements of high-performing schools which could be rolled out or fostered in lower-performing schools.

# 3

## THEORY OF CHANGE AND LITERATURE REVIEW



### 3.1 Theory of Change

The project's Theory of Change states that if one can understand what makes successful schools serving a range of communities perform, this information could be used to assist struggling schools through Positive Deviancy (PD) methodology linked to Behaviour Change Approach (BCA). The use of PD is relatively new in education, and is a methodology borrowed from the community development and health sectors.

The starting point for understanding PD is that in many communities there are individuals, groups or institutions whose different (deviant) behaviour or strategies allow them to find better solutions than their neighbours to the challenges which everyone in that community faces (Bullen 2012).

The point is made more powerfully and persuasively if the positive deviants start from the same point as their neighbours, and have access – certainly at the start – to the same resources and are exposed to the same external conditions as everyone else in the community. As an extension and application of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques which were popular in the 1990s (Chambers 1997) in its community form, it allows the community to work together to identify the existing solutions which the positive deviants are using and have these solutions, and the process of reaching these solutions, accepted by the community at large. It is therefore a group problem-solving approach which leads to social and behaviour change.

The PD approach explicitly seeks solutions to apparently intractable development challenges internally, and does not turn to external sources of knowledge and experience. It allows the community the space to realise that some of its members have already found and are using appropriate solutions, and then encourages the community to adopt these existing, sustainable solutions which were generated from within the community. This both speeds up innovation and ensures that the solutions are appropriate and sustainable ([www.positivedeviance.org/about\\_pd/](http://www.positivedeviance.org/about_pd/)). This is different to traditional needs-based or problem-solving approaches in that it does not focus primarily on identifying problems or barriers to development and then the external inputs necessary to remedy these. In theory, at least, the PD approach should be more empowering while recognising that appropriate solutions to developmental problems best come from the community itself. It also helps to create the environment where successful members of the community can be recognised for their success without this creating resentment and jealousy.

In the education field, high-performing schools in difficult circumstances have been a subject of study by school effectiveness practitioners for decades (Scheerens 2007), while recently such schools have begun to be termed “Positive Deviants” and studied using the PD methodology and a case study approach. PD has been used in Argentina to address high rates of dropout from primary schools in the province of Misiones ([www.positivedeviance.org/projects/education.html](http://www.positivedeviance.org/projects/education.html) – accessed 8/3/2016), and in Ethiopia to assist communities seeking to reduce school dropout ([www.positivedeviance.org/pdf/ETHIOPIA%20-GIRL'S%20EDUCATION](http://www.positivedeviance.org/pdf/ETHIOPIA%20-GIRL'S%20EDUCATION) – accessed 8/3/2016; [www.positivedeviance.org/about\\_pd/](http://www.positivedeviance.org/about_pd/) – accessed 10/10/2015) and to improve girls’ attendance of primary school (BESO II/SCOPE n.d.). These issues were defying solutions using traditional approaches. PD practitioners argue that because PD involves the participants in every stage of finding the solution, and because it draws on strengths and ideas that come from the target community itself, solutions are more readily agreed to, adopted and sustained (Devane 2009).

## **3.2 Literature Informing the Positive Deviance Approach**

Although PD does not appear to be linked closely to the school effectiveness (SE) methodology which was popular in the 1980s and 1990s, in reality it comes with some of the same assumptions. SE research began in the USA and UK in reaction to the socially deterministic Coleman and Plowden Reports of 1966 and 1967 respectively (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore 1997). These reports seemed to indicate that school performance was largely determined by a child’s background. This ran against conventional wisdom and confronted proponents of the belief



in the social-levelling impact of schooling. If schools purely replicated existing social divisions, then one of the main arguments for schooling would fall away. However, in response to these USA and UK reports, there was a strong belief in many education circles that schools do and can make a difference, irrespective of a child's socio-economic background. SE set out to prove that the school does make a difference. It is based on an implicit cost-benefit analysis of rates of return on schooling and a deterministic input-output model of schooling. Once this approach was accepted during the late 1970s, the research began to focus on what conditions and elements make for a 'good' or 'effective' school, with effectiveness usually defined in terms of learner performance as measured by exam results (Harber 1995).

SE methodology was used in an effort to improve schools which were struggling, particularly in poorer neighbourhoods in the USA and the UK. At the start this was done in a somewhat unsophisticated way. Proponents of SE asserted that it is possible to analyse what makes some schools successful (the positive deviants) while others are not. The favoured approach was to examine primary research to identify indicators of successful schools. These lists of indicators were provided to non-performing schools which were meant to then implement these indicators of success and so improve (Morley & Rassool 1999). However, the underlying assumption that there is a definitive list of indicators that define an effective school is problematic (see Davies 1993; Fertig 2000; Huberman & Miles 1984; Reynolds et al 1993; Wideen 1992), as was the view of some SE advocates that indicators of a successful school are universal and absolute, and so can be transferred to any education system and any school, even those in developing countries (Jamieson and Wikeley 2000; Morley & Rassool 1999). Over time, many critiques of SE were mounted (Alexander 2000; Hamilton 1995 and 1997; Morley & Rassool 1999). As a result the SE analysis became more sophisticated, with the strict behaviourist and quantitative orientation being modified using statistical analysis with multi-variate analysis as well as a more nuanced approach using a mixed-method approach with some qualitative indicators (Scheerens 2012; Teodorovic 2009).

The key changes were that SE research was increasingly conducted between schools serving similar or the same socio-economic and geographic community, and the attempt to transfer indicators across schooling systems has largely ceased. Presentation has also changed, with a move away from the much-criticised lists of indicators to present effective schools through case studies and comparative studies (Prew 2004). In addition in the developing countries, the focus on learner performance in exams as the key indicator of effectiveness or school output is often questioned, with some focusing on the role of schools in deepening democracy and civic responsibility while reducing violence and discrimination, particularly through focusing on indicators of child-centred learning and classroom democracy (Harber 1995).

The value of SE research is that it has helped educationists understand how school inputs, the context of schooling and school processes impact on school outputs, even if the evidence is often confusing and studies contradict each other (Teodorovic 2009). Over the years, some consistency has emerged from SE studies on what makes schools effective and ineffective. Meta-analysis of SE research across countries and education systems showed that there were some commonalities (Scheerens 2007). Sound school management skills and capacity are universally associated with successful schools (even if what is meant by 'sound' may be somewhat different across systems and cultures). In contrast, as the SE research began to use statistical methods

it was shown that while resourcing levels, teacher qualifications and access to learning and teaching materials had little or no statistical relationship to effectiveness in schools in the West, they were often statistically significant in African and Asian schools where resources were relatively scarce.

More recently, led by the consultancy firm McKinsey, an adapted SE approach has been used to case study effective school systems and narrate what they have done to improve along a calibrated path from 'poor' to 'good' to 'excellent' (McKinsey 2010), while keeping the focus on student performance. This takes the attention away from individual schools and their management, and focuses on government/system-level planning and implementation of change, which impacts most strongly on the individual classroom. However, it continues to work on the assumption that if you describe a successful change process, other system leaders can pick up the lessons and attempt to implement them in their system.

The change in sophistication in SE analysis has largely been driven by the impact of the school improvement movement. This research-based and statistical approach to school development set out to prove that SE assumptions are naïve, and explored what could help struggling schools to improve. School Improvement (SI) proponents showed that each school is unique and cannot simply copy another school. Each school management is different from every other one and the management style that works in one school and community may not work in another.

*“It is one thing to demand that all schools are effective; it is an entirely different matter to assume ... that what has positive effects in one setting will invariably have the same effects in another.”* (Jansen 1995: 186)

In contrast, SI consciously targeted curricula, classroom practices and learner outcomes, while strengthening the schools' capacity to manage change (Hopkins 1998). SI sees the individual school as the centre of change and, in contra-distinction to SE, sees the teachers and principal of the school as the experts and agents of change. The outsider's role is therefore one of providing growth and support. School change is as complex, contextual and problematic, *“because it is non-linear and the process is fraught with difficulties and subtleties”* (Fullan 1986: 271).

SI practitioners see the key focus of change being the internal conditions of the school. The change should be planned, extend over years, be top-down and bottom-up, and lead to institutionalisation of the change at classroom level through methods which build teacher ownership of the changes (Hopkins 1994). Hopkins et al (1994) argue that SI has to be school wide as well as school deep: it has to affect the actual culture of the school to be sustained, and the change strategies need to lead to fundamental and lasting organisational changes. This then led to a focus in the late 1990s on School Development (SD), with the linked writing of School Development Plans (SDPs), which allowed schools to focus their school improvement priorities and link them to holistic, school-wide indicators, with a particular focus on classroom practice and pupil learning (MacGilchrist & Mortimore 1996: 199). This approach sees the school as an integrated holistic organisation.

SD requires multi-dimensional and multi-level change across the whole school community, involving inside-outside partnerships. This creates space for self-management of schools and puts the agency back into the school. The self-managing school usually does its own capacity

review and develops its own SDP within its vision, and sets about achieving its development priorities through an integrated process involving school stakeholders (Prew 2004).

In more recent years, broader school development initiatives have included SE-style indicators alongside intervention strategies which draw more from the SI school of thought. The SE indicators help ensure that the focus is on specific measurable improvements in the struggling school, which have been drawn from SE lists, with the SE indicators set as goals within a complex process of what is often school-driven externally supported change leading to a learning organisation (Prew 2004).

### 3.3 Key Components of an Effective School

There is general agreement in the SD literature that a number of key components are found in high-performing schools anywhere in the world. One of the most definitive lists has been developed by Scheerens (2007; 2012) after years of analysing studies on school effectiveness. The components he identifies are:

- a school climate which promotes achievement and sets high expectations of teachers and learners;
- cooperation and consensus among school staff and other stakeholders;
- education leadership;
- frequent monitoring and setting of curriculum targets; and
- time on task, opportunity to learn and structured instruction.

There is a small body of literature which has found that these and factors in other lists are important, with slight modification in Namibian schools (Kolofu 2015). The key factors which seem to typify high-performing PD schools in Southern Africa, and which the PD schools will be evaluated against, are:

- the principal's school leadership skills and the setting of high expectations;
- educator practices and time on task;
- development of a supportive school environment which is safe and nurturing; and
- internal and external cooperation and consensus.

We will look at each of these in turn. However, it should be noted that they do not work in isolation, and so effective school leadership will normally create space and support for high-quality educator practices and ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning.

#### 3.3.1 Principal's School Leadership Skills

In most studies the importance of school leadership is emphasised. Not only do effective school principals run the school efficiently and set high standards for teachers and learners, but they are also usually model instructional leaders themselves, and show high levels of accountability to the school community. It has been found that where the principal is knowledgeable about the curriculum and can model lessons or lead Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshops in the school, this reinforces their administrative work. Such principals set in place effective teacher and learner monitoring systems with curriculum targets. If anything the role of

the school principal is even more critical in a developing country like Namibia where teachers are often not well trained, and where understanding of the demands of the curriculum are often not fully understood.

The particular characteristics of a successful principal vary from country to country and even within a country. Studies in South Africa have shown that the skills that a principal requires in a township or rural school are different to those required of a principal in a former white school in the main urban centres (South African Department of Education 2006). This is likely to be true of schools in Namibia.

The particular skills which a principal requires in a township and rural school include an ability to work with a community where the social and cultural norms are often traditional and inimical to the more democratic management style and pedagogical mode that is expected in schools. Equally in some communities they may have to deal with high levels of drug use and sexual abuse among learners and the impact of initiation ceremonies on teenage boys. The traditional principal, who still often succeeds in urban middle-class schools with an authoritarian approach to management, is likely to struggle in a township school where community liaison is critical and often the job involves sensitivity (Prew 2006). In fact, one of the main differences between successful schools serving African communities and those in Europe is the importance of working with the parents and the community and engaging regularly with the community, particularly in school planning and fundraising efforts (Prew 2004). In addition, in Southern Africa when a principal is accused of financial impropriety, the school often declines rapidly, even if the accusation is unsubstantiated (Prew 2004). Where the principal is a confident and transparent financial manager, such accusations are rare.

### 3.3.2 Educator Practices and Time on Task

Over much of the African continent, traditional forms of pedagogy still dominate, with serried rows of learners listening to a teacher and at best chorusing answers. Opportunities for learners to develop their own critical thinking capacity or even to build their language skills are limited in such a classroom. In many African schooling systems, group and pair work is rarely allowed, usually on the basis that large classes make learner-centred learning difficult. Ironically, it is actually teacher-centred pedagogy which is least effective in such situations, as many learners in a typical early-grade classroom fail to learn to read, write or add up. As almost no learning occurs in such classrooms without the teacher's direct involvement, few children ever have enough support and get enough attention to learn at an adequate speed and depth.

There is a lot of evidence that children learn better when allowed to take some control of their own learning through discovery-based approaches, often involving group and pair work, use of the children's prior knowledge and environment to reinforce the learning, and scaffolded with varied teaching styles and approaches within a purposeful focused environment (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen 2010; Harber 1995), where time on task is maximised. There is also evidence that children in Southern Africa learn better irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds when they have access to reading materials and other stimuli (Zuze 2010). Feeling secure and safe at school appears to be another important indicator of learner – and particular

female – retention in school and performance. Finally, children of all ages learn better where they are treated with respect and high expectations are set, irrespective of a child's background.

Zuze's (2010) work with recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) test results indicates that in Botswana there is a clear association between teacher content preparation and student achievement. In addition, regular purposeful assessment is associated with better performance and greater social equity between students within the same school. We can tentatively assume that the same may be true in neighbouring Namibia. In fact, many of these conditions have been found to relate to high performance in a small study of two high-performing rural secondary schools in Omusati Region, Namibia (Kolofu 2015). In addition this study found that learners performed better where there were strong supportive relationships between the school management team and the teachers.

### **3.3.3 Development of a Supportive School Environment which is Safe and Nurturing**

There is a body of research which relates authoritarian school leadership and low levels of pupil engagement along with high potential for violence (Milgram 1974; Miller 1987; Woods & Gronn 2009). Miller (1987) argues that if learners are exposed to models of authority and leadership in those they look up to which are authoritarian and restrictive, then the learners will internalise this as legitimate and normal, and so will reproduce this in relations with others.

In contrast there is an increasing body of literature – which includes studies on South African schools – which finds that more effective and democratic inclusive school leadership creates conditions where violence is unacceptable (Harber & Mncube 2012) and there is no recourse to corporal punishment. In such schools, learners, finding that their views are listened to and matter, and that they are trusted, do not need to resort to violence or abusive behaviour to get noticed or make their point. In addition, such effectively led schools have been found to keep at bay potentially violent influences that may come into the school from the surrounding community.

### **3.3.4 Internal and External Cooperation and Consensus**

Effective schools are usually associated with consensus among staff and cooperative supportive relations between staff and parents and community members. Internal cohesion is a key element in effective schools – and the reverse, fragmented staffrooms are closely associated with struggling schools. A supportive community is not as closely correlated to high performance as is the quality of the school's management, but the literature (e.g. Government of South Africa 1996) recognises that it is an important component of the triangular relationship which makes for effective schooling (along with the school management and teachers). There are many models of effective school-community relationships, ranging from an extreme hands-on relationship to a distant but supportive arrangement. The important thing with this relationship is that it allows the school to fulfil its vision and marshals community resources and support behind the school. This is particularly critical in rural communities in developing countries where schools often have multiple resource needs, some of which the community can meet, or at least assist with.

Similarly, there is considerable evidence that the quality of support coming from the local education office is important for the success of schools (Prew 2012). While some high-performing schools can manage with little or no education office support, and indeed almost relish their independence, others require the confidence that comes with knowing that the education office supports what the school is doing and celebrates its success. The support can come in a variety of areas, including curriculum and subject support, classroom management assistance, school management team advice and support, and attendance at important days in the school's calendar. Further, research shows that principals in developing countries who receive support from a strong and well-organised district or regional office are likely to be better networked, have a clearer idea of the system's expectations from their school, and feel more confident in taking risks and experimenting with new ideas to improve teaching and learning in the school (Prew 2004).

## 3.4 Positive Deviancy

While there is no specific literature on using PD methodology to improve school performance, the literature on using this methodology in other sectors indicates that it may pose a number of challenges, particularly in the context of a limited budget.

One of the most problematic aspects of using PD methodology to improve schools is the same as we saw in the SE methodology: the determination as to what constitutes a PD school. Ideally the starting point would be to bring together the whole community of Namibian schools and guide them to identifying the positive deviants among them. This is clearly impractical and assumes that school leaders have knowledge of schools across the country, which they are unlikely to possess.

To overcome the lack of a school leadership community to work with in determining what is a PD school, one needs to use other methods of identifying PD schools. Various data pools have to be used. These have to be utilised to identify schools which are performing well above the average of the schools in their region in external high-stakes exams. However, it is important that before selecting any secondary school, the Regional Office confirms that the school is not artificially inflating its results by being selective in its enrolment policy, encouraging weak learners to repeat or drop out, or massaging results to overstate its pass rate.

It is also important to check that the proposed PD secondary school is delivering a well-balanced schooling experience to both boys and girls and is not perpetrating values and practices which run counter to the law and nationally agreed norms. This should, for instance, bar any school that actively uses corporal punishment being included in the PD secondary school sample.

Similar filters should be used in selecting primary schools. As primary school learners do not do annual externally moderated exams, more reliance has to be placed on the Regional Office helping to identify its highest-performing schools which face similar resourcing, enrolment and other challenges as most primary schools in the region, and yet achieve recognised good learning results as indicated by the National Standardised Achievement Tests (NSATs) results, without resorting to methods which are not child friendly.

We also have to explore alternative strategies of collecting data in schools. A PD strategy called Positive Deviance Inquiry (PDI) (BESO II/SCOPE n.d.) offers a way of circumventing the challenge posed by the limited budget and lack of agreement on what may constitute a PD school. PDI is a research approach which enables the researchers to identify the unique practices of PDs – in this case a number of schools – which set them apart from others and allow them to cope more successfully in the same environment (BESO II/SCOPE n.d.). The research methods are eclectic and revolve around a case study approach. This would involve focus group interviews, observations, discussions at various levels in the local Regional Office and schools, and feedback loops to check understanding and the picture of what makes certain schools PDs.

The literature advocates that PDI should inform an intervention which is based on a Behaviour Change Approach (BCA) which focuses on strengthening institutional activities in struggling schools which are likely to lead to improvement, and also targets the removal or neutralising of recognised barriers. The BCA encourages the intervention team to work closely with practitioners from the PD schools so that they can mentor and advise the struggling schools.

# 4

## RESEARCH THEMES/QUESTIONS

The core objective of the research for this project is to understand what make some PD schools in Namibia stand out amongst their peers in terms of learner performance. This research is then meant to be used to help inform the MoEAC to enable it to assist other schools to improve their performance.

The underlying research question is simple: *What are the features that typify high-performing schools in contexts where other schools struggle to perform?*

Behind this broad question, the research team – which designed the research instruments – asked a number of sub-questions:

- What are the management and governance arrangements in the PD schools that stand out as unusually effective?
- Are the teachers in the PD schools unusual in their teaching strategies or abilities?
- Is high performance in the PD schools related to the resourcing levels in those schools?
- Is the higher performance in the PD schools related to explicit or hidden forms of selection of learners?
- What other elements found in the PD schools are related to these schools' high performance?

The use of a case study approach was designed to allow the research team to examine how the elements associated with high performance in the PD schools relate to each other and also create the space for unexpected elements to be identified and examined while the research was in progress.



# 5

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

A number of potential limitations in the original hypothesis and research process were defined in the inception report or during the training of the data collectors. Although some of these concerns – particularly the first one listed below – seemed to be potentially grave, none of them actually impacted on the process negatively enough to in any way devalue or undermine the findings and conclusions of this research. It is important to identify these perceived and real concerns or challenges and explain why they did not impact on the conclusions:

- (i) There was a concern that the results would be too specific to individual schools and thus not generalisable, and in addition, that they would be likely to relate to positively deviant school principals and teachers. In other words, these schools would be almost impossible to learn from, and would not create conditions for replication in poorer-performing schools. While there are elements of this concern still expressed in this report, overall the report will argue that the features of the PD schools are to a large extent replicable.
- (ii) The data collection teams were impacted by the late dispatch of the letter informing the regional directors (RDs) of the study, which was further compounded by the poor e-communication culture of some of the RDs, who seem to rarely clear their email inbox, and so claimed to have not been informed of the research team's imminent arrival in the region. This could have led to serious consequences, and certainly delayed access to a couple of schools and the conducting of the regional interviews on schedule with the RD involved. However, all five regions were accessed, although only one RD was interviewed, and no long-term delays were experienced; the research ended on the planned day.
- (iii) Two school principals – one in each of the data collection zones – resisted the respective research team accessing their schools. In both cases this delayed arrival in the school, but in neither case did it prevent the data collection in these schools on the day scheduled. In one case the team was largely ignored by the principal, although later she did give an interview, and in the other the regional director overruled the principal and instructed the team to visit the school as planned, even though the principal was absent.
- (iv) One of the 'comparison' or 'control' schools turned out to be a high-performing school (ranked sixth in its high-performing region in JSC). In contrast, one of the PD schools had got a new principal in 2015, and its 2015 JSC results were in stark contrast to its 2014

marks. This situation somewhat compromised both the PD sample and the comparison sample. However, the school with falling performance and the remaining comparison school together provided very useful data which contrasted with that in the PD schools. In addition, the high-performing schools and the Regional Offices regularly described what lower-performing schools look like, and how they behave and function. This collectively painted a clear picture of what most schools in Namibia are like. The triangulation of these three sources of information on non-PD schools convinced the research team that the loss of a comparison school was not a serious limitation. In the analysis to follow, this PD school, which was allocated 'comparison school' status, is treated as a PD school, while the declining school is treated as a 'comparison' school, leaving 12 sample PD schools and two comparison schools.

- (v) Although each team had a Namibian with some language skills, both teams were visiting a number of ethnic areas with a range of languages. Generally this was not a problem and someone in the interview focus group was able to interpret for members who could not speak the languages known to the researcher. However, in one instance a student teacher had to be called in to interpret the responses of the parent focus group. As the student teacher was newly arrived in the school, she was not seen to be too closely associated with the school, and the parents' responses were assessed to have been free of the influence of the student teacher, once she was persuaded that the researcher did not require her responses.
- (vi) The interview and other data collection tools were not field tested in Namibian schools prior to the start of the data collection process. This was due to a number of factors including the timing of the data collection immediately after the school holidays. To reduce the impact of this limitation, the tools that were used were modified versions of tools used in gathering data for school case studies in Uganda, South Africa, Lesotho and other countries with schools with similar conditions to those in Namibia. Further, they were presented to the research team, UNICEF and the MoEAC prior to the data collection process. These stakeholders added and changed certain questions based on contextual knowledge and good practice. Finally, after the first day in the field, the two international researchers had a long discussion to identify changes that needed to be made in the tools; there were few. The final proof of their appropriateness is in the quality of the case studies that they produced; this is left for the reader to determine.
- (vii) Finally, the time frame for the research and the distances travelled between schools were immense. In total, both teams travelled between 3 000 and 4 000 km during the two weeks, as well as working long hours each day to ensure that the case studies were written up on a daily basis. The limited time available was a result of the budgetary limitations and the availability of the international researchers. It is believed that the quality of the data was not adversely affected, and that spending more than a day in each school would not have yielded significantly more and richer data than was collected.

# 6

## RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY



### 6.1 Sampling

The schools were chosen through two complementary but separate processes. Firstly, about half the schools were selected through a lengthy process of working with the MoEAC Grade 10 and Grade 12 national exam results (JSC, NSSC (O) and NSSC (H)) on the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessments (DNEA) website ([www.dnea.gov.na/en/archive](http://www.dnea.gov.na/en/archive)) over the period 2012-2014. Once a school was identified as a consistently high-performing school, the research team checked through the internet on its public status, resourcing levels and the community it serves. This removed private and schools serving relatively affluent communities, leaving a set of high-performing senior secondary, combined and junior secondary schools which serve rural and poorer urban communities. However, it was realised that this method would not work with primary schools as the results of the National Standardised Achievement Tests (NSATs) at school level are not universal and the tests are administered less regularly than every year.

As a result of this problem, an alternative and complementary strategy was agreed whereby one of the project’s Namibian researchers who also works for the MoEAC at regional level and a national officer of the Ministry together spent a day reviewing school performance, with the help of regional education authorities, and through that process selected the remaining schools. These were selected largely on the basis of reputation in their respective regions, as schools which were doing remarkably well against the odds.

Finally, the ‘comparison’ schools were selected. The team leader determined that these should be schools which sat the JSC so that results could be ascertained, and that they should be in different research zones. The researcher and the MoEAC officer selected these schools.

The final list of schools included 4 primary schools, 1 junior secondary school (JSS), 2 combined schools and 5 senior secondary schools. The ‘comparison’ schools were meant to be one JSS and one senior secondary school. However, as explained above, the JSS turned out to be a high-performing school, while one of the PD senior secondary schools turned out to be struggling. Therefore, both of the ‘comparison’ schools are senior secondary schools.

As the selected schools were assured of a level of confidentiality, their names are not mentioned in this report. Tables 1 and 2 below indicate the phase of each school and the region in which each school is located.

**Table 1: Distribution and Phase of Sample Schools**

Region	Phase of School
Zambezi	1. Combined School
	2. Primary School
Khomas (including Windhoek)	3. Senior Secondary School
	4. Junior Secondary School
Oshikoto	5. Senior Secondary School
	6. Combined School
	7. Junior Secondary School
	8. Primary School
//Karas	9. Junior Secondary School
	10. Primary School
Erongo	11. Senior Secondary School
	12. Primary School



**Table 2: Distribution and Phase of Comparison Schools**

Region	Phase of School
Zambezi	13. Senior Secondary School
Khomas	14. Senior Secondary School

## 6.2 Development of Data Collection Tools

The data for each case study was generated from a range of interview, observation and data tools. These were developed by the research team leaders and refined in the final weeks of 2015. Dedicated tools were used for each of the focus groups and individual interviews, and some were also modified for each type of school. All of the data collection tools are presented in Annex C.

Given the intensity of the data collection process, it was clear that there would be no time to field test the instruments. For this reason the team leader used tools which have been tried and tested in schools with similar conditions to those found in the Namibian schools. Secondly, the tools were reviewed by UNICEF and MoEAC before and during the workshop, and changes were made to them. Thirdly, after the first day of data collection a few final changes were made to some of the tools, based on a discussion between the two research team leaders. The main changes were to reduce some repetition between tools. It is accepted that this was not adequate; it was a limitation.

The team leader was worried from the start that the interview tools, which in most cases had over 25 questions, were too long. This was debated with UNICEF and within MAS. However, it was decided that in order to develop detailed and reliable case studies, and to be able to triangulate data from a number of sources within each school, it was necessary to repeat the same or similar questions across all categories of respondents. It was also decided to conduct most interviews as focus group interviews. This was because the researchers wanted to generate discussions in the PD schools about the elements of success and what beliefs, values and practices impact on those elements. It is much harder to do this with a single respondent. However, it was decided to interview the principals separately as the theory of change posited that they would be key to the success of their schools and they may play down or 'edit' their role if interviewed with their staff.

## 6.3 Training Workshop and Team Finalisation

On Monday 18 January 2016, the research leaders conducted a workshop for all of the potential data collectors. The MoEAC and UNICEF were invited to observe and participate. The aims of this workshop were to:

- (i) ensure that the research team, UNICEF and MoEAC were fully aware of the approach that would be taken to collecting the data;
- (ii) identify the strengths and weaknesses in the additional researchers who would be employed locally for the data collection; and so,
- (iii) determine who would fill the final place in the data collection team.

It had already been determined that Mr Francis Kolofu, a Chief Education Officer for Planning and Development in the Erongo Regional Office, would be part of the data collection team, as his Master's dissertation had been on PD schools in northern Namibia. Permission had been sought from the MoEAC, and granted, for Mr Kolofu to join the team.

The final place was to be filled by a lecturer from the University of Namibia. To that end, two lecturers, who had been identified a few months earlier, were invited to the workshop, but it soon became clear that they had not obtained permission to be absent for the proposed data collection period. When sought during the workshop, this permission was denied. UNICEF stepped in and identified a former intern who had basic research skills. She was called and recruited that very afternoon. Both local researchers were issued with memoranda of agreement outlining their roles and the conditions under which they would be part of the process. Therefore, each team set off into the field with one international researcher and one local researcher. The latter, who had both worked in or with the education ministry, helped smooth things with regional managers and school principals, and ensured that the team was informed of the specific dynamics of the Namibian education system and schools. In addition, both local researchers had language skills which were invaluable when interviewing the learners and community members.

The training workshop was divided into three sections. The team leader opened by sharing a short presentation on the project and the proposed research process. All parties agreed to this process, which had been earlier presented in the inception report. In the second session the meeting examined the proposed instruments and the protocol for each school visit. This led to a few changes in the approach, the most significant being a decision to administer the tool designed for 'parents' to school parents and School Board members separately. It was emphasised that School Board members and parents represent different interests and could not be conflated into one stakeholder group.

During the final session of the workshop, the potential researchers role-played sections of the interview tools, with the Ministry and UNICEF participants acting as appropriate school stakeholders with set roles. The interviewers were observed by the international researchers to ensure that they could use the interview tools and ask follow-up questions. In order for the same data to be collected from each school, the interview tools were structured, but the researchers were required to go beyond the set questions and ask follow-up questions to establish meaning and to reduce room for misinterpretation. This helped identify the strengths of the researchers; the proposed researchers managed the process well, giving the team leader some comfort.

The workshop ended with the signing of the memoranda and final agreement on the composition of the two teams which would set off on the data collection process the following day. The team going south then sat with senior members of the MoEAC who helped the team to locate the schools and determine the order of visits. The local researcher had already completed this task for the team going north.

## 6.4 Data Collection

The 14 sample schools were divided into two groups of seven schools each, with each group inclusive of six PDs and one 'comparison' school. The schools neatly divided into a northern group (Zambezi and Oshikoto Regions) and a south and central group (//Karas, Khomas and Erongo Regions). The team leaders for the two groups of schools were identified in advance of the workshop which launched the research programme. The second team member of each team was allocated in the workshop.

A school visit protocol was developed (see Annex A) which guided the approach that each team would take in relation to the sample schools, and determined who should be interviewed and what process should be followed in each school. It included prescriptions on the classes which would be observed (grade and subject), how the learning walk and lesson observations should be conducted and, perhaps most important, how the project should be presented to the staff of the school.

During the workshop a letter had been finalised which would then be sent immediately to each of the five affected regions, detailing the project and indicating which schools would be visited by the research team. The Regional Offices were instructed to inform the schools of the visit. This process was observed only in part. One or two regional directors failed to see the letter in their email inbox, so failed to inform their staff and schools. Others managed to inform the schools but did not realise that the regional staff would also be interviewed. Although such information gaps and misunderstandings created some temporary frustrations, neither team was delayed, both teams completed their task in full, and both teams returned to Windhoek in time to provide initial feedback to UNICEF and the MoEAC representative on Friday 29 January 2016.

Efforts were made to contact the principal the day before each visit by calling his or her mobile phone. Where contact could not be made, alternative methods of contacting the school were made through the Regional Offices. Only a few schools were not informed of the visit beforehand, and none of those which had not been informed barred access.

The research team aimed to arrive in each school as it opened in the morning. School opening times varied from just before 07h00 to 08h00. Once in the school the team would introduce itself and the research to the principal, or in the absence of the principal the most senior teacher. Once the formalities were over, the principal was asked to help the team arrange the classroom observation visits based on the protocol which varied between the various types of school (see Annex A). The principal was also handed the school data sheet (see Annex B), which varied between the various types of school but broadly requested contemporary and historical data on the school's learner and teacher enrolment and attendance, learner dropout and repetition rates, staff qualifications and gender, the number of orphans enrolled in the school and the performance of the school in national exams. This form was usually filled in by senior staff with the assistance of the school secretary. On arrival the research team also checked whether the principal had managed to inform parents and School Board members that they would be required for an interview. In some schools these informants had already arrived in the school and were waiting patiently to be interviewed. If not, a messenger would be sent out to identify and invite parents to come and be interviewed.

Once the day had been planned, one team member started observing the requested lessons using a structured lesson observation tool (Annex D) while the other team member started conducting the interviews (Annex C), generally prioritising those for the School Board and parent focus groups if these community members were already in the school. The school-based focus groups of teachers, senior teachers and learners were then organised during the day. Each of these interviews took between an hour and a half and two hours. Inevitably these impacted on the conduct of classes. Many of the schools were relatively small, so extracting five teachers from their normal duties inevitably impacted on the school. None of the schools complained about this,

even though the PD schools had a culture of being in class and maximising time on task: they seemed to realise the importance of the study and the recognition it brought to their school.

It should be noted that because many of the schools were relatively small, they lacked senior teachers and appointed heads of department. Where this was the case, the senior teacher interview was not always conducted as it depended on whether the more senior teachers were likely to provide different information to what the ‘normal’ teachers provided. Similarly, fewer School Board members than planned were interviewed. This was partly because in some schools none were available, and even where they were available, where they had just been elected in the recent School Board elections, their inputs were found to be the same as those of the parents, so the two groups were interviewed together.

Generally the interview with the principal was left till last. This interview usually took a similar length of time to the focus group interviews. This often meant that the principal was interviewed after the school closed for normal lessons, at around 13h00.

During the day, one of the team members would undertake a walk around the school using a learning walk tool (Annex E). On this form the researcher recorded the state of the school’s infrastructure, classrooms and toilets, its access to water and electricity, as well as the specialist rooms that the school contained, and its security and computer access.

Before leaving the school the team thanked the principal and staff for their assistance and tolerance in allowing the school to be impacted by the interviews.

Arrangements were also made to interview Regional Office managers. Given the fact that many of the officers were in the field, the required interviewees were not always accessed, although key informants were interviewed in all five Regional Offices. They were also interviewed using a structured interview tool (Annex C).

Table 3 below lists the numbers of respondents interviewed during the data collection process. In total, over two weeks, 266 people were interviewed, the majority of whom were female.

**Table 3: Interviewees in the Study**

Stakeholder Group	Number Interviewed	Gender
Principal	12 (including one acting principal)	3 female, 9 male
Senior Teachers	18	50% female
Teachers	66	56% female
Learners	85	51% girls
School Board Members	24	13 female, 11 male
Parents	46	34 female, 12 male
Regional Directors	1	1 male
Senior Regional Officials	14	5 female, 9 male
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>54% female, 46% male</b>



# 7

## PROFILE OF COMMUNITIES SERVED BY SAMPLE SCHOOLS

### 7.1 Economic Activities

The researchers found that there was something of a divide between the communities in the north compared to those in the southern and central regions.

#### Northern regions

In the northern regions, all but one of the communities were rural and depended mainly on subsistence agriculture with some livestock rearing, supplemented by pensions. Many of the children do not live with their parents, and are being brought up by grandparents or fending for themselves either as child-headed households or living alone in temporary accommodation near the school. Poverty levels are generally high. All of these schools had a few parents with professional civil service jobs – mainly nurses, teachers, police or army. Other parents ran *cuca* shops (small rural shops selling alcohol and a range of other products), and a few had small businesses or brewed local ‘brandy’. Income levels were generally low. These meagre incomes had been impacted by the last two years of drought (particularly in Oshikoto Region) and the collapse of the South African Rand (to which the Namibian Dollar is pegged) against the US Dollar.

#### Southern and central regions

In the southern and central regions, most of the sample schools were in remote rural areas or the townships and informal settlements around Windhoek. As in the north, they mainly serve poor communities surviving on subsistence agriculture and pensions, but there is more access to wage employment and informal-sector jobs, particularly in Walvis Bay and Windhoek. There seems to be higher levels of unemployment in the south and centre compared to the north, which often goes along with alcoholism and drug use, which was mentioned regularly in the south and centre, but hardly at all in the north. Two schools serve a wider and more professional and middle-class community which uses the schools to remove their children primarily from the bad influences of urban centres.

The children attending the schools in the south are more likely to board than those in the north, although the hostels in most of the PD schools with boarding facilities were in a poor state of repair and cleanliness.

In the urban schools there is much greater diversity in the economic status of the parents, some being professionals, some working as labourers, some earning wages in mines or in businesses or shops, and some being involved in the informal economy selling on the streets.

In almost all of the schools, especially in the south and centre, orphans form a significant section of the enrolment – between a fifth and a quarter of all learners in a number of schools.

## 7.2 Access to Basic Social Infrastructure

Few of the parents in the north have access to electricity or clean running water in their homes. This reflects that most of these schools serve communities which fall into the lowest quartile of the Namibian population and live in typical conditions related to that socio-economic group (Makuwa 2004; Miranda 2011). In the south and centre the picture is more complex, in that some communities have almost no access to electricity or water and others have reliable sources of both services. Learners living with grandparents who had benefited from a government project to instal toilets in pensioners' homes had better access to sanitation than most. For most of the schools in the north, the nearest clinic is at least 5 km away, while in the south and centre the distances from the rural schools to a clinic could be considerably greater. One primary school in the north is inaccessible by normal road, and another is reached by 20 km of very corrugated gravel road, while two of the southern schools are reached by some 60 km of gravel road. However, most of the schools are a few hundred metres from a tarred road, usually in or on the edge of a small community living in traditional thatched mud-clay houses in the north and in corrugated-iron and make-shift shelters in the south.

Levels of illiteracy seemed high in both parts of the country, and seemingly particularly high in the south and centre. Urban schools could generally draw on a more literate population than rural schools, both in the north and south/centre.

## 7.3 Overview of Regional Performance

Performance in the national Grade 10 JSC exams and Grade 12 exams varied widely from one study region to the next. Oshikoto has performed well since 2012, being ranked first in the JSC every year, and second in the NSSC (O), while Zambezi, after years of performing well, is now the worst-performing region in the country. The southern and central regions fall between these two extremes, with Erongo coming third in the senior exam rankings, Khomas coming fifth and //Karas coming twelfth nationally.

# 8

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS



This section on findings is sub-divided into a number of sections which draw on the indicators that the literature finds to be closely related to high performance by PD schools.

### 8.1 School Infrastructure

As with the communities that the schools serve, the schools in the north differed somewhat to those in the south, and the urban schools differed to the rural schools. Significantly, all of the schools had electricity and most had access to clean water, but many of them lacked clean functional toilets in adequate numbers for their learners. In half of the schools the learners had to use the bush as a toilet, which embarrassed the teenage girls particularly.

What was special about these PD schools' infrastructure in the north was how ordinary it was: it is not possible from just driving into most PD schools to tell that there was anything special going on, except that there were usually very few learners out of class. Even if one looked through the windows, there was still no clue as to the performance of these schools as most had bare classroom walls, desks in rows (with only a few classrooms having desks grouped), and a predominance of teacher-centred learning.

Of the northern schools, only two – a newly built secondary school in a rural setting and an urban primary school – had a computer room, and in none of the others did learners have access to computers. In the former, computers were stored in a strong-room as the school had no computer teacher, although the learners could access them if they requested this. In the second school, learners could access the well-organised computer room only if they paid a fee. Further, only two PD schools, both being secondary schools, had a science laboratory, but only one had chemicals in the laboratory. Five schools had a dedicated library, although in one of the secondary schools and a primary school the library books were stored in the administrative offices, making them almost inaccessible.

Of the southern and central schools, only two had a computer room and functional science laboratory, and four had a library. In contrast, the comparison school in the south/centre had a better infrastructure than any of the PD schools, with a large computer room with 46 computers, a functional and well-equipped laboratory, and a library.

Of all the PD schools, nine have teacher housing (five in the south/central schools) while six have hostels for learners (five in the south/central schools). Learner hostels are more prevalent in the south/centre as the desert conditions mean that learners live over a greater area. However, all of the PD schools in the north offering Grade 10 or Grade 12 operate ad hoc hostels for exam classes for all or part of their final exam year. This involves learners sleeping in tents or in classrooms.

It is patently obvious that the secret to the success of the PD schools was not in the quality of their infrastructure. In fact there was something of an inverse relationship between the quality of the infrastructure and a school's performance.

## 8.2 Leadership

Effective leadership appears to be key to the success of the 12 PD schools. As one focus group of teachers stated, *“If the leaders (of the school) were bad then the school would not succeed; when things are right it means everyone is doing their work well.”*

Central to the management of each of the PD schools was the principal. In each of these schools, all stakeholders emphasised the role that the principal plays in driving and leading the school's high performance. The stakeholders reported that the principals do this in a variety of ways, but nearly every principal scored a '4' on the Likert scale that learners, parents, School Board members and teachers were presented with to rate their principal. A score of '4' translates to 'the principal has excellent leadership skills'. Other projects (Prew 2016) indicate that teachers tend to rate their principal as 'good', not 'excellent'. That nearly all of the principals, irrespective of age, gender, race and training, were rated excellent is significant. Interestingly, in the comparison schools the principals were not rated as highly; in fact one of the principals was rated at only '2' ('inadequate') by his teachers. The teachers in this school commented that their principal *“deserved a score of '4' [then] the school would be at the top of the (performance) rankings”*. These teachers apparently saw the relationship between a weak principal and lower school performance.

The fact that there was no single model of leadership to which the PD school principals adhered indicates that each has developed his or her own leadership style. However, all (or nearly all) of their leadership styles had some features in common, these being:

- an explicit vision for the school which focused on the high performance of teachers and learners and a belief that the school is on a path to even greater things;
- a belief that all teachers and learners can succeed;
- a belief in life-long learning which translates into supporting their teachers in their studies and even encouraging them to seek promotion;
- a total commitment to the school, which can be almost excessive in relation to being in the school at all hours – and most of these principals are instructional leaders taking exam classes and making sure that their subject scores amongst the best results in the school;
- an open ‘democratic’ management style which makes them approachable by teachers, parents and learners;
- a desire to communicate and engage with parents and the community as a whole;
- a good knowledge of the school’s regional ranking, but a stronger knowledge and professed interest in how individual teachers are doing;
- a belief in the power of internal competition within the school between teachers and between learners;
- an innate confidence that the school (and the principal) can overcome any barrier; and
- an immense pride in their school, their children and teachers.

In all of the PD schools (and in the non-PD school in a negative sense), the principal set the tone. All of the principals were qualified and the majority reported having a degree. In one PD school after another, school teachers talked of the principal being a “*role model*”, and by implication someone they did not want to let down or disappoint. As one group of senior teachers said of their principal, “*She works harder than anybody.*” This was a refrain that was repeated across the PD schools.

A key ability that these high-performing principals have is the ability to manage external factors which could destabilise the school. They do this through a strategy (which seems almost unconscious) of managing the external environment. As one principal had written on his office wall, “*We are the architects of our own destiny!*” This neatly summarises the underlying value that these principals seem to represent. This attitude and belief has an important impact on the way that they run their school and protect their staff and the school against external challenges, policies and regulations which could be detrimental to the success of their school. They do not reject such policies and regulations, but rather work out how to integrate them into the effective workings of the school. In contrast, non-PD principals often allow the outside world to impinge on their school, leaving their staff feeling powerless to manage forces which are beyond their control. The approach of the PD principals generally involves a management style which is open and encourages reflection and debate. Most of the staff focus groups in the PD schools commented extensively on the openness of their principal’s management style, and how the principal encouraged teachers to specialise in the grades and subjects where they could make the most impact on “*the success of the school*”. This attitude extended into the professional space, with teachers commenting that their principal gives them freedom and autonomy to do what they judge to be best for the learners, or as one teacher said, “*We are not told what to do. He treats us like professionals.*”

Another achievement of these principals was the ability to help young staff to understand the importance of their role as a teacher and get them to internalise a strong sense of dedication to their educative task and continue their studies. As one principal asserted, *“I encourage them to do further study – a person shouldn’t stop reading,”* while teachers in a PD secondary school said, *“One of our colleagues is in the US; our principal encourages this,”* and teachers in a combined school averred that, *“We are encouraged to do further study.”* This commitment to further study was accompanied by structured and well-thought-through induction programmes for newly qualified and new teachers joining the school. Such induction programmes seemed to be more about inducting the new teachers to the school and its work culture.

Further, most of the schools, and particularly those in the north which are doing well nationally, seemed to be exciting and enjoyable places in which to work – and this was in spite of the infrastructure. What these principals seemed particularly good at doing was creating a self-motivated and highly motivated team, particularly among those teachers who were teaching key exam classes. This is the key to understanding why teachers, who are paid nothing extra, are prepared to work from 07h00 to 18h00 (and in some schools 22h00) as well as on weekends and holidays and present this as a privilege that they have been granted! They clearly enjoyed being part of a winning team, and fought to maintain that status. As one teacher explained, *“When we meet teachers from other schools and they know we come from (Name) School, they treat us like principals, like inspectors ... we are highly respected.”* While this creates a gap between these and other teachers, it also provides professional recognition of their success and prowess.

The PD school principals who had inherited low- or moderate-performing schools were at pains to explain how they had turned the school around. In most cases, if not all, this process commenced with getting the teachers on their side and then starting to make the systems in the school function properly, thereby generating a disciplined, safer, more trusting and caring environment. The principals who had turned their schools around particularly talked about setting a winning tone and strict discipline. As one PD combined school principal explained, *“We set out to be one of the best schools: we started by working on discipline.”* Once the learners were disciplined and the teachers were infected with the vision and appetite to succeed (and other studies show that teachers in low-performing schools are well aware of their school’s performance and are not happy with this low performance), time on task improved dramatically. In addition, these schools started using targets consistently and focusing their planning on how to improve the school. Their effort was then rewarded with improved exam results – in some cases very dramatically improved. This seemed to convince teachers that they can trust the new principal and that their mediocre school had become a place of energy and excitement. At this point many factors in the school change:

- Parents and community members want to be involved and associated with the success of ‘their’ school, so parents’ meetings are now over-subscribed and reportedly bring in over 80% of the parents or guardians.
- Dropout rates and learner pregnancy rates fall.
- Teacher mobility stabilises and teachers stop applying for lateral transfers, and instead, if they leave, they do so on promotion as other schools ‘poach’ them to share in the success of their school.
- The school becomes a safer and more democratic space.
- Learner and teacher absenteeism in exam classes often drops to zero.

The fact that one PD school after another reported a similar trajectory indicates that these triggers and this progression are the basis for their success.

The principals of the PD schools also generally ran an open and transparent financial system whereby teachers knew what the funds were spent on, helped to create the school's spending priorities through the planning process, and were free to ask questions about the school's finances – as were members of the community. This openness helped the schools to avoid any sense that they were misusing funds, and helped the principals plan for periods of uncertain funding. In addition, in a few schools the capitation grants were supplemented by fundraising. As the principal of a newly fee-free secondary school stated, *“We learned from the local primary school that USE/UPE (grants) will be delayed, so we had fundraising last year to tide us over.”* This advance planning was a feature of some of the better PD schools.

The principals in most of the PD schools were clearly the pride of their Regional Education Office which provided support, but more importantly provided space for these principals to take risks. Hence one Regional Office boasted that the principal of one of the PD schools had initiated the increasingly common practice of holiday and weekend lessons for exam classes, while teachers in this same school boasted that, *“The inspector is proud of our school.”*

Finally, the successful principals showed great skill in bringing the local community into the school, and as one principal put it, *“making sure there is no gap between school and home”*. While teachers in less well-performing schools tend to look down on the illiterate parents of the learners and make them feel unwelcome, the PD schools embrace these parents. Parents of the learners in the PD schools regularly reported that they are encouraged to visit their children's class during lessons and talk to the teachers about their children, and are positively encouraged to attend parents' meetings. As one PD combined school principal explained, *“We have seen a change in mindset from the community and traditional leaders ... now they see learners getting to secondary school and tertiary institutions and doing well, so now they react quickly and give us more than we ask for,”* while a teacher in the same school went on to explain that, *“A lot of parents turn up for parents' meetings, [and when we] check the parents against the learners' names, we find less than 10 parents are missing; it is awesome.”* This has led to material benefits for the PD schools, such as the building of new classrooms by communities and provision of food and bedding during school exam class camps, and more importantly it has led to a general sense of success around the school which then seems to rub off on the learners, helping to keep them in school and studying hard.

## 8.3 Learner Performance and Selection

Even in performance there was something of a divide between the schools in the north and those in the south/centre. Generally those in the north – particularly in high-performing Oshikoto Region – are high performing relative to the regional average as well as the national average. This was true in both the JSC and the NSSC exams. Hence most were consistently attaining a Grade 10 pass rate of 100% with many A and B grades. Most of these schools, which also offered Grade 12, also did relatively well in the NSSC exams. In contrast, the PD sample schools in the south and centre were doing well by regional standards but were not particularly prominent nationally.

The sample PD schools in the rural areas of Zambezi and Oshikoto Regions managed to use the school environment to counter the effects of the poverty, low socio-economic status, poor living conditions, and lack of money for extra lessons which typified the learners' communities and which UNICEF (2011) correlates with low learner performance.

The pass rates of the PD schools contrast with the comparison schools, along with many other medium- and low-performing schools which the Regional Offices and the PD schools referred to, which are struggling to get a 50% pass rate in JSC.

The initial concern expressed in the inception report was that the PD schools may be selecting their learners. If this was the case, it might skew the results as selecting learners at Grade 8 or 11 should make it much easier for the school to do exceptionally well in the JSC and NSSC exams. In fact a number of the PD sample schools were able to be somewhat selective in their intake at Grade 8, Grade 9 and/or Grade 11. This was because in some cases their success in exams attracted children from across the region and even the country. One of the PD schools was set up as a model school with hostels, to attract learners from across the country, while another was a semi-public Catholic foundation school which managed to draw learners from many communities. While the staff in these two schools insisted that they take a range of abilities when enrolling learners and do not do so purely on academic prowess, it is inevitable that these schools will select learners who will make the school a success.

However, these two schools were not the highest-performing in the sample, and the highest-performing Grade 10 school in the study – and one of the highest in the country – is a non-selective school, with the worst infrastructure of all the schools visited: the researchers searched in vain in the school to find an unbroken window, and walls of some classrooms were dangerously cracked and floors pitted. More significant is that all the PD schools, whether partially selective in their intake or not, presented very similar features which were not seen in the comparison schools, and according to the regional education offices and the team's experience, are not seen in other mediocre or weak schools.

When considering the high performance of the PD schools, it may be significant that they all had a majority of girls, with 52.7% of the learners in the northern schools being girls. This dominance of girls was even found in senior classes. In some classes and schools the girls outnumbered the boys by a large margin. One of the central secondary schools had a majority of 64.5% girls.

## 8.4 Teacher Quality

Perhaps the most surprising findings related to the quality of the teachers. In the literature, PD schools are normally typified by unusually good teaching. A high percentage of the teachers were qualified, with only seven out of 221 being unqualified in the PD schools (with only one unqualified in the two comparison schools out of 50 teachers, and that teacher had a science degree). However, the vast majority of the 40 lessons observed during the classroom observations were mediocre lessons, scoring an average of 2.9 in the northern schools and 2.26 in the southern and central schools. The score of 2.9 comes in just below 'achieved' and above 'partially achieved', while 2.26 is only just above 'partially achieved'. Overall the lessons



in the PD schools scored an average of 2.6, which is below what would be expected in high-performing schools. This means that the lessons were barely competent and there were many things that could be improved.

In the observed lessons in the north, planning was often weak, whereas in the south/centre the researchers found that teachers had planned and prepared topics for lessons and exercises and homework to be done. What was weak was the kind of learning activities planned – very rarely were any learner-centred activities included in lessons. Almost all planning was focused on teacher delivery of the topic and some kind of exercise or assessment task at the end of the lesson: the lessons were very formulaic.

Very few of the 40 teachers whose lessons were observed used group work or pair work, and none used it effectively. Almost all of the teachers conducted teacher-centred lessons. However, while most of the classrooms were sterile environments with no or few educational materials on the walls, the teachers generally had adequate numbers of textbooks, and most teachers used worksheets which had been generated and then duplicated on the school's photocopier. The teachers also made extensive use of the ubiquitous metal chalkboards.

Many of the teachers in the PD schools were inherited by their present principal. Even where the principal and School Board members in some of the schools have taken control of the identification and interviewing of new staff members, they are frank about stating that most of the good teachers do not want to work in poorly resourced schools in rural areas. The only rural school which found it relatively easy to attract staff was one which was newly built and fairly well resourced, and which provided modern housing for the staff. The others had to use the teachers whom they inherited and could attract. These were often teachers who had been learners at the same school. Interestingly, the vast majority of the high-performing teachers taking exam classes were young – between 25 and 35 years of age.

So, how can the success of these teachers be explained?

A factor in explaining how these ordinary teachers achieved extraordinary results may lie in the size of the classes. Generally the classes in the northern schools were relatively small, with an average of 32 learners with a range of 28, with the largest class having 44 learners and the smallest 16.<sup>1</sup> Many of the classes, particularly in the most successful combined and secondary schools, had less than 30 learners. Significantly, the highest-performing schools in the north, which seemed fairly unconcerned about their poor infrastructure, ensured that they had as many teachers as possible, allowing the school to keep class sizes down.

In addition, in the PD schools the teachers felt that they had adequate resources to plan and prepare lessons. Every PD school prized its photocopy machine(s) above all else. As teachers in one primary school stated, "*The financial resources are well managed, better than in other schools. We have two photocopiers bought by the school and all the learners have more than enough textbooks.*" In school after school, the limited funds available were spent on paper,

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<sup>1</sup> Namibia has an average class size of 41 in primary classes (Grades 1-7), 25 in lower secondary (Grades 8-10) and 21 in upper secondary (Grades 11-12) (Fhi360 2014).

toner and repairs of the photocopiers. These photocopiers enabled the teachers to use the available textbooks and other reference books as effectively as possible, and means that information and worksheets were used in a large number of the lessons observed. This access to worksheets also allowed the teachers to set regular exercises and tests, mark them quickly and mark the corrections. In the literature, purposeful and regular setting of exercises which are marked and corrected and then reinforced with regular tests, are associated with high-performing schools.

Another significant factor in the success of the PD schools may be the level of support that teachers provide to each other. It was a distinctive feature of the responses of the principals, senior teachers and teachers that cooperation between teachers was regularly rated in PD schools at '4' ('excellent'), and that teachers often "*visit places and relax together*", as one group of teachers explained. In the comparison schools it was mentioned that teachers and management do not cooperate well, and that there are tensions and factions among the staff and management. As in the study by Kolofu, a high level of cooperation between school staff and principal is a feature of the PD schools.

Apart from the size of classes, availability of photocopying facilities and high levels of cooperation among the staff, the key differentiating feature of the staff which was constantly discussed in the PD schools was their commitment and dedication, which was manifested in maximising time on task. One focus group of teachers in a PD combined school explained that, "*Teachers are self-motivated; teachers fight to teach in the afternoon, that is why we need a timetable,*" while in another school a teacher simply explained, "*There is always time to mark a test.*" The commitment of the teachers in the PD schools was palpable. A number of teachers in various PD schools explained that when they do not reach their targets, "*We are not embarrassed (by the principal); we feel guilty as we know we have let the rest [of the staff] down.*"

## 8.5 An Environment of High Expectations and Constant Improvement

Whether the school was selective or not, all the PD schools showed a very high level of belief in their learners. Interestingly, the less successful the school was in national exams, the less committed the staff seemed to be to their learners and the less their professed belief in their learners' ability.

In the higher-performing PD schools, teachers and principals said that every learner could succeed. As teachers from a rural under-resourced PD school said, "*We are in a village but in the top 10 (schools) in the country – that is significant. We are not here to fail ... what a learner in Windhoek can do, they [learners in this school] can do ... schools with resources fail their learners,*" to which the principal added, "*We take everyone from everywhere, even if they are failing in another school. We boast that we get slow learners and get them to pass.*" In the same school another teacher stated, "*Our learners are from a rural area. The only possible way when you are teaching is to talk to them; you let them understand; you respect and value them to promote self-esteem in the learners.*"

Some of the PD schools engineer learner success by retaining learners who are struggling, and getting them to repeat classes and organising remedial lessons in the afternoon for them, which was a common feature of the PD schools. However, the more successful of the PD schools achieved the same result by entrusting the learning process to the learners themselves. In one PD secondary school the principal explained that there are no bells but there are clocks in every classroom and even in the toilets and showers, so that the learners can monitor their own time keeping, as the learners, according to the teachers, “*must be self-driven ... it is not part of our culture to monitor the children*”. Similarly, the principal of another high-performing PD school explained, “*We don’t supervise study periods and we have no LRC;<sup>2</sup> we just tell learners that they need the study time and we expect the learners to behave – we trust them.*” These schools, along with other PD schools, also encourage peer coaching among learners. In this approach learners were expected to ask questions and seek assistance from teachers when they needed it, knowing that requests for extra tuition would be well received by the teacher.

Further, in the PD schools the researchers saw no evidence of discriminatory behaviour by teachers based on the individual learner’s gender, appearance or background. When teachers were questioned about how they treat the learners, they seemed genuinely shocked that they might treat a learner differently to others. This was part of the caring culture that most of the PD schools seemed to exude, while it also reflected the view that all learners can succeed. The PD schools realise that learners who are discouraged and are assumed to fail will often fulfil that prediction. Equally, if it is assumed that all learners can and will pass, then they are likely to fulfil that prediction. As one senior teacher in a PD school neatly stated, “*It must be 100%; you can’t say I want 80% to pass, otherwise we are assuming 20% will fail and we are not trying our best ... all [learners] can succeed.*”

Part of the armoury that the PD school principals used for setting high standards and maintaining and even improving on those standards was the national system of institutional and system-wide targets. Namibia’s schools have to set targets for learners and teachers annually. These are meant to be monitored by the school and adjusted if necessary. The Regional Offices admitted that even in high-performing regions, many of the schools treat the targeting policy as an imposition and pay lip service to the setting and monitoring of the targets. A senior regional official stated that, “*In some schools the management team or principal set the targets for the school; they are not even fully communicated to staff.*” In such schools the targets have little or no impact. In contrast, in the PD sample schools the targets are set as part of a fundamental school-wide process. In all of the PD schools this begins with analysis of the previous year’s exam and test results. Decisions are made about setting new performance targets for the school, and intervention strategies are agreed with the staff and sometimes the School Board to improve performance further. This leads to the teachers working with the learners to set performance targets for every learner in each subject. These are generally expressed in the form of grades (A, B, C etc.). In some schools these are displayed on the wall of the classroom. The teachers and principals in the PD schools explained that the targets at the level of the learner are not too aspirational as they must create room for improvement and should not be so high that learners have no chance of attaining them and so feel that they have failed. The role of the teachers in mediating the learner targets is probably key to the success of these targets in the PD schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Learner Representative Council.

Once the learners have set their targets, the teachers set their own targets (based on a consolidation of the learner targets), which are shared with the learners, and finally the staff and principal agree on the targets for the school. All of the PD schools set their school target well in excess of the regional target. It was clear that attaining the regional target, even when the regional target is set at 75%, would be considered as a failure in the PD schools. In one primary school the teachers asserted that, *“We set targets at school level; we aim to beat the regional and national targets. We expect learners to do well so our school target is set 10% higher than the regional target. Girls are doing well; in fact all the best learners are girls. If learners don’t achieve 75% from the start of the year, we find ways to encourage them. We identify slow learners and focus on them in remedial study time.”* This is in a deep rural school with mud-clay classrooms and no road access.

Many PD secondary schools set the target at a 100% pass rate and then focus on setting targets for the number of A and B grades that the school will score. As one senior teacher stated, *“If we set a target of 85%, we are expecting 15% of our learners to fail. How can we plan for failure?”* This sort of spirit permeates the PD schools.

Beyond the setting of targets, the highest-performing schools used the strategic meetings at the start of the year to refocus attention on where the bottlenecks to even greater performance are sited. Hence in the highest-performing school in the survey, a rural combined school, the attention in 2016 moved to the lower primary grades as the teachers of the more senior classes felt that the children reaching them could have stronger basic literacy and numeracy skills. To that end in this school, teachers were moved in the lower classes, with weaker teachers (who were often older than the average for the school) given smaller classes and stronger teachers larger classes. At the same time, in the management team a decision was made that no learner would have two years in a row taught by any of the ‘weaker’ teachers: it was argued that most learners could survive one year with a weaker teacher, but two years would hinder their development. In another combined school, teachers commented that, *“In Grade 1 we have a very structured school readiness programme. By the end of six weeks all the kids can read and write.”* This holistic approach to the development of the PD schools should ensure that they go on being successful.

## 8.6 Caring, Safety and Security

It was a regular theme in the PD schools that teachers buy food and uniforms for more indigent learners. Many learners in these schools reported that they come to school hungry. Providing food and clothing to learners is not expected of teachers, but the teachers seemed to see this as a part of their duty of care towards their learners. One early-grade teacher reported that she always brings extra food in her packed lunch to school, so that if a learner is not working well and seems tired and lacking in concentration, she can feed him/her. At the same time, most of the PD schools with lower classes extend the school-feeding scheme to all learners including those in Grades 8-10 because, as one principal said, *“all our learners are vulnerable”*. The attitude of caring was further illustrated in one deep rural primary PD school where a P7 girl had become pregnant. The principal persuaded the girl’s parents not to punish her but to let her sit her primary school-leaving exams. *“We allowed the girl to come to school with her baby.”*

*She passed and is now in secondary school. The mother came to thank us, saying that she thought when her daughter got pregnant that it was the end. Now she has hope again.”*

Two of the schools in the north and three in the south/centre have security guards – all three being secondary schools. The rest of the schools – and even some with security guards – have broken fences or no fence at all. However, learners in every school in the north and all but one school in the south/centre said that they were safe, and the worst problems that any school reported were a few break-ins over the last few years, with nothing of real value being stolen.

Six of the PD schools have a hostels on site for learners – all but one of these being in the south/centre – and eight of the PD schools have accommodation on site for all or most of the teachers. In the north this accommodation was usually in traditional houses of mud-clay under thatch. In the south the teachers’ houses were usually of brick, though generally in a poor state of repair, and were generally shared by a number of teachers, while in some schools the teachers occupied accommodation built for hostel staff.

Having teachers on site means that the school is more secure, and also the teachers can work long hours without being seriously inconvenienced. The concern is that teachers might sexually abuse learners in their accommodation, but this was not reported by any learners or parents in any of the schools. One senior secondary school did have a strict rule that no learner is allowed to enter a teacher’s house, and another school had tightened security after some male learners who were being removed from the school harassed the girls in their hostel.

The core reason for the PD schools being declared safe was not the physical infrastructure or the presence of security guards or teachers, but rather the inclusive and democratic school leadership which seems to create an environment where violence is unacceptable, and where learners are too occupied with being part of a successful school to indulge in any anti-social behaviour. This helps to explain why most (but not all) of the PD schools do not use corporal punishment, even though it is reported to be widely used in Namibian schools. If learners are trusted, they will act in a responsible fashion.

# 9

## CONCLUSION

The international research on effective schools indicates that a number of indicators are likely to typify the PD schools. These were listed earlier as:

- school leadership where high expectations are set;
- educator practices and time on task;
- development of a supportive school environment which is safe and nurturing; and
- internal and external cooperation and consensus.

In examining the findings of this study, each of these indicators is supported by the evidence from the Namibian PD schools.

1. The principals of all of the PD schools had an inclusive approach to management, and most of these principals were described as having an open-door style and a leadership approach which was often described as “open” and “democratic”. Many of these principals were conscious of their position as a role model, and went out of their way to motivate and inspire staff as well as set very high standards and a strong work ethic. It was clear from the testimonies that these principals are school leaders as well as managers. Beyond this, certain behaviours were exhibited in all of the PD schools. The most significant of these common behaviours was that the principal did not allow external factors to destabilise the school. The principals achieved this through a strategy of managing the external environment and conceptualising all new policies, initiatives, problems and challenges through a lens which examines how the school could use the change to its benefit. In contrast, the non-PD schools and those whose status as PD schools was questioned, let the outside world impact negatively on the school, leaving the staff feeling like victims of forces beyond their control. Hence, whereas the PD schools perceived the national requirement that all schools should work until 16h00 (which the PD schools in Oshikoto were already doing) as a justification and official recognition of their approach, and accordingly met this requirement, the non-PD schools either ignored it or met it in letter but not in spirit, thereby failing to use it to the advantage of the learners and the school. Similarly, the PD principals saw the huge potential of the policy on setting performance targets at every level, and so constructed a system of monitoring and reporting achievement against these targets at every level in their school. They used it to bring the staff and parents together, and to inspire the learners to increase their commitment to study and pass their exams. In fact, in the highest-performing schools the targets were core to the aim of creating a school culture of continual improvement both implicitly and explicitly. For example, the principal and staff of the highest-performing PD school, having attained the highest level of achievement that it could in the higher grades, is now focusing on early grades, and was putting in place similar improvement strategies in these grades, with the expectation that this



would leave less remedial work to be done in the upper grades. Such schools appear to be never satisfied with their success, but are always striving for improvement. This attitude may help them to avoid the cyclical pattern that Fink (1999) noted in high-performing schools in the USA, being that once they had performed well for a few years, they went into decline as they started to live off their success.

2. All of the PD schools were very focused on educator practice and teacher time on task. This was particularly evident with exam classes, but the practice permeated right through these schools. The teachers, particularly those teaching the exam classes, were very committed. This was helped by their living on site in most schools and the fact that most were between the ages of 25 and 35. One teacher summed up the views we got from a number of these teachers when he indicated that he did not like being out of school because he might miss something. These schools went to great lengths to maximise the teachers' and learners' time on task, while also leaving the time on task fairly flexible so that teachers and learners could use the time to best advantage. This helped them to avoid the danger of cramming for exams and the production of learners who can pass exams but do little else. While the teachers' observed during the research were not outstanding in any way in the classroom, they had internalised a strong work ethic and were working to explicit performance targets which they respected and were passionate about achieving, both for themselves and their learners.
3. The PD schools exuded a team spirit among the staff. It was clear in most of these schools that the staff were proud of their achievements and would work very hard to ensure that their performance was maintained. The collective staff focus in all of the PD schools on the use of the targets to motivate learners and teachers, and to provide everyone in the school with an aspirational ladder with reasonable and adjustable targets which each member of the school community helped generate for himself or herself, was powerful. At the same time these are innately caring and safe schools, but in many cases without fences or security guards. The high energy levels in the school, and the fact that learners are in the school for well over 12 hours a day in most of the PD schools, including weekends and holidays, mean that there is little time for harassment and vandalism. In the same vein most of these schools do not use corporal punishment, and in the highest-performing school it was argued that the school has failed if the learners do not take full responsibility for their own learning. In the most extreme example of this philosophy, the learners are not supervised by teachers during their afternoon study period because, in the words of the principal, "*They must take responsibility for their own learning – we expect learners to behave – we trust them.*" Similarly, in the PD schools we heard no accusations of sexual abuse, even though learners were asked about

how safe they felt. This is unusual in southern African schools where sexual harassment and abuse of female learners is relatively commonplace. Again the energy of the school – including the fear that teachers have of letting down the team and the principal, and the general environment of hard work and commitment – seems to carry learners and teachers with it.

4. Without exception, the PD schools and their community members interviewed stressed that they had high expectations of all of their learners and did not treat either girls or learners from poor backgrounds any differently to the boys and the children from wealthier backgrounds. This view was evident in the lessons and in the interviews with all of the stakeholders, including the learners and the parents from whatever background. The sense of belonging to a successful project, and the belief of most principals in transparency, extended to the PD school's engagement with parents and the broader community who they generally welcomed into the school and allowed access to classrooms and teachers. Even the Regional Offices expressed how impressed they are with the highest-performing PD schools and supported the approaches that these schools are utilising.
5. Interestingly, the performance in the PD schools appears to be related to infrastructure, but only in a possibly perverse way. The highest-performing school was almost proud of its broken windows, dangerous classrooms and unattractive sandy environment. It was as if the very environment brought the staff together as a community of practice in adversity. This is not unique to this school in Namibia, but is a phenomenon that the team leader has noted elsewhere (see Prew & Mahaye 2013). Obviously the schools which had hostels and a well-developed and clean environment had certain advantages. It was easier for them to attract learners and staff, and to mount evening lessons and run classes during the weekends and holidays. It was also easier for them to motivate staff. However, it was the principal of the poorly resourced school described above who initiated weekend lessons. These schools also counter their lack of hostels by housing the learners in tents and in classrooms for much of their exam year, if not the whole year. These principals of schools with poor infrastructure seemed to see their very poverty as a challenge that they could turn to their advantage. As one such principal said, "*In our school everybody wants to be the best; we can do as well as the private schools,*" and went on to explain that in the last JSC the school had beaten all the region's private schools and well-appointed public schools.



# 10

## RECOMMENDATIONS – REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS IN RELATION TO WIDER APPLICATION



The experience of the PD schools indicate that there are certain triggers that set most of these high-performing schools on the road to academic success. These include:

- the arrival of a new, committed and extremely hard-working principal who is determined to make a success of the school, and sees only opportunity even in the most challenging situation, and exudes confidence and acts as a role model;
- the focus on learner and teacher discipline as a starting point towards school improvement, with an emphasis on fairness and firmness;
- the encouragement of a culture in the school where all staff are persuaded to work together towards a common goal, which leads to a powerful community of practice;
- use of school-generated data to set goals to improve performance, and getting stakeholder buy-in to those goals, emphasising that everyone is working together towards a common goal; and
- engendering of trust and openness between the school and its stakeholders, particularly parents – which often only comes after initial exam success gives substance to the trust.

Understanding these trigger factors may help the MoEAC to assist other schools to improve. However, while the arrival of a new principal seems to be the key trigger, it is important to note that the findings indicate that the PD schools are not unique as regards their staff or even in the apparent backgrounds and qualifications of their principals. The key elements that make the PD schools different to poorer-performing schools, whether primary or secondary schools, seem to relate to work ethic, time on task, setting clear targets which assume that every learner can succeed, and caring for the learners. All of these elements should be transferable, despite that they all relate to attitude of mind and commitment. It is possible to put in place training on how to increase time on task; how to develop a school-wide positive work ethic; how to manage limited funding to maximise its impact on teaching and learning; how to motivate and reward staff; and how to create a well-managed environment. However, international experience shows that these changes are best built into the culture of weaker schools through workshops along with intensive and sustained school-based support. This strategy has to be based on trust between the school staff and those providing the support supervision and internal CPD.

Trust is also key to developing the salient relationship between the PD schools, their community and the parents of their learners. This is based on openness and transparency, particularly in relation to the budget of the school and the performance of the learners. While this openness needs to be encouraged in non-PD schools, the key element which bound the PD schools with their communities was success. Success cannot be manufactured, but once the school tastes success, it seems to be a drug that no one in the school community wants to lose.

Finally, it must be noted that this PD research should not be used to draw up lists of the ‘success elements’ that PD schools embody and then impose them on weaker schools. Weaker schools can learn from successful schools, but this learning must take place on their own terms. The elements would have to be grown in each school over time, and be adjusted to benefit each school’s unique situation. Poorer-performing schools need to know that successful school managers understand the value of trust. This trust comes from such managers’ approach to managing their staff, which is open, democratic and fair; and their approach to managing funds, which is transparent; and their approach to planning, which is conducted in an inclusive way. Ultimately, trust depends on respect: if the principal respects the local community, teachers and learners, they are likely to respect and trust the principal.

The researchers would like to urge UNICEF to replicate this Positive Deviance study in other countries. We feel that it is a very constructive approach to understanding the dynamics of schools, and one that provides a strong foundation for being able to identify the areas of intervention and support required to assist struggling schools to improve their performance based on research in high-performing or positive deviant schools.

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# ANNEXES

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# **Annex A**

# **SAMPLE SCHOOL**

# **DATA COLLECTION SAMPLE**

## **FIELDWORK PROTOCOL**

### **for the**

## **MoEAC/UNICEF Positive Deviance Study**

### **18-29 January 2016**

### **Introduction**

During the period 19-29 January two teams of researchers (one member in each team from Mzabalazo Advisory Services and one a Namibian national) will be deployed to develop 14 school case studies (7 per team) across 5 regions.

These schools have been informed that they will be visited but without the exact date being agreed. The afternoon or evening before you collect data you should contact the school and confirm that you will be visiting the following day at the start of school and that you will want to talk to focus groups of learners, teachers and a focus group of at least 3 members of the parent community (those parents of high-performing learners except in control schools). The parents can be joined by the chair of the school's governing council if available, or any other parent to make a focus group of at least 3 parents. In control schools any parent or community member who engages with the school can be in the focus group. The focus group of parents/community members is the hardest to organise, so make sure you prioritise getting these people into school and then interviewing them.

When you contact the school stress that it is a working visit and no special treatment should be given to you except that you will want to see your interviewees with a minimum of fuss. Do not mention at this stage that you will be observing lessons.

After each day's visit you are expected to write up your notes and feed into the rough draft of the case study you have just visited. If you leave it schools merge into each other and a simple task takes much longer and there is a greater risk of making mistakes.



## Golden Rules of School Research

When undertaking school research there is a set of rules which must be observed. These state the following:

- (i) Entry to the school must be through the principal or senior teacher if the principal is absent.
- (ii) Disrupt the schools normal operations as little as possible.
- (iii) When observing a lesson, NEVER interrupt the lesson or distract learners during the lesson, and never arrive late or leave early – stay for the full single lesson.
- (iv) Do not discuss the findings with anyone in the school. If asked, just say the school ‘is doing fine’.
- (v) Treat all teachers and learners with respect.

## School Visit Process

When in the school, follow the following process:

1. Greet the principal or most senior teacher in the school. If the principal is late insist on starting the process through the most senior teacher present. Don't wait for the principal.
2. After greeting the principal you need to explain what you are doing (briefly). Stress that the data is collected confidentially and the school will not be singled out by name in the report.
3. Hand over the school data collection instrument to the principal to be filled in while you are at the school.
4. Ask to see the timetable and identify the three lessons you want to observe. Start with the lesson observations if possible – unless the community members are already waiting for you.
5. At the end of the lesson if the observed teacher requests it, you may discuss the lesson with her/him briefly. But do not be critical – offer support and advice.
6. Split up to maximise coverage. You can organise the day as you wish, but the Namibian in the team should do the learner (if primary school level) and community member/parent focus group interviews. Leave the interview with the principal till last unless the principal has to leave the school before you finish.
7. You must complete all the interviews and observations in a school day; this means organising yourselves carefully and not being too rigid in who you see when. At the start it may be difficult to plan as the interviews are long. Each one will take at least 1.5 hours. This is a minimum of 5-6 hours work for each of you in each school.
8. Control schools are generally treated the same as sample schools except you use slightly different interview schedules which do not say that their school is doing well.

You will do a somewhat different process depending on what type of school you are in. The specifics are listed on the next pages.

The interviews and focus groups for the **primary schools** will include the following:

- Observe a mother-tongue literacy, an English and a Mathematics lesson in different grades (you choose the grades, however mother tongue must be a Grade 1-3 class)
- Interview with the principal
- School management focus group
- Focus group of 6 high-performing learners: 2 each in Grades 5, 6 and 7 (3 girls, 3 boys)
- Focus group of 5 teachers teaching Grades 1-4
- Focus group of 5 teachers teaching Grades 5-7
- Focus group of parents/guardians of 3 high-performing learners (including at least one female learner's parents/guardian) in any grade and up to 2 community members of the School Board if available.

For **combined schools** (which cater for Grades 1-10) the interviews will include the following:

- Observe a mother-tongue literacy, an English and a Mathematics lesson in different grades (you choose the grades, however mother tongue must be a Grade 1-3 class)
- Interview with the principal
- School management focus group
- Focus group of 6 high-performing learners: 2 each in Grades 5, 6 and 7 (3 girls, 3 boys)
- Focus group of 6 high-performing learners in Grades 9 and 10 (3 girls, 3 boys)
- Focus group of 5 teachers teaching Grades 1-4
- Focus group of 5 or 6 teachers teaching Grades 5-10
- Focus group of parents/guardians of 3 high-performing learners (including at least one female learner's parents/guardian) in any grade and up to 2 community members of the School Board if available.

For **junior secondary schools** the interviews will include the following:

- Observe 3 lessons including an English, a Mathematics and a Science lesson in a range of grades including upper ones
- Interview with the principal
- School management focus group
- Focus group of 6 high-performing learners (3 boys, 3 girls) with two each in Grades 8, 9 and 10
- Focus group of 5 teachers teaching Grades 8-10
- Focus group of parents/guardians of 3 high-performing learners (including at least one female learner's parents/guardian) in any grade and up to 2 community members of the School Board if available.

For **senior secondary schools** the interviews will include the following:

- Observe 3 lessons including an English, a Mathematics and a Science lesson in a range of grades
- Interview with the principal
- School management focus group
- Focus group of 6 high-performing learners in Grades 11 and 12 (at least 50% should be girls)
- Focus group of five teachers teaching Grades 11 and 12
- Focus group of parents/guardians of 3 high-performing learners (including at least one female learner's parents/guardian) from either grade and up to 2 community members of the School Board if available.

## Regional Office Workshops

You also need to fit in workshops with the Regional Offices for the schools you are visiting. Generally try to arrange these for after you have visited the schools in that region – which may not always be possible. The Regional Office workshops may need to be done the day after the school visits in the particular region. You have 7 schools to cover in 11 days, including the weekend. Use the weekend to move regions.

## Emergency

If anything goes wrong or if anything is worrying you, contact the project leader, Martin, on +27 82 325 3822. If you cannot get through, contact UNICEF in Windhoek (name and numbers to be provided).

# Annex B

## SAMPLE SCHOOL DATA SHEET

### Data Collection Instruments for Sample Schools – Primary Schools

*Give to the principal on arrival to be filled in while in school by the school. Collect before leaving.*

Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Current enrolment

Grade		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Enrolment	Female								
	Male								
	Total								

2. Number of orphans in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of classrooms per grade

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Number of classrooms								

4. Number of classrooms accommodating more than one grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Current learner-teacher ratio: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Language of learning and teaching – lower primary: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Languages of learners: \_\_\_\_\_

8. State non-academic activities offered in the school: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Teachers' attendance:

Total number of teachers			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days teachers not in school in 2015		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total

10. Pupils' attendance

Grade	Official enrolment			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days pupils not in school in 2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
<b>Total</b>									

11. Number passing each grade – lower primary

Grade	Total number enrolled	1			2			3			4		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013													
2014													
2015													

12. Number passing each grade – higher primary

Grade	Total number enrolled	5			6			7		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013										
2014										
2015										

13. Repetition Rates (2015/16)

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number of learners repeating							

14. Dropout Rate (2015)

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number of learners leaving the school							

15. Please fill in the table below saying where these learners went to (where you know). For instance, if you know that 8 learners moved from your school to a private school, please write 8 in the correct box.

Where learners went	Number of learners doing this
Moved to private school	
Moved to another public school	
Stopped attending school	
Temporarily stopped attending school	
Learner got married/pregnant	
Learner was ill/injured	
Learner passed away	
Not known	

16. New learners joining your school (2015/16)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>T</b>
No. of learners joining the school								

17. Staff qualifications

17.1 Educator staff (including principal)

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number</b>		
	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>
O level only			
Post-school professional certificate			
Post-school professional diploma			
Professional Bachelor degree			
Post-graduate professional degree			
Other (specify)			
<b>Total</b>			

17.2 Admin support staff

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number</b>		
	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>
O level only			
Tertiary qualification			
<b>Total</b>			

17.3 List and number of professional support staff, e.g. school psychologist, school nurse

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18. Residential profile of educators

<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>
On school premises		
In the community		
In another community		

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# Data Collection Instruments for Sample Schools – Combined Schools

*Give to the principal on arrival to be filled in while in school by the school. Collect before leaving*

Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Current enrolment

<b>Grade</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Enrolment</b>	Female								
	Male								
	<b>Total</b>								
<b>Grade</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>				
<b>Enrolment</b>	Female								
	Male								
	<b>Total</b>								

2. Number of orphans in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of classrooms per grade

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Total</b>
No. of classrooms								
<b>Grade</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>				
No. of classrooms								

4. Number of classrooms accommodating more than one grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Current learner-teacher ratio: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Language of learning and teaching – lower primary: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Languages of learners: \_\_\_\_\_



8. State non-academic activities offered in the school: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Teachers' attendance:

Total number of teachers			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days teachers not in school in 2015		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total

10. Pupils' attendance

Grade	Official enrolment			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days pupils not in school in 2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
<b>Total</b>									
Grade	Official enrolment			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days pupils not in school in 2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
8									
9									
10									
<b>Total</b>									

11. Number passing each grade – lower primary

Grade	Total number enrolled	1			2			3			4		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013													
2014													
2015													

12. Number passing each grade – higher primary

Grade	Total number enrolled	5			6			7		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013										
2014										
2015										

13. Number passing Junior Certificate Examinations

Grade	Total number enrolled	8			9			10		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013										
2014										
2015										

14. Repetition rates (2015/16)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Number of learners repeating							
<b>Grade</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>			
Number of learners repeating							

15. Dropout rate (2015)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
No. of learners leaving the school							
<b>Grade</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>			
No. of learners leaving the school							

16. Please fill in the table below saying where these learners went to (where you know). For instance, if you know that 8 learners moved from your school to a private school, please write 8 in the correct box.

<b>Where learners went</b>	<b>No. of learners doing this</b>
Moved to private school	
Moved to another public school	
Stopped attending school	
Temporarily stopped attending school	
Learner got married/pregnant	
Learner was ill/injured	
Learner passed away	
Not known	

17. New learners joining your school (2015/16)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
No. of learners joining the school							
<b>Grade</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>			
No. of learners joining the school							

18. Staff qualifications

18.1 Educator staff (including principal)

Level	Number		
	F	M	T
O level only			
Post-school professional certificate			
Post-school professional diploma			
Professional Bachelor degree			
Post-graduate professional degree			
Other (specify)			
<b>Total</b>			

18.2 Admin support staff

Level	Number		
	F	M	T
O level only			
Tertiary qualification			
<b>Total</b>			

18.3 List and number of professional support staff, e.g. school psychologist, school nurse

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19. Residential profile of educators

Place of residence	Number	Total
On school premises		
In the community		
In another community		

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# Data Collection Instruments for Sample Schools – Junior Secondary Schools

*Give to the principal on arrival to be filled in while in school by the school. Collect before leaving*

Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Current enrolment

Grade		8	9	10	Total
Enrolment	Female				
	Male				
	Total				

2. Number of orphans in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of classrooms per grade

Grade	8	9	10	Total
Number of classrooms				

4. Current learner-teacher ratio: \_\_\_\_\_

5. State non-academic activities offered in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Teachers' attendance:

Total number of teachers			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days teachers not in school in 2015		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total

7. Pupils' attendance

Grade	Official enrolment			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days pupils not in school in 2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
8									
9									
10									
<b>Total</b>									

8. Number passing Junior Certificate Examinations

Grade	Total number enrolled	8			9			10		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2013										
2014										
2015										

9. Repetition rates (2015/16)

Grade	8	9	10	Total
Number of learners repeating				

10. Dropout rate (2015)

Grade	8	9	10	Total
No. of learners leaving the school				

11. Please fill in the table below saying where these learners went to (where you know). For instance, if you know that 8 learners moved from your school to a private school, please write 8 in the correct box.

<b>Where learners went</b>	<b>No. of learners doing this</b>
Moved to private school	
Moved to another public school	
Stopped attending school	
Temporarily stopped attending school	
Learner got married/pregnant	
Learner was ill/injured	
Learner passed away	
Not known	

12. New learners joining your school (2015/16)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>
No. of learners joining the school				

13. Staff qualifications

- 13.1 Educator staff (including principal)

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number</b>		
	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>
O level only			
Post-school professional certificate			
Post-school professional diploma			
Professional Bachelor degree			
Post-graduate professional degree			
Other (specify)			
<b>Total</b>			

13.2 Admin support staff

Level	Number		
	F	M	T
O level only			
Tertiary qualification			
<b>Total</b>			

13.3 List and number of professional support staff, e.g. school psychologist, school nurse

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14. Residential profile of educators

Place of residence	Number	Total
On school premises		
In the community		
In another community		

**Thank you for your cooperation.**



# Data Collection Instruments for Sample Schools – Senior Secondary Schools

*Give to the principal on arrival to be filled in while in school by the school. Collect before leaving*

Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Current enrolment

Grade		11	12	Total
Enrolment	Female			
	Male			
	Total			

2. Number of orphans in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Number of classrooms per grade

Grade	11	12	Total
Number of classrooms			

4. Current learner-teacher ratio: \_\_\_\_\_

5. State non-academic activities offered in the school: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Teachers' attendance

Total number of teachers			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days teachers not in school in 2015		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total

7. Pupils' attendance

Grade	Official enrolment			Attendance on day of school visit Date ____ / ____ / 2016			Total number of days pupils not in school in 2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
11									
12									
<b>Total</b>									

8. Number passing NSSCO Examinations

Grade	Total number enrolled	12		
		M	F	T
2013				
2014				
2015				

9. Number passing NSSCH

Grade	Total number enrolled	11			12		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
2013							
2014							
2015							

10. Repetition rates (2015/16)

Grade	11	12	Total
Number of learners repeating			

11. Dropout rate (2015)

Grade	11	12	Total
Number of learners leaving the school			

12. Please fill in the table below saying where these learners went to (where you know). For instance, if you know that 8 learners moved from your school to a private school, please write 8 in the correct box.

<b>Where learners went</b>	<b>No. of learners doing this</b>
Moved to private school	
Moved to another public school	
Stopped attending school	
Temporarily stopped attending school	
Learner got married/pregnant	
Learner was ill/injured	
Learner passed away	
Not known	

13. New learners joining your school (2015/16)

<b>Grade</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of learners joining the school			

14. Staff qualifications

- 14.1 Educator staff (including principal)

<b>Level</b>	<b>Number</b>		
	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>
O level only			
Post-school professional certificate			
Post-school professional diploma			
Professional Bachelor degree			
Post-graduate professional degree			
Other (specify)			
<b>Total</b>			

14.2 Admin support staff

Level	Number		
	F	M	T
O level only			
Tertiary qualification			
<b>Total</b>			

14.3 List and number of professional support staff, e.g. school psychologist, school nurse

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15. Residential profile of educators

Place of residence	Number	Total
On school premises		
In the community		
In another community		

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# Annex C

# INTERVIEW TOOLS

## INTERVIEW GUIDE A

### Guiding Questions for Principal Interviews

#### Introduction

Your school has been selected as performing better than other schools in the region, that is, the learners are generally producing better results than at other schools. We would like to discuss with you to find out why this is the case. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your name will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in your school to improve their learners' results.

#### Questions

##### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves? What is the main form on work and or other income generating activities of the community? How would you describe the living conditions in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health facilities and transport?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

##### Overview of good performance

6. Are you aware that your school is performing better than other schools in your area? Why do you think that is the case? What do you do differently here compared to other schools?
7. What are the management responsibilities of other staff in the school: deputy principal, heads of departments, subject heads and other teachers who have supervisory duties, e.g. class teacher?

8. Do you and your teachers set high expectations for your learners? How do you communicate these high expectations?
9. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?
10. What in your opinion is the social standing of your teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?

### **School admission practice or policy**

11. What are the admission and selection process and criteria for learners to enrol in the school? Does this impact on the performance of the school? How?

### **Resources and materials**

12. What are your sources of income for the school? Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.  
1: poorly resourced  
2: adequately resourced  
3: well resourced
13. Briefly describe how you manage your financial resources to impact on the good performance of the school.
14. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. How do you ensure that your school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
15. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
16. Is there a teacher resource centre they can access? Do they use it?

### **Recruitment and selection of teachers**

17. Who is responsible for the recruitment and selection of teachers for your school? What are the process and selection criteria used?
18. Do you have a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.

### **Learning and teaching practices**

19. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
20. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively?
21. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst your teachers what rate would you give?  
1: no collaboration  
2: inadequate collaboration  
3: adequate collaboration  
4: good collaboration
22. Is there a practice of peer review amongst your teachers – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
23. Do you have a formal homework timetable for all grades and subjects? Describe

24. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
25. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

26. Can you describe the performance appraisal process you have in place for your teachers? What do you do when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
27. Do your teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have they attended in the last year?
28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Do you have a system for study leave/time off for such studies?
29. Can you tell us about your teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to you and your teachers? Explain.
32. Other than parents/guardians, does the school get support from the broader community, e.g. donations and voluntary work?

### **Regional Office Support**

33. What is the frequency of engagement you have with the Regional Office officials? What support do you receive from the Regional Office?
34. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Other support**

35. Do the school and its learners receive support from departments other than Education, for instance Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture etc? If so, what kind of support is this? Would you be able to say whether in your opinion or observation this support contributes to the performance of learning or is it insignificant? Give reasons for your opinion or observation

### **Concluding remarks**

36. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
37. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# INTERVIEW GUIDE A

## Guiding Questions for Principal Interviews (Control Schools)

### Introduction

We are doing research for the Ministry and UNICEF on what makes schools perform in different ways. Your school was selected for this study. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from your insights to improve learner results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves? What is the main form of work and or other income generating activities of the community? How would you describe the living conditions in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health.
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your school fit that description?
7. What are the management responsibilities of other staff in the school: deputy principal, department heads, subject heads and other teachers who have supervisory duties, e.g. class teacher?
8. Do you and your teachers set high expectations for your learners? How do you communicate these high expectations?
9. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?
10. What in your opinion is the social standing of your teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?



## **School admission practice or policy**

11. What are the admission and selection process and criteria for learners to enrol in the school? Does this impact on the performance of the school? How?

## **Resources and materials**

12. What are your sources of income for the school? Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.
  - 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
13. Briefly describe how you manage your financial resources to impact on the good performance of the school.
14. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. How do you ensure that your school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
15. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
16. Is there a teacher resource centre they can access? Do they use it?

## **Recruitment and selection of teachers**

17. Who is responsible for the recruitment and selection of teachers for your school? What are the process and selection criteria used?
18. Do you have a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.

## **Learning and teaching practices**

19. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
20. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively?
21. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst your teachers what rate would you give?
  - 1: no collaboration
  - 2: inadequate collaboration
  - 3: adequate collaboration
  - 4: good collaboration
22. Is there a practice of peer review amongst your teachers – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
23. Do you have a formal homework timetable for all grades and subjects? Describe
24. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
25. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

## **Teacher performance management and development**

26. Can you describe the performance appraisal process you have in place for your teachers? What do you do when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
27. Do your teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have they attended in the last year?

28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Do you have a system for study leave/time off for such studies?
29. Can you tell us about your teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to you and your teachers? Explain.
32. Other than parents/guardians, does the school get support from the broader community, e.g. donations and voluntary work?

### **Regional Office Support**

33. What is the frequency of engagement you have with the Regional Office officials? What support do you receive from the Regional Office?
34. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Other support**

35. Do the school and its learners receive support from departments other than Education, for instance Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture etc? If so, what kind of support is this? Would you be able to say whether in your opinion or observation this support contributes to the performance of learning or is it insignificant? Give reasons for your opinion or observation

### **Concluding remarks**

36. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
37. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE B

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Teachers

### Introduction

Your school has been selected as performing better than other schools in the region, that is, the learners are generally producing better results than at other schools. We would like to discuss with you to find out why this is the case. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in your school to improve their learners' results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges than other families?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your school fit that description?
7. How would you describe the leadership qualities of your principal? How would rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent
8. How would you describe the management qualities of other staff in management positions in the school?
9. Does the school set high expectations for its learners? How are these high expectations communicated to learners?
10. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance at the end of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?

11. What in your opinion is the social standing of the principal and you teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?
12. Can you describe learner attendance rates? Is it low/high? Do you think it has impact on the performance of the school? Why/why not?

### **Resources and materials**

13. Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.  
1: poorly resourced  
2: adequately resourced  
3: well resourced
14. How well are the school's financial resources managed to impact on the good performance of the school?
15. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. What does the school do to ensure that the school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
16. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
17. Is there a teacher resource centre you can access? Do you use it? How far away is it?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

18. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
19. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively? Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing? Is there a review session per class/per subject to assess general performance of learners at the end of each cycle?
20. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst teachers what rate would you give?  
1: no collaboration  
2: inadequate collaboration  
3: adequate collaboration  
4: good collaboration
21. Is there a practice of peer review amongst – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
22. How many days a week are learners given homework?
23. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
24. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

25. Can you describe the performance appraisal process for teachers? What happens when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
26. Is there a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.
27. Do teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have you attended in the last year?
28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Is there a system for study leave/time off for such studies?

29. Can you tell us about teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to teachers? Explain.

### **Regional Office Support**

32. What is the frequency of engagement with the Regional Office officials? What support does the school receive from the Regional Office?
33. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Concluding remarks**

34. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
35. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE B

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Teachers (Control Schools)

### Introduction

We are doing research for the Ministry and UNICEF on what makes schools perform in different ways. Your school was selected for this study. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from your insights to improve learner results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges than other families?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your school fit that description?
7. How would you describe the leadership qualities of your principal? How would rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent
8. How would you describe the management qualities of other staff in management positions in the school?
9. Does the school set high expectations for its learners? How are these high expectations communicated to learners?
10. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance at the end of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?

11. What in your opinion is the social standing of the principal and you teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?
12. Can you describe learner attendance rates? Is it low/high? Do you think it has impact on the performance of the school? Why/why not?

### **Resources and materials**

13. Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.  
1: poorly resourced  
2: adequately resourced  
3: well resourced
14. How well are the school's financial resources managed to impact on the good performance of the school?
15. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. What does the school do to ensure that the school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
16. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
17. Is there a teacher resource centre you can access? Do you use it? How far away is it?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

18. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
19. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively? Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing? Is there a review session per class/per subject to assess general performance of learners at the end of each cycle?
20. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst teachers what rate would you give?  
1: no collaboration  
2: inadequate collaboration  
3: adequate collaboration  
4: good collaboration
21. Is there a practice of peer review amongst – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
22. How many days a week are learners given homework?
23. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
24. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

25. Can you describe the performance appraisal process for teachers? What happens when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
26. Is there a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.
27. Do teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have you attended in the last year?
28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Is there a system for study leave/time off for such studies?

29. Can you tell us about teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to teachers? Explain.

### **Regional Office Support**

32. What is the frequency of engagement with the Regional Office officials? What support does the school receive from the Regional Office?
33. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Concluding remarks**

34. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
35. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**



# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE C

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Teachers

### Introduction

Your school has been selected as performing better than other schools in the region, that is, the learners are generally producing better results than at other schools. We would like to discuss with you to find out why this is the case. If you do not mind we have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in your school to improve their learners' results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves? What is the main form on work and or other income generating activities of the community? How would you describe the living conditions in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health facilities and transport?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Are you aware that your school is performing better than other schools in your area? Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your school fit that description?
7. How would you describe the leadership qualities of the principal? How would rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent
8. How would you describe the management qualities of other staff in management positions in the school: deputy principal, heads of departments, subject heads and other teachers who have supervisory duties, e.g. class teacher?

9. Does the school set high expectations for its learners? How are these high expectations communicated to learners?
10. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?
11. What in your opinion is the social standing of the principal and teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?
12. Can you describe learner attendance rate? Is low/high? Do you think it has impact on the performance of the school? Why/why not?

### **Resources and materials**

13. Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.
  - 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
14. How well are the school's financial resources managed to impact on the good performance of the school?
15. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. What does the school do to ensure that the school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
16. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
17. Is there a teacher resource centre you can access? Do you use it?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

18. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
19. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively? Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing – every 4 weeks? Is there a review session per class/per subject to assess general performance of learners at each cycle?
20. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst teachers what rate would you give?
  - 1: no collaboration
  - 2: inadequate collaboration
  - 3: adequate collaboration
  - 4: good collaboration
21. Is there a practice of peer review amongst – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
22. How many days a week are learners given homework? 23. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week? 24. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

25. Can you describe the performance appraisal process for teachers? What happens when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?

26. Is there a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.
27. Do teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have you attended in the last year?
28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Is there a system for study leave/time off for such studies?
29. Can you tell us about teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to teachers? Explain.

### **Regional Office Support**

32. What is the frequency of engagement with the Regional Office officials? What support does the school receive from the Regional Office?
33. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Concluding remarks**

34. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
35. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE C

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Teachers (Control Schools)

### Introduction

We are doing research for the Ministry and UNICEF on what makes schools perform in different ways. Your school was selected for this study. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from your insights to improve learner results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. Can you describe the social and economic circumstances of the community and parents in particular that the school serves? What is the main form on work and or other income generating activities of the community? How would you describe the living conditions in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health facilities and transport?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your school fit that description?
7. How would you describe the leadership qualities of the principal? How would rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent
8. How would you describe the management qualities of other staff in management positions in the school: deputy principal, heads of departments, subject heads and other teachers who have supervisory duties, e.g. class teacher?
9. Does the school set high expectations for its learners? How are these high expectations communicated to learners?

10. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Who is involved? How is it done? Do you use these plans to monitor progress throughout the year?
11. What in your opinion is the social standing of the principal and teachers amongst your parents and in the broader community you serve?
12. Can you describe learner attendance rate? Is low/high? Do you think it has impact on the performance of the school? Why/why not?

### **Resources and materials**

13. Would you say your school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.
  - 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
14. How well are the school's financial resources managed to impact on the good performance of the school?
15. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Explain. What does the school do to ensure that the school has adequate supply of textbooks? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?
16. Do the teachers have adequate access to teaching resources – textbooks, teaching aids, libraries, or internet access?
17. Is there a teacher resource centre you can access? Do you use it?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

18. How are schedules for lessons planned? Do teachers collaborate and plan together for the week, month, term or year? Do they share lesson plans and materials?
19. How are assessments and tests set? Do teachers who teach the same subjects set these collaboratively? Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing – every 4 weeks? Is there a review session per class/per subject to assess general performance of learners at each cycle?
20. If you were to rate the level of collaboration amongst teachers what rate would you give?
  - 1: no collaboration
  - 2: inadequate collaboration
  - 3: adequate collaboration
  - 4: good collaboration
21. Is there a practice of peer review amongst – lesson plans, assessments, learning and teaching methods and aids?
22. How many days a week are learners given homework?
23. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
24. Does the school offer extra lessons? Are these free or not?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

25. Can you describe the performance appraisal process for teachers? What happens when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
26. Is there a mentoring process for novice teachers/newly qualified teachers? Describe.

27. Do teachers attend continuous professional development sessions each year? How many sessions have you attended in the last year?
28. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Is there a system for study leave/time off for such studies?
29. Can you tell us about teacher absenteeism rate? Is it low or high? Is there a threshold for deciding whether a teacher's absenteeism may be affecting performance of the learners? If so, how does the school deal with this when it happens?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

30. How often do you have parents' or guardians' meetings to talk about their children's school work and performance? How well are such meetings attended – low attendance/adequate attendance/ good attendance?
31. Outside of formally arranged parents' meetings, do parents have access to teachers? Explain.

### **Regional Office Support**

32. What is the frequency of engagement with the Regional Office officials? What support does the school receive from the Regional Office?
33. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Concluding remarks**

34. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
35. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE D

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Learners

### Introduction

Your school has been selected as a school where learners pass with better results than other schools in the region. We would like to talk to you to find out from you why this is the case. If you do not mind we have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in your school to improve their learners' results.

### Questions

#### Overview of the school's performance

1. Are you aware that your school is performing better than other schools in your area? Do you think your school is a good school? Why?
2. Does the school set high expectations for you? How do teachers make you aware that they have high expectations?
3. What is the opinion of your parents and the community about your principal and teachers?
4. Are all teachers at school most of the time? When a teacher is absent do other teachers fill in for him/her? Are you given work for the time that the teacher is absent? Are you supervised to do the work?

#### School admission practice or policy

5. How did you get admitted to the school? Did your parents choose the school because it is near home? Did you get in because you were doing well at your previous school? Do all the children in the community get a place at this school or not?
6. Think of a time when you knew someone who applied to get into the school and did not get admitted. Do you know why they did not get admitted?

#### Resources and materials

7. Does the school give you the prescribed textbooks for all your subjects? Do you have access to other learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet? Do you buy your extra books?
8. Do your teachers use textbooks or materials other than the prescribed ones? Do they give you exercises from other books that they have or do they only give you exercises from the prescribed textbooks?

#### Learning and teaching practices

9. Do teachers encourage group work in class? How frequently?
10. Do you do tasks that need you to find information for yourself? Explain by giving examples

11. What is the relationship between you and teachers? Can you ask questions in class? How do the teachers respond? Are you able to ask for help from teachers outside lesson time?
12. Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing – e.g. every 4 weeks?
13. When it is near the time for exams, how do the teachers help you prepare for these? Do you stop doing normal lessons and practise answering exam questions? Do the teachers ... ?
14. How many days per week are you given homework? Do your teachers check and mark your homework? Do they correct homework with clear indications of what you did wrong?
15. Are you able to have time to do homework at home? Do you get any help at home to do your homework? Who helps you?
16. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
17. Does the school offer extra lessons? Do you pay for these?
18. If you are absent from school do you get help from teachers to catch up?
19. If you are not getting good results, do your teachers offer to help to improve your results? What do they do?
20. Are there learners in your class that are repeating? How many?
21. Are the learners from your class last year who did not get promoted? How many? Do you know why?
22. Are there learners from your previous grade/s who dropped out? How many? Do you know why?

### **Additional questions for junior and senior secondary school group**

23. How did you choose your subjects? Did you choose them yourself, with the help of your parents or did the school/teachers choose them for you? In the case where the school/teachers chose, do you know why they chose those subjects for you?
24. Do you as learners organise your own study groups?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement and community support**

25. How often are your parents or guardians called for meetings to talk about your school work and performance? Do many parents attend these meetings?
26. Do your parents or guardians come to school whenever they want to talk to a teacher about your work? Do the teachers make time for them?
27. Are there other people who come to the school to give different kinds of support to you learners, e.g. social workers, nurses?

### **School environment/climate**

28. Do you feel safe in the school? Do the girls feel safe and comfortable in the school? Why/why not?
29. Do teachers use corporal punishment? What do they use it for?
30. Do you think girls are treated differently from boys? Explain.

**Thank you for your cooperation.**



# **FOCUS GROUP GUIDE D**

## **Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Learners (Control Schools)**

### **Introduction**

Your school has been selected for a study on what makes schools successful in Namibia. If you do not mind we have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to better understand what makes some schools successful in order to help improve learner results.

### **Questions**

#### **Overview of the school's performance**

1. Do you think your school is a good school? Why?
2. Does the school set high expectations for you? How do teachers make you aware that they have high expectations?
3. What is the opinion of your parents and the community about the principal and teachers of your school?
4. Are all teachers at school most of the time? When a teacher is absent do other teachers fill in for him/her? Are you given work for the time that the teacher is absent? Are you supervised to do the work?

#### **School admission practice or policy**

5. How did you get admitted to the school? Did your parents choose the school because it is near home? Did you get in because you were doing well at your previous school? Do all the children in the community get a place at this school or not?
6. Think of a time when you knew someone who applied to get into the school and did not get admitted. Do you know why they did not get admitted?

#### **Resources and materials**

7. Does the school give you the prescribed textbooks for all your subjects? Do you have access to other learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet? Do you buy your extra books?
8. Do your teachers use textbooks or materials other than the prescribed ones? Do they give you exercises from other books that they have or do they only give you exercises from the prescribed textbooks?

#### **Learning and teaching practices**

9. Do teachers encourage group work in class? How frequently?

10. Do you do tasks that need you to find information for yourself? Explain by giving examples
11. What is the relationship between you and teachers? Can you ask questions in class? How do the teachers respond? Are you able to talk and ask for help from teachers outside lesson time?
12. Is there a formal timetable for tests per term per subject? What is the frequency of formal testing – e.g. every 4 weeks?
13. When it is near the time for exams, how do the teachers help you prepare for these? Do you stop doing normal lessons and practise answering exam questions? Do the teachers ... ?
14. How many days per week are you given homework? Do your teachers check and mark your homework? Do they correct homework with clear indications of what you did wrong?
15. Are you able to have time to do homework at home? Do you get any help at home to do your homework? Who helps you?
16. Do you have formal study periods? How often per week?
17. Does the school offer extra lessons? Do you pay for these?
18. If you are absent from school do you get help from teachers to catch up?
19. If you are not getting good results, do your teachers offer to help to improve your results? What do they do?
20. Are there learners in your class that are repeating? How many?
21. Are the learners from your class last year who did not get promoted? How many? Do you know why?
22. Are the learners from your previous grade/s who have dropped out? How many? Do you know why?

### **Additional questions for junior and senior secondary school group**

23. How did you choose your subjects? Did you choose them yourself, with the help of your parents or did the school/teachers choose them for you? In the case where the school/teachers chose, do you know why they chose those subjects for you?
24. Do you as learners organise your own study groups?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement and other support**

25. How often are your parents or guardians called for meetings to talk about your school work and performance? Do many parents attend these meetings?
26. Do your parents or guardians come to school whenever they want to talk to a teacher about your work? Do the teachers make time for them?
27. Are there other people who come to the school to give different kinds of support to you learners, e.g. social workers, nurses?

### **School environment/climate**

28. Do you feel safe in the school? Do the girls feel safe and comfortable in the school? Why/why not?
29. Do teachers use corporal punishment? What do they use it for?
30. Do you think girls are treated differently from boys? Explain.

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE E

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Parents/Guardians

### Introduction

Your children's school has been selected as a school where the children get better results, better than other schools in the region. We would like to discuss with you to find out why this is the case. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in your school to improve their learners' results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. What are the main forms of work and or other income generating activities of the community?  
Can you describe the living conditions of the community in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health facilities and transport?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school?  
What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges than other families?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your children's school fit that description?
7. Is there another school you could have sent your children to but decided you will not because you think it is not a good school? If yes, why do you think that school is not a good school?
8. Do you think the school sets high expectations for learners? How do you know?
9. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance at the end of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Are you as parents/guardians involved?
10. Is the principal respected in your community? And the teachers are they? Why/why not?
11. Do you get the impression that teachers in this school are at school most of the time?
12. Do you think the principal is a good leader or not? Explain. How would you rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent

13. Do you think the teachers at this school are good? How would you rate them?
- 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent

### **School admission practice or policy**

14. How did you get your children into this school? What information did you have to give to the school to get your children enrolled?
15. Did the children have to write an entrance test to get admitted to the school?

### **Resources and materials**

16. Would you say the school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Can you explain your rating.
- 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
17. How well do you think the financial resources are managed? Can you tell me why you say this?
18. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, access to internet, or books you buy and keep at home?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

19. Does the school inform you of what they expect from the children – lesson attendance, homework timetable, schedule for assessments etc? Does the school inform you what support they would like you to give to your children?
20. How many days per week are your children given homework? Do their teachers check and or mark their homework?
21. Do you give your children help with homework? If you do not do so directly is there someone else who does?
22. Does the school offer extra lessons? Do you pay for these?
23. If your children are not getting good results, do the teachers offer to help to improve their results? What do they do?
24. Does the school have drop outs? Do you know why?

### **Additional questions for secondary school group**

25. Do you know your children's subject choices? How were they chosen? Was it the children? Did you choose? Did the school/teachers choose them? In the case where the school/teachers chose, do you know why they chose those subjects for your children?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

26. How often are you as parents or guardians called for meetings to talk about your children's school work and performance? Do many parents attend these meetings?
27. Do you as parents or guardians come to school whenever you want to talk to a teacher about your child's work? Do the teachers make time for you? Please explain what you experience

### **Other support**

28. Are there other people who come to the school to give different kinds of support to learners, e.g. social workers, nurses?

### **School environment/climate**

29. Do you think your children are safe in the school? Do the girls feel safe and comfortable in the school?
30. Do teachers use corporal punishment?
31. Do you think girls are treated differently from boys in the school? Can you give examples to help me understand your answer?

### **Concluding remarks**

32. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to the school to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
33. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# FOCUS GROUP GUIDE E

## Guiding Questions for Focus Group of Parents/Guardians (Control)

### Introduction

Your children's school has been selected for a study on what makes schools successful. We have a few questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. This discussion is confidential and your names will not be quoted. The idea behind talking to you is to try to understand how schools can improve and get better learner results.

### Questions

#### Establishing socio-economic circumstances

1. What are the main forms of work and or other income generating activities of the community?  
Can you describe the living conditions of the community in terms of availability of basic social infrastructure such as access to electricity, water, sanitation, health facilities and transport?
2. How do people in this community see formal education? What do they think about it?
3. What have you observed as being the benefits of education for the children and young people of the community?
4. What challenges do families in this community face when they send their children to school? What types of families face the most challenges? What challenges do they face? Why do they face more challenges than other families?
5. What challenges do children in this community face when they go to school?

#### Overview of good performance

6. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how does your children's school fit that description?
7. Is there another school you could have sent your children to but decided you will not because you think it is not a good school? If yes, why do you think that school is not a good school?
8. Do you think the school sets high expectations for learners? How do you know?
9. Does the school have a practice of reviewing performance at the end of the year and planning for the following year on the basis of a review? Are you as parents/guardians involved?
10. Is the principal respected in your community? And the teachers are they? Why/why not?
11. Do you get the impression that teachers in this school are at school most of the time?
12. Do you think the principal is a good leader or not? Explain. How would you rate his/her leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent

13. Do you think the teachers at this school are good? How would you rate them?
- 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent

### **School admission practice or policy**

14. How did you get your children into this school? What information did you have to give to the school to get your children enrolled?
15. Did the children have to write an entrance test to get admitted to the school?

### **Resources and materials**

16. Would you say the school is well resourced financially? Give a rating. Can you explain your rating?
- 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
17. How well do you think the financial resources are managed? Can you tell me why you say this?
18. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning? Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, access to internet, or books you buy and keep at home?

### **Learning and teaching practices**

19. Does the school inform you of what they expect from the children – lesson attendance, homework timetable, schedule for assessments etc? Does the school inform you what support they would like you to give to your children?
20. How many days per week are your children given homework? Do their teachers check and or mark their homework?
21. Do you give your children help with homework? If you do not do so directly is there someone else who does?
22. Does the school offer extra lessons? Do you pay for these?
23. If your children are not getting good results, do the teachers offer to help to improve their results? What do they do?
24. Does the school have drop outs? Do you know why?

### **Additional questions for secondary school group**

25. Do you know your children's subject choices? How were they chosen? Was it the children? Did you choose? Did the school/teachers choose them? In the case where the school/teachers chose, do you know why they chose those subjects for your children?

### **Parental/guardian/community involvement**

26. How often are you as parents or guardians called for meetings to talk about your children's school work and performance? Do many parents attend these meetings?
27. Do you as parents or guardians come to school whenever you want to talk to a teacher about your child's work? Do the teachers make time for you? Please explain what you experience.

### **Other support**

28. Are there other people who come to the school to give different kinds of support to learners, e.g. social workers, nurses?

### **School environment/climate**

29. Do you think your children are safe in the school? Do the girls feel safe and comfortable in the school?
30. Do teachers use corporal punishment?
31. Do you think girls are treated differently from boys in the school? Can you give examples to help me understand your answer?

### **Concluding remarks**

32. If you were to introduce other practices and activities in the school to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
33. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**



# INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP GUIDE F

## Guiding Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups at Regional Education Office

### Introduction

Schools (Names) have been selected as performing better than other schools in the region, that is, the learners are generally producing better results than at other schools. We would like to discuss with you to confirm if that is the case and why. We have some questions to which we will refer to guide the discussion. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We would like you to share your honest opinions and feelings. We note that you may not be able to provide answers to all the questions because of your limited interaction with the school community. Nonetheless we would appreciate hearing some of your opinions and observations. This discussion is confidential and your name/s will not be quoted. The idea behind getting your opinions is to try to see if other schools can learn from the good practices that are being employed in these schools to improve their learners' results.

### Questions

#### Identifying practices that impact on good performance

1. Can you describe from your perspective what a good school is like? Given your description, how do the named schools fit that description?
2. Is there another school that in your opinion is a weak school? Can you point out what are the characteristics of that school that makes you say it is a weak school?
3. What in your opinion is the social standing of the principals and teachers of PD schools amongst parents and in the broader community?
4. Do you get the impression that teachers in these named schools are at school most of the time?
5. Do you think the principals are good leaders or not? Explain. How would rate their leadership?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent
6. Do you think the teachers at these schools are good? How would you rate them?
  - 1: poor
  - 2: inadequate
  - 3: good
  - 4: excellent

#### Regional Office Support

7. What is the frequency of engagement you have with these schools? What support does the Regional Office give to the schools?

8. Can you tell us whether in your opinion the support from the Regional Office is adequate or not? Why/why not?

### **Resources and materials**

9. Would you say the PD schools are well resourced financially? Give a rating. Explain your rating.
- 1: poorly resourced
  - 2: adequately resourced
  - 3: well resourced
10. How well do you think the financial resources are managed? Give reasons for your response.
11. Does every learner have access to the textbooks needed for learning in these schools? Explain. Do the learners have access to additional learning materials through a school library, community library, or access to internet?

### **Teacher performance management and development**

12. Does the Department of Education prescribe policy for the performance appraisal of teachers? What happens when a teacher may be found not performing optimally?
13. Do the teachers from PD schools attend continuous professional development sessions each year? Is there Departmental policy to support this? What is the role that the Regional Office plays in the CPD of teachers?
14. Are teachers able to embark on further formal training? Who pays? Do you have a system for study leave/time off for such studies?

### **General perceptions/opinions of the PD schools**

15. Can you tell us what in your opinion or observation are the practices and activities of at these schools that contribute to the learners in these schools getting better results than in the other schools in the area/region. You can use the list of categories below to frame your response:
- School governance, leadership and management
  - Parent/guardian community involvement
  - Learning and teaching
  - Staff management and development

### **Concluding remarks**

16. If you were to introduce other practices and activities to further contribute to raising the results of the learners what would these be?
17. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

# Annex D

# LESSON OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

## LESSON OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

### Teaching and Learning Process – Individual Classroom Observation

Grade/Form: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Pupils Present:    Boys: \_\_\_\_\_    Girls: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_    End: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Teacher's Planning and Preparation

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2. Teacher's activities and instructions during lesson delivery:

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3. Teacher's methods and signs of good practice used:

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4. Pupil activities and responses:

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5. Phasing of the body of lesson:

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6. Learning resources for lesson:

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7. Use of resources during the lesson:

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# Annex E

## LEARNING WALK TOOL

### Learning Walk Tool for Namibian Sample Schools

Take 20 minutes during the day while lessons are in progress to walk around the school. Then fill in the sheet below.

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Buildings – describe what classrooms and other buildings are made of, e.g. brick, prefab, other:

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2. Buildings – describe the state of the classroom windows, doors and floors; describe the building materials used:

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3. Does the school have a (tick where it exists)?

Science lab \_\_\_\_\_ Library \_\_\_\_\_ Computer room \_\_\_\_\_ Kitchen \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's office \_\_\_\_\_ Admin block \_\_\_\_\_ Staff room \_\_\_\_\_

List any other specialist rooms/buildings: \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Safety and security – describe the state of the school’s fence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Safety and security – are the grounds and school buildings safe? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do the classroom doors lock? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does the school have some secure rooms with bars on the windows? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

8. Class rooms:

Item	Yes	No	Comment on quality
Teaching aids on wall			
Nice classroom environment			
Enough desks			
Enough chairs			
Correct chairs/tables for age level			
Visible chalkboard			
Windows in place			
Overcrowded classes			

9. School Environment: Is it attractive with flowers and trees and talking environment? (describe)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. School Environment: Does the school have playing fields and play ground? (describe)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Latrines: how many latrines are there in total? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. How many are allocated for Girls \_\_\_\_\_ Boys \_\_\_\_\_ Teachers \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Are there changing rooms for girls and other provisions for menstruating girls? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Are there toilet facilities for disabled learners? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Are the latrines kept clean? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Water: Do the students have access to clean water? \_\_\_\_\_

- a. What is the source of the water? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Power: Does the school have electricity? \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Is the electricity functioning? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What is the sources of the electricity? (solar/grid/generator) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Do all/some/none of the classrooms have access to electricity? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Does the staffroom/admin office/head teacher office have access to electricity? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Computers: Does the school have computers? \_\_\_\_\_
- a. How many does the school have that are working? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Where are they kept? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Do the students have access to the computers to learn? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Are the computers safe (i.e. in a secure room)? Describe \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



# Annex F

## SAMPLE SCHOOL

### CASE STUDIES

#### North

#### School A

##### Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 7 English, Grade 7 Maths and Grade 3 Maths. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 2 senior teachers, 4 teachers (2 male, 2 female), 2 parents, 4 School Board members and 6 learners in Grades 6 and 7. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

##### Details of the school

Number of learners	216 (Grades 0-7)
Number of teachers	8
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	27

The school is a primary school with Grades 0-7 in the eastern part of Zambezi Region, about 40 km east of Katima Mulilo.

The parents are mainly subsistence farmers (maize, millet and vegetables along with poultry and cattle), with some fishing. Reeds are cut for sale and for weaving into baskets and mats. Some run shebeens and cuca shops, some of which sell cakes and firewood (including to teachers) and poles for building huts. Cash income is mainly confined to labouring on the nearby rice project and working on the present major road-building project in the area. The teachers believe that the community is not as poor as it makes out, and that although some parents say they cannot afford to pay into school funds or buy a complete uniform for their children, this is more about being stubborn than reality. However, this is clearly a low-income community.

The staff and principal disagree over the extent to which the community and parents see the value of formal education. The principal points to the initiative and commitment that the parents have shown in building the three lower-grade classrooms and paying for the zinc and providing the poles. In contrast, the teachers point out that the parents rarely come to meetings. The School Board members and the parents claim that they are very committed to supporting education.

The school has 216 learners (including Grade 0), 109 of whom are male and 107 are female. The school has 33 orphans. The repetition rate is relatively low except in Grade 1 where 9 learners are repeating. In total 20 (9.3%) learners are repeating this year across the school. According to the teachers, only 2 learners dropped out in 2015. The school goes to great lengths to avoid learners dropping out, with a Grade 7 learner who had just given birth being persuaded against her parents' wishes to sit for Grade 7 exams with the baby looked after in the next room. She passed and is now in Grade 8. The mother visited the school this term to thank the teachers for persisting and believing in her daughter, as the family had given up all hope of her education continuing once she got pregnant. While the dropout rate is low, the school has been taking on new learners, with 16 joining in 2015/16 after Grade 0.

There are 7 classrooms. The 4 housing the lower grades are of mud-clay with sand floors, and the others are brick with zinc roofs and concrete floors. The learners have access to pitches for football, netball and volleyball. The school also does athletics. The school grounds contain many mature trees, but there has been little attempt to beautify the sandy grounds of the school. The school has no fence, and only the principal's office, which is also used as a secretary's office, storeroom and library, is lockable. The staff room is in a mud-clay room and the school has no kitchen for the school-feeding programme. There are only 4 toilet stands, with only one for all the boys and one for all the girls. The others are used by teachers. They are in a very poor state and are completely blocked, posing a health risk and forcing the learners to go in the bush. The school has 2 old computers, a printer and a photocopier – all kept in the principal's office.

The 8 teachers are all qualified, with 5 having a post-school professional diploma and three having a post-graduate professional degree, including the principal and 2 female teachers. Many of the classes are quite small and none are large. The teachers are accommodated in school accommodation which has been built by the community and is in the form of traditional houses of mud-clay. These teachers' houses have electricity and there are clean water taps nearby in the school. Water is pumped from underground and kept in a tank. The school also has a secretary and four student teachers – all of whom come from the local community.

No learners were absent on the day of the visit. The learners claim to feel safe at school as they are not mistreated and the two sexes are treated equally. They indicated that they are given the same punishment for the same violations of rules.

## **School performance history and present**

The school has been performing well for the last three years. It is known to have amongst the highest pass rates at Grade 7 of any primary schools in the area. In 2015, 19 out of 20 learners passed, 11 being girls. The pass rate in 2015 for Grade 6 was 100%. The previous year 90% passed Grade 7, the majority being girls.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

Three lessons were observed: two Grade 7 classes (English and Mathematics) and a Grade 3 (Mathematics) class. The learners were seated in groups in all three lessons, but no group work was utilised and no advantage was taken of the seating arrangement to enhance learning. The main mode was teacher-centred, with the teachers introducing the topic and in two cases setting the lesson objectives, and then dominating the introduction of the topic (reading for understanding; place values; days of the week). The lessons were set at an appropriate level and were in line with the curriculum, with two of the teachers having lesson plans available, though not closely followed. There was extensive use of resources, with the English teacher using a handout with a set of myths about the sun which the learners read and then had to answer comprehension questions on, while the Grade 3 teacher used a poster and the names of the days on pieces of paper. Learners in the Grade 3 class were very involved in working out the order of the days and the numbering of the days, while the Grade 7 learners in both lessons were very passive. However, the learners say that their relationship with their teachers is good. They also praised teachers for reteaching lessons which had not been understood.

The written exercise which all three teachers set towards the end of their lesson was well done in the Grade 7 Mathematics lesson, with most learners showing an understanding of place value and value, while the comprehension questions were done very poorly in the English lesson, and many of the learners in the Grade 3 class put the days of the week in the wrong order. It was clear that the teachers had not gauged the comprehension levels of their learners well. The teachers monitored the exercises but failed to pick up the mistakes and reteach the lesson.

The lessons were uninspiring and lacked innovation. The teachers tended to talk too much, and rather than allow the learners to solve the problems and think for themselves, the teachers did the thinking and the solving. Two lessons only partially achieved their aim. However, the learners claim that they are expected to seek out information for homework projects.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

No heads of department are appointed, but the principal has selected three phase heads who each look after a set of grades. These teachers, with the principal, form the school's management team. They have responsibility for ensuring that their teachers translate the scheme into lesson plans in their lesson files, and that compensatory teaching takes place during study time in the afternoon, and that tests occur. They also observe their teachers to ensure that they are teaching effectively, and they run the school when the principal is absent.

The School Board, which has just been elected, consists of eight members – six parents, the school principal and a teacher. The previous School Board was very supportive of the school and the principal.

The principal seems well respected in the community because of the job he is doing and also because of the way he runs the school, which is energetic and open, allowing the community a full role. He has a vision for the school and drive. He is set on making the school succeed. He seems respected for staying all week in the mud-clay house allocated to him rather than

staying in town and driving out each day – this makes him accessible. He has full control and ownership of the school, and seems to put the needs of the school before his own comfort and needs. This is seen as noteworthy as this is not his own community.

Parents are very receptive to the needs of the school and make themselves available as well as visiting the school regularly. The school gets considerable support from the parents, who have contributed labour and funds for the extra buildings for the lower classes.

The school is not selective and takes in all learners in the community. Some of the learners come from as far as 9 km from the school, and have to come through a conservancy forest where elephants are common. The teachers report that these learners often arrive late for school but are not punished. However, corporal punishment, which was not observed on the visit, is apparently used for dealing with major violations of the school rules, such as fighting and being rude to teachers and other learners.

The school received N\$78 700 in 2015 as UPE grant in two tranches. The school management decided that 60% of this would be allocated to curriculum support. This helps ensure that all learners have a textbook for every subject (except where the new curriculum textbooks are yet to be delivered), as well as some stationery and mathematics instruments. The parents are given accounts for the money received and clear accounts, which they appreciate, and which helps the parents feel that the principal is being open and that the financial management is good. They were told about the purchase of the photocopier and other resources. The principal presents trends of expenditure to the School Board before it goes to all parents.

All agree that the school is inadequately resourced (scoring it at ‘1’ indicating ‘inadequately resourced’), and is managing even without adequate classrooms, and with squirrels in the roof of the Grade 0 class, and with no administration and staff block and kitchen with a storeroom. The staff asserted that, “*The financial resources are well managed – better than in other schools. We have two photocopiers bought by the school and all the learners have more than enough textbooks.*” The parents argued that the school needs a hostel for the learners who walk long distances to get to school, facing problems with elephants and floods.

The school has a mentorship scheme for new and novice teachers (teachers of less than 5 years seniority). CPD is provided through the mentors as well as orientation.

The school has a system of study periods from Monday to Thursday each week, between 15h00 and 16h00. Teachers who need to give remedial lessons conduct these (called “compensatory teaching”) during the study period, and the learners are expected to do their homework in groups and pairs during the study period. Homework is usually given daily for all lessons – although this is up to the individual teacher – and is monitored. Both homework is marked, as is classwork which most teachers check and mark in the lessons. This is possible because the classes are relatively small.

The school also has a target-setting system, which starts with each learner setting themselves a target for each subject. The teachers then set their own targets for the year based on the learner targets, and then the school has its own target – which is to improve its performance from 75%

to 80% in Grade 7. The teachers said, “*We set targets at school level; we aim to beat the regional and national targets. We expect learners to do well so our school target is set 10% higher than the regional target. Girls are doing well; in fact all the best learners are girls. If learners don’t achieve 75% from the start of the year, we find ways to encourage them. We identify slow learners and focus on them in remedial study time.*” These targets are shared with parents in parents’ meetings. These meetings also allow for analysing the performance of each teacher and class. Tests are set for each subject at a minimum of two per month. The results from these tests are pasted up on the notice-board, with the aim of encouraging competition among the learners, and encouraging boys especially to compete when they see that generally the girls are doing better than them.

The success of the school is attributed to:

- the teaching team – cooperation between members of staff is strong;
- parental involvement and support;
- structured study time and compensatory lessons in the afternoon;
- the principal encouraging staff to improve their qualifications;
- the principal teaching over his allocated number of lessons as a model of commitment;
- a competitive environment among teachers, which is created through the system of targets and regular review meetings;
- belief that the school is privileged as it has water and electricity and is near town – which creates a sense of confidence and a feeling of being lucky to be teaching at this school;
- setting competitions within the three-school cluster to which the school belongs;
- the quality of the teachers – all being qualified and having upgraded and having considerable experience;
- learners being disciplined – helped by the fact that the school ends at Grade 7; and
- small class sizes and a low learner-teacher ratio.

The school plans to improve its performance even more by:

- holding an annual school community performance review which focuses everyone on the need to improve performance;
- increasing the school’s targets above those for the region and national pass rates;
- building the school cluster to set common tests and hold subject meetings; and
- planning teacher dialogues where the principal meets with each teacher and discusses their challenges – which, as the principal says, “*allows me to intervene quickly*”.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

The community is very engaged and supports the school. The parents seemed very well informed, and even knew about quite complex aspects of the school such as differing views among the school stakeholders on the appointment of the Grade 0 teacher. They also knew where the computers came from and who donated what. As mentioned, the community helped the school to build four classrooms.

The teachers asserted that the community is “*the third leg of the school pot*”, and that without the community the school would ‘tip over’. They reported that the parents assist the learners with homework. In return, the School Board members and parents rated the teachers and principal as excellent, and reported that their children praise their teachers.

Medical staff visit the school to sensitise the learners on issues such as HIV and female hygiene, and to vaccinate the learners and run programmes such as “My Future is My Choice”.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare has been engaging the school, to advise on how the grants for orphans are used and to ensure that such grants are spent on school uniforms, which is what is intended when this money is allocated. However, the teachers argue that the community is not very positive about the staff and keep questioning whether the staff complement can achieve what they need to do at the start of each year, but later in the year come round to seeing that the school is again performing well.

The community values the school’s cleanliness and learners having hygienic practices. The community members interviewed were upset at the lack of toilets and the state of those which the school has, as well as the need to get rid of the bats in the main buildings. The community members indicated that they would like to see their school extended to Grade 8 so that learners are able to stay at the school as the distances to the closest secondary schools are prohibitive.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The principal was cited regularly as the main reason for the school performing well. The period of success for the school largely coincides with the present principal’s time at the school. The main characteristics of the principal which seem to be helping the school to perform are that he is energetic while allowing his staff to make professional decisions without micro-managing them. As one of the teachers said, “*He trusts that we know what we are doing and he listens.*” Another said, “*He has a laissez faire approach.*” He has also managed to get the school focused on high performance. Most funds that the school receives are allocated to curriculum delivery, and the teachers and principal have high expectations of all the learners. The principal has also managed to bring the community into the school.

The engagement of the community seems to be a critical factor in the success of the school, with the teachers acknowledging that the community, while suspicious of their abilities to offer their children a high-quality education, acknowledge their success and support. This support has been manifested in the building of classrooms.

The average class size is 27, which is well below the national norm for primary schools. This means that the teachers can provide learners with individual attention and mark class work and homework regularly. The learners also have enough textbooks and other resources.

Extra lessons and structured study time of the sort that this school provides, along with teacher commitment to run them, is often more a feature of schools catering for post-Grade 7 classes. Its replication in this primary school is symptomatic of the school’s and the teachers’ focus on academic success. The compensatory lessons are only possible because the teachers are committed and all are accommodated on the school site.

Although target setting is national policy, the way that this school has adopted it and taken ownership of the targets, setting them at every level in the school with full participation of the learners and teachers, again indicates commitment to academic success.

## School B

### Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 10 Maths, Grade 8 English and a Grade 2 language lesson. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with a male senior teacher in place of the principal who was absent, 5 teachers (3 male, 2 female), 6 learners in senior grades, 8 parents (3 male, 5 female) and 3 School Board members (all female). The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed (with some trouble) during the visit.

### Details of the school

Number of learners	300 (Grades 0-10)
Number of teachers	15
Percentage of teachers qualified	73%
Learner-teacher ratio	20

This school is situated 100 m from a new tarred road, about 80 km west of Katima Mulilo. The community depends mainly on subsistence farming with selling of vegetables, livestock and surplus crops, and fishing. To earn money, local people cut poles, grass and reeds, and work on road construction, and some commute to town and work as shop assistants. The teachers and the School Board classified the community as “*very poor*”, with many households headed by children, single mothers and elderly people.

The community members face challenges paying for school uniforms, books and toiletries, and the teachers said that the biggest problem they face with learners is a lack of cleanliness. Some learners need to travel long distances to get to school – 4 km being the longest distance.

The school has two lines of plastered and painted brick classrooms, with a total of 10 classrooms. Only the Grade 5 class is situated away from these classrooms, in a dilapidated mud-clay thatched building with no windows. Most of the brick classrooms are in a reasonable condition. In some the cement floor is pitted, but in others the cement has been replaced with tiles. There are also some broken windows. Overall the school environment is not very attractive, being sandy with no flowers, but there are a number of mature trees and bushes.

The classrooms have adequate desks and chairs and are far from overcrowded, except in the senior grades where the rooms are full but not overcrowded. There were teaching aids on the classrooms walls, but few classrooms lock. All classrooms have metal chalkboards which are in good condition.

The staff room, office and principal’s and head of department’s offices are all in long storerooms situated between the classrooms. These are not suitable for the use to which they are being put. Many of them have multiple purposes – for example the school office also houses the library,

which consequently is fairly inaccessible and under-utilised. All classrooms and storerooms and the teachers' houses have mains electricity and access to piped water. The school has only two computers, which are in the administrative offices and thus safe but not accessible to the learners and teachers.

The school has a sliding gate, but the fencing has broken away from the front of the school. The children report that they feel safe and the school has a night watchman. Beyond the broken fence, the school has a football field. There are no other sports fields. There are 10 toilet stands, of which half are reserved for staff. The learner toilets are not allocated by gender and are not accessible by disabled learners. The learner toilets are in a reasonable state, with toilet seats intact but not entirely clean. The school has no facilities for menstruating girls.

The staff complement of 15 (7 females and 8 males) is supplemented with a cleaner and an administrative officer. Three of the staff (all female) have only 'O' level and no formal teacher training, but they are all studying for their diploma. One teacher has a qualification in ECD and is doing her full teaching diploma. Two of the male teachers have degrees. All but one reside in the school compound, while the final teacher stays in the local village. They live in traditional mud-clay thatched houses scattered along the perimeter of the school.

The school has 300 learners and a very positive learner teacher ratio of 20, which allows for small classes and individual attention to learners. Some of the class groups are as small as 13 and 16 (Grade 6 and Grades 4 and 7 respectively). Most of the learners are in junior secondary grades, with a total of 126 in Grades 8, 9 and 10, averaging 42 learners per class. In 2016 there are 83 learners repeating a grade, with the highest numbers repeating Grade 1 (9), Grade 3 (15) Grade 5 (12), Grade 8 (13) and Grade 9 (10). The school has a large number of orphans – 25% of the learners. It has a low dropout rate – only 5 in 2015. The school did not have many new learners joining in the primary phase, but 39 learners joined at Grades 8, 9 and 10. Apparently some learners join this school in Grade 9 or 10 because of its reputation for preparing learners seriously for Grade 10 exams. One of the learners interviewed came into Grade 10 from another region. Most learners live with their parents or grandparents, except Grade 10s who are camping at the school in tents that their parents provided or staying in rooms offered in teachers' houses.

The language of learning and teaching is Silozi in Grades 0-3 and thereafter English, with a very limited amount of code switching; teachers tend to repeat in English if learners do not understand.

The school has been visited and supported by: nurses who administer vaccinations, encourage the boys to get circumcised, and give lessons on hygiene; UNICEF which donated a few school bags; the local councillor who motivated the learners to study hard; the Office of the Ombudsman who spoke to the learners about their rights; and the Regional Director of Education who visited at the start of 2015 to thank the learners for their 2014 results.

## **School performance history and present**

The school scored a JSC pass rate of 88% in 2014 and 84% in 2015, and some of the teachers have received regional awards for being the best teachers in their subjects. The school is acknowledged by the region and the community as being a high-performing school.



## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

Generally the quality of teaching was reasonable, with two of the three achieving in their lesson and one partially achieving. The teachers were well prepared with lesson plans, and one had printed handouts for the learners to use in an exercise. Lessons were structured and timed, but were far too teacher-centred to be effective. Although the desks were arranged in groups, there was no use of group work and only one teacher used pair work. The teachers tended to provide the answers to their own questions, rather than encouraging the learners to solve problems themselves. Chalkboards were used extensively in lessons and were generally used well. In the Grade 10 Maths class the learners were actively involved and clearly engaged with the task, which they found difficult but succeeded in mastering. This was not the case in a Grade 8 English lesson where the learners struggled to follow the teacher's detailed instructions, however they did the final exercise quite well. The Grade 2 learners were doing a handwriting lesson, in which the teacher used the exercise to put across a number of issues, and encouraged the learners.

All three teachers showed keenness and energy. All three were keen to be observed and were prepared.

The school has a full programme of study periods for all learners from Grades 6 to 10. There is an afternoon session at 15h00-17h00 and an evening session at 19h00-21h00. The afternoon session includes extra and compensatory lessons, which are used to cover the syllabus and to remediate if a lesson was not well received by the learners or where learners need specific assistance. The evening session is supervised rather than taught. In this session the learners are expected to do their homework. The Grade 10s also have lessons between 05h00 and 06h00. The teachers teach these morning lessons in turn, and teach the whole grade. The aim with Grade 10s is to complete the syllabi by the end of the second term, in line with regional policy. Later in the year these lessons will be used for revision and for going over old exam papers. The Grade 10s also have a timetable of lessons in the early morning, afternoon and evening of Saturday and Sunday. These lessons are normally taught by a single teacher who remains at the school for that weekend; the teachers revolve this responsibility. The school also has structured timetables for holiday lessons. As one Grade 10 teacher said, *"The staff is highly motivated; we are not forced [to give these extra lessons]. Few other schools do this amount of extra work."*

The school also sets performance targets at learner, teacher and school levels. These are set by the individual and monitored. Collectively these personal targets are meant to enable the school to achieve its target, which exceeds the regional target of a pass rate of 65% at JSC. These targets were mentioned by all the stakeholders interviewed, including the learners and parents. It seems that they are taken very seriously.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The principal was appointed recently. The previous principal was said to have been autocratic, which led to staff rating his leadership skills between 'good' and 'poor'. However, although all acknowledged he was autocratic, one teacher argued that *"this is why we perform so well"*. The school has one HoD, who is male, and is interviewing for a second. It also has three senior teachers, two of whom are female.

The senior management team puts the success of the school down to the commitment of the teachers, and particularly identify as a key strength the fact that teachers take the initiative (e.g. over the Grade 10 camp) and don't wait for management direction. They also attributed the school's success to parental involvement, the learners setting targets, teacher accountability, lesson observations, and the weekly review of the tests and exercises given by each teacher – the latter being in line with regional policy.

The school funds do not fully cover the school's needs, which all stakeholders claim is 'under-resourced'. Further the teachers complained that the school grant is spent mainly on items which advantage the administration and not the teaching process. The result, according to one teacher, is that the Grade 10s, a class of 45, have just 10 textbooks for Geography and 12 for History.

The management believe that "*all learners can succeed*". This belief starts as learners enter the school, as one of the teachers explained: "*In Grade 1 we have a very structured school readiness programme. By the end of six weeks all the kids can read and write.*" Learner absenteeism is common in the lower grades and uncommon in the higher grades.

The management team also has considerable faith in the teachers and praised the way that the teachers cooperate in their planning, scheming and sharing of materials. It is symptomatic of the way the school works that there is no test timetable, and the managers stated that such was not needed as the setting of tests is based on the individual teacher's professional judgement. The teachers agreed and clearly welcome not being strait-jacketed into setting tests for the sake of meeting set criteria. As the teachers asserted, "*The staff is highly motivated; we are not forced.*"

The CPD, as in other schools and described by the Regional Director, focuses on induction of new teachers, with a hierarchy of staff, including a designated mentor, appointed to run the induction. The school runs limited CPD workshops, and regional and cluster workshops and meetings are held. The regional workshops were criticised for being insensitive to individual teacher needs.

Management feel little need to control teacher absenteeism, although the teachers do sign in and out of school. Management and teachers agree that it is difficult for teachers to be absent given their proximity to the school, and as the HoD said, "*They can't just be absent; we follow up if they don't turn up.*"

The school does not use corporal punishment according to the learners and parents. Discipline is not a huge problem, but there is some abuse of alcohol by learners. When learners break the school rules, parents are called to meet with the principal.

The school generally feels under-supported by the Regional Office, although they recognise that as a successful school they are low on the priority list, but it was pointed out that they still need motivating and supporting to go on achieving good results.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

The community members are deeply involved in the school and are very committed. The school holds monthly meetings for the parents, which are for sharing information and making decisions.

The school also holds regular parents' meetings for the parents to review their children's work. The monthly meetings are not well attended, which may relate to their being too regular.

Parents have been encouraged to approach teachers if they are not happy with their children's progress or with an aspect of the teaching. This has led to such situations as a parent, after seeing that her child's homework and corrections had not been marked, came to the school to confront the teacher. The parent then realised that the whole class's work had not been marked. The teacher explained the circumstances and committed to marking the work – which was done.

The community's commitment is visible in the teachers' houses, which the community built.

The parents say that they are pleased with the teachers' work and that they respect the teachers, which is confirmed by the teachers. The community clearly respected the previous principal.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The main reason for the success of this school is the extended time on task brought about by the use of extended study time and early morning lessons, as well as the 'camp' for Grade 10 learners and the holiday classes. This also indicates two other strengths of the school: the commitment of the teachers and the decisions that the teachers and management make which are in the interests of the learners.

The study schedule is complemented by the structured approach being used to complete the syllabi and organise revision for the Grade 10 exams.

Among the most important reasons for the success of the school is staff collaboration, which is strong in the school. Alone this might not be particularly significant if teachers were not able and prepared to take the initiative and if learners were not committed and disciplined. These tendencies all came together in the week of the researchers' visit, when the teacher decided that all Grade 10 learners would camp in the school from the Sunday until the October exams, and the learners accepted this decision, which was supported by their parents who have to supply them with tents and supplies.

Parental support and involvement had already been in place for a few years. Close contact with teachers over their children's performance and the parental confidence in confronting teachers is an important element in the school's success.

The internalising of targets set at every level in the school has focused all parts of the school on performance, and has justified learners and teachers working long hours.

Finally, the school illustrates the saying that 'success breeds success'. The belief that the school is successful means that even when teachers dislike the methods of the principal, they knuckle down and do their work. They want to share in the school's success.

# School C

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 10 English, Grade 11 Maths and Grade 12 Biology. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with 4 teachers (2 male, 2 female), including the acting head teacher (who indicated that she is not a senior teacher), 6 learners in senior grades and 6 members of the parent and guardian community (2 male, 4 female), all of whom live in the local community. The principal was not interviewed as he was at a Regional Office meeting and had not made himself available. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	404 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	16
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	25.25

This secondary school is situated 60 km south-east of Ondangwa, the last 20 km of the road being gravel and in urgent need of grading. Being in the bush and far from any distractions, the school is a relatively isolated and conducive learning environment.

Most of the learners come from poor backgrounds. Many of their parents are subsistence farmers whose main crops are millet, sorghum and beans (with cash gained from selling poultry, pigs and goats especially), while other parents run cuca shops and rent out rooms. A minority of the parents are professionals – mainly teachers, police officers and nurses. The farmers have been under serious pressure as last year's crop largely failed. The parents reported that most of the learners lack electricity and running water at home, and only about 60% have a toilet in their home.

Only 25% of the children come from Oshikoto Region; the rest come from across the other 13 regions, with each region having a quota. Many of the parents struggle to pay school costs, which include buying the uniform and paying the hostel fee of N\$256 per term. The school buys the uniforms in bulk and then sells them on to the parents who can pay through a hire-purchase scheme. While waiting for the payment of the uniform fee the learners can wear the uniform of their previous school. The school works on peer pressure to get money for hostel fees and uniforms. Learners who cannot afford these are apparently allowed to remain in the school. Learners go home for one weekend per month, however quite often parents ask if the learner can stay in school as they cannot afford the bus fare for the learner to go home.

The school offers Grades 8-12. The distribution of learners is 70 in Grade 8, 89 in Grade 9, 34 in Grade 10, 82 in Grade 11 and 129 in Grade 12. The larger number in Grades 11 and 12 is related to

this 4-year-old school opening with only these grades and then expanding more recently. There are almost double the number of girls to boys in Grades 11 and 12, and in Grades 8-10 there are 57 boys and 136 girls. This is related to the hostel places, as all learners must be enrolled in the hostels and the school has two girls' hostels and one boys' hostel. A second boys' hostel is due to be built this year, and two more will be added in future – one for girls and one for boys. Only three learners were absent on the day of the visit – all were ill. The school has a sick bay which is a separate building, a small library which is not very well stocked, and science labs which are very well stocked with equipment, chemicals, benches, and water and gas taps. There is no computer room; the computers are stored in the school's storeroom. Apart from those used by the administration, there are 31 laptops, which were donated by Ernst & Young and by parents. Due to a lack of a computer teacher, the computer lessons were terminated. Pupils can access the computers if they wish. The school has two WiFi routers and there is WiFi access across the school. The school also has a tuck shop which is outsourced, and the operator pays part of the profit to the school.

The school is secure with two layers of fencing. The school and hostels are surrounded by a razor-wire fence, beyond which is a wire fence which surrounds the games fields. The school also has two security guards who are always on duty. All of the classroom and hostel doors lock, and the labs and admin block are secure. The learners say that they feel safe.

The school does not allow any repetition of grades, and the dropout rate is extremely low, at just one learner last year – a girl who left citing too much competitive peer pressure and moved to another public school. The school is somewhat selective in its enrolment, so learners clearly feel privileged to get a place, which may explain the low attrition rate. New learners can join the school at Grades 8, 9 and 11. This year 129 joined, most being in Grade 8 (70), 2 in Grade 9 and 57 in Grade 11. Twenty-five learners who completed Grade 10 in the school in 2015 got places for Grade 11.

The school is very modern and clean in appearance. The brick buildings, with zinc roofs, are painted various pastel shades. The classrooms are large and have tile or cement floors. There are adequate desks and chairs, and every classroom has a white board alongside the chalkboard. The walls were almost entirely devoid of any teaching aids, and so felt quite sterile although functional. The desks were generally arranged in three rows and then two rows facing inwards making a gate formation, and in the labs the desks were in groups. There are no overcrowded classrooms. There is a large staff room, referred to as the “*boardroom*”, with a boardroom table and cabinets. Almost every teacher has an office, and the principal and vice-principal have separate large offices in the administration block. The school is supplied by mains electricity and piped water. All classes, the admin block and hostels have electricity, and the hostels have hot water fed by solar power. Overall, while the buildings are attractive, the site is sandy with thorn bushes and a few trees. There are a few flower beds. The school has playing fields which are overgrown at the moment. The school offers PE, chess, volleyball, netball and soccer.

The toilets for teachers are in the admin block, and those for learners are in the main school and the hostels. The toilets are adequate in number and well maintained and functional. There is no facility for disabled learners and no changing room for girls. Girls are required to bring their sanitary pads to class, as well as toothbrushes, as they are not allowed to return to the hostel

during lessons. Only one learner is allowed out of the class at a time, and must carry with him/her the class's permission card which is held by the class captain. Each class has only one card, which ensures that learners visit the toilet singly. However, Grade 11 and 12 learners do leave class without the card.

The school has a complement of 16 teachers (8 women and 8 men), including the principal. All are qualified and 14 have degrees, one of whom is completing her Masters. All but three of the teachers are young – between 23 and 35. All were dressed very smartly, with the men wearing ties. All teachers wear a badge with their name on it. All reside on the school campus in flats or small houses which have a main room, kitchen and bedroom. The school has 20 support staff, including 12 hostel staff, 7 gardeners and cleaners, and a secretary. These staff members live off campus and come from the local community. On the day of the visit all the teachers were present except for the principal who was at the Regional Office. It was noted that teachers come to class even when ill.

The teachers and principal are highly respected in the community, and avoid drinking in the local shebeens or associating too closely with teachers from other schools. The parents say that the teachers are respected because they do well and are well behaved, and are always in school. The teachers say that the ethos of the school is such that they would find it difficult to do anything that embarrassed the school. No learner is allowed into a teacher's house.

## **School performance history and present**

The school prides itself on its very high pass rate. At Grade 10 level in the JSC the school has had a 100% pass rate ever since the first cohort sat in 2012. Learners are regularly given awards – so regularly that one of the teachers said, *“I think the regional awards are just for this school.”*

## **Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process**

Three lessons were observed: one each for Grades 10, 11 and 12, in English, Maths and Biology respectively. Two of the lessons were rated 'fully achieved' and one 'achieved'. The teachers were well prepared, and in two of the lessons started by making clear the objectives of the lesson. The teachers all used a similar style of teacher-centred learning. They were relaxed and kept up a learning conversation with the learners, using the board as a prop. Constant questions and pupil responses kept the learners engaged. All classes had textbooks and worksheets or printouts. One teacher used a laptop and data projector for his Maths lesson. Learners were fully engaged except in the Biology lesson in which the teacher's explanation of the dialysis machine was overly long. All lessons had some learner-learner talk. The teachers insisted on silence only when they were speaking.

The lessons were all at the correct intellectual level for the grade, and assumed considerable knowledge while also involving regular recaps of prior knowledge. Exercises were set in two of the lessons, and a small amount of homework was set in these same lessons.

Learners in all of the lessons asked questions and challenged the teacher. The teachers explained that mistakes are not discouraged, but rather are seen as learning points. The learners reported

that teachers are “gentle” with learners who make mistakes, and lessons often end up as debates with the teacher. The teachers seemed to enjoy this and clearly did not feel threatened or distracted by it in any way: there was clear evidence of mutual respect between teachers and learners. This respect is also evident in the smart attire of the teachers: as one teacher said, “*Teachers [in this school] are very neat – no dust! We are the models to our learners.*”

Uniquely, the teachers rarely have their own desk in the classroom. When the teachers were asked about this, they explained that they do not want to have the opportunity to sit down or mark during the lesson: as one teacher explained, the lack of a desk “*forces us to move around*” during the lesson and monitor the learners.

All school and hostel-based conversation is in English, and learners are punished if they speak their vernacular. Generally the learners’ English was confident and of a high standard.

Learners get up before 06h00. Lessons start at about 06h30 and end at 12h00. On two days a week they start with an assembly, and the other three days a form period in which the teacher inspects every learner and fills in a form to say that each learner is properly turned out, with the accepted hairstyle and clean nails. They also check that each learner has their calculator, pen, and toothbrush and paste.

From 12h00-12h40 is an extra period which teachers can use to catch up and for tests. Tests are not allowed during normal class time. Lunch is provided after this lesson until 14h00, during which time teachers make themselves available to meet with learners who need specific assistance with their studies. From 14h00-16h30 the learners are meant to rest – this being compulsory for Grade 8s and advised for other learners. After dinner, from 18h00-20h00, the learners attend compulsory lessons or “mission (study) time”, and from 20h00-20h30 they must watch the NBC evening news; missing the news is an offence. The second mission time, from 20h30-21h30, is used for doing homework in the classrooms. The learners can then go to bed, but many stay on in the classrooms, and it is quite normal for learners to take advantage of the “extra mission time” in the hall from 22h00-04h30, with the security guards checking on them. Except when giving extra lessons or advising learners, teachers do not supervise these mission periods, since, as one teacher said, “*It is not part of our culture to monitor kids.*” The learners are encouraged to discipline themselves and commit to these long hours of study. Teachers report that the desire to compete and the fear of coming in the bottom three in their class keeps learners motivated and working these long hours. If they come in the bottom three in end-of-term tests, they have to call their parents for consultation with the school.

On weekends teachers hold extra lessons by prior arrangement with the learners. Homework set on Friday must be presented on Sunday before mission time, which is also held on Sunday. On Friday and Saturday mission time is optional. Teachers report that they always see learners working in the classrooms on the weekends. Learners who are struggling are counselled by teachers, which often involves teachers advising them to drop sports and other extramural activities until their academic performance improves.

The school assumes that every learner can and will succeed academically. There is a general ethos of high performance across the school. Each learner is expected to score 70% or above.

Below 70% is considered a school fail. Learners who score below 70% three times have to call their parents in for consultation. This leads learners to compete with each other to avoid being in the lowest three in the class and to earn an award. Teachers also compete with each other, since, as one teacher pointed out, in the annual review of results (which occurred in the week prior to the visit), no teacher wants to have their learners amongst those who scored a C when other teachers' learners scored an A or B. He said that they are not embarrassed in the meeting, but "*I am judging myself*". As a result, absenteeism of teachers and learners is almost unheard of in this school; in fact teachers reported that they teach even when ill.

The learners report that group work is rarely used, and only one of the classes observed had learners grouped, although only one activity in this lesson involved the learners in each group working on a problem together. Learners are given research tasks in some subjects, and when this happens they use the library or draw evidence from the environment (such as examining grasshoppers for Life Science). Grade 10s do a market-research project every year in the school and the local community.

The learners are given homework daily, but teachers report that learners often find the burden of homework too much. However, teachers report that when the learners complain of this to the principal, he supports the teachers. Teachers generally mark and provide feedback to learners in the form of class discussion. Learners report that revision for exams is focused mainly on specific challenging topics, and, "*A day before the exam the teachers ask us if we have any questions related to that exam.*" The school stops conducting normal lessons at least three days before exam periods so that the learners can revise.

When learners are ill or absent, the teachers and fellow learners help them catch up. If teachers are absent, they leave work for the learners, often with the support staff. The learners report that they are not supervised, since "*teachers trust us as we are committed*". This trust is illustrated in part by the lack of school bells at the end of each lesson. There is a clock in every classroom and in the toilets and showers, and learners are in charge of determining when to move lessons based on the times on the timetable. The teachers explained that this is to build up learners' sense of time and self-management. Equally, the learners are encouraged to ask questions, challenge teachers and be open, or as one teacher put it, "*The kids must be able to ask any question; they mustn't fear the teacher.*"

Tests are not timetabled: teachers decide when they want to set tests, but they are not allowed to conduct tests during in class time; they must be conducted during the early-afternoon extra lesson. The results of assessments have to be shown to the principal for quality assurance.

Learners form their own study groups, and when teachers come across a struggling learner they sometimes ask particular study groups to adopt this learner and assist him/her. The trust expressed in learners is also illustrated by the lack of any form of corporal punishment and the relatively relaxed relations between staff and learners.

The learners are allowed to choose their own subjects for Grades 10 and 12. The parents report that they were involved in helping their children to do this. Overall, girls are expected to achieve in all subjects, and there was no report of discrimination.



The teachers plan either individually or in groups with other teachers in the school and with colleagues in neighbouring schools. The teachers report a high level of collaboration and feel that they are well supported.

The teachers said that the school is lacking an adequate number of textbooks in some grades, especially for Oshindonga, Biology, Agriculture, English and History, with three or more learners sharing a book in some classes. The teachers get around this by photocopying the books and by handing out worksheets and supplementary materials. The learners agreed and pointed out that textbooks are in short supply for many subjects at both lower and higher levels. The library is not well stocked and is not available to learners during class time. Some learners buy their own books, but few learners can afford this. The learners report that teachers encourage them to use varied sources for information and not rely on the textbooks alone. The learners pointed out that the school's computers, if managed effectively, could give them access to more information.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The school lost its only HoD at the end of last year and has yet to appoint a new one. Senior teachers are there in name only, and have authority only if they are in a large department. When the principal is absent he nominates any member of staff to act as principal. This is a revolving responsibility and can fall on any teacher's shoulders. Interestingly the acting principal is treated with a lot of respect.

The principal is clearly respected by his teachers. They say that he leads by example, being an "*exemplary teacher*" who is happy for other teachers to sit in on his lessons. They say he is often found in the learner hostels and in classrooms, and is respected and liked by the learners.

The teachers say that the principal is such a good manager (they and the parents awarded him a '4' indicating 'excellent leader') that the school runs perfectly without him being physically present. They report that he is a workaholic and can often be found in the school in the early hours of the morning and at any time on weekends. They say that he is quite humble, and if he sees that something needs doing in the gardens or kitchen, he is liable to get his hands dirty doing it himself. He has refused promotion to inspector as he "*would miss the pupils*".

When questioned as to why the principal tried to prevent the research being conducted in the school, the teachers explained that, "*We are suspicious of visitors, as we don't want other schools to learn the secrets of our success.*" They also stated that the short notice and the fact that the principal was going to be away on the day of the visit played a part in his resistance to the visit.

The principal undertakes lesson observation and does so with no warning: the teachers report that they arrive for the lesson and find the principal already sitting at the back of the room. He uses a tool sometimes or makes a few notes in his diary, and then calls the teacher to meet with him for conferencing on the lesson later. There is no policy or tradition of teachers doing peer reviews of each other's lessons, but they report that if they want to sit in on another teacher's lesson, no one objects. During induction the new teacher spends a week observing the other teachers to absorb the ethos and standards of the school.

The staff rate the school as ‘adequately resourced’, whereas the parents report that it is ‘poorly resourced’. However, the available resources are marshalled behind teaching and learning. So, for instance, when the school received an award of N\$50 000, it was spent on white boards in all of the classrooms.

CPD is focused mainly on induction of new teachers, this being a well-structured week-long process, involving orientation to the school and its high-performing ethos through spending time in the classrooms and being trained by the principal. However, internal CPD sessions are conducted mainly by the principal who sometimes makes presentations on new circulars and policy changes. Every teacher has a staff-development file, and they consider themselves to be very knowledgeable on policy issues. As the nearest Teachers’ Resource Centre is some 120 km away, they do not have that as an available resource. The principal encourages teachers to advance their qualifications. At present one teacher is on leave doing her Masters in the USA and will come back to her job, and another had been given time off to do her Masters.

Admissions are conducted through learners applying to join in Grade 8 or 11. They did not have to do an entry test. Some learners apply but are not admitted “*due to limited hostel space*”. The learners say that their parents chose the school even if they live in the south, because it is considered to be a good school and one which selects learners on the basis of a fair assessment of the learner, although it does prioritise learners who have attended public schools and not private ones. The teachers say that the school takes learners who have a history of performing well, but also some who are not high performers – particularly girls as there is more hostel space for them.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

All of the stakeholders reported that the parents and the local community are supportive of the school, and are impressed with its performance and the dedication of the staff.

Parents and guardians are called once per term in Terms 1 and 2 to review their children’s work. Many parents attend. If they cannot attend this review because they live far away, they are allowed to nominate a representative to attend. The parents can come into the school to talk to the teachers, and can even observe lessons and review their children’s books if they wish.

The school has no professional support staff, but there are 20 administrative and institutional support staff, working mainly in the hostels. This provides local people with employment.

The teachers regard the Regional Office as supportive, and noted that the office assists with paper, books, mending the copier and other maintenance issues, in addition to running workshops and assisting teachers professionally. They added that they would love it if the Regional Office could be better funded so that it could offer more support. Senior regional staff visit the school to motivate learners and to give out awards. The teachers believe that the Regional Office wants to assist the school to become the best in the country. The inspector visits about three times per year – only once for proper inspection. In addition, a former teacher who is now in a senior position in government, visits the school whenever he is in the north to motivate the learners, and representatives of the University of Namibia visit to provide career guidance.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services visits occasionally to talk about HIV/AIDS, the dangers of tobacco and other health issues.

## Analysis of why the school is successful

The main reason for the school's high performance is said to be its ability to select its learners. However, once selected, there are a number of things that the school does which maximises its impact on the learners. These include the unusually strong school ethos of high performance with a strong focus on academic excellence: the teachers and learners want to be the best. For this honour they internalise competition and strive to be the best that they can be. This ethos is necessarily supported by the teachers and principal acting as a united and committed team. They share ideas, and because they all live on site, they spend a lot of time together.

Perhaps the most important element in the school's success is its leader. The school's vision and ethos are led by a competent leader who acts as a powerful role model. New teachers are inducted and exposed to that ethos in a carefully choreographed process. His energy, which staff constantly alluded to the interview, with comments such as "*when does he see his wife?*", is complemented by a staff who are generally young and energetic with a strong sense of purpose and determination to do well.

The commitment and energy of the staff are rewarded with learner commitment. As one teacher said, "*The kids are motivated; they believe in themselves and know what they want to be in life.*" The learners are all staying in hostels on site, and so can be acculturated to the ethos of hard work. The trust that the teachers place in the learners is unusual and must play a key part in the success of the school. The schedule of extra lessons and mission time means that there is considerable extra time on task. The time on task is not used to cram learners, but rather to allow them more time to engage with the contents of the curriculum, think for themselves and solve problems. Finally, the school benefits by the active support of the learners' parents.

# School D

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 10 English, Grade 7 Maths and Grade 3 Maths. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 2 HoDs, 5 teachers, 3 female parents and 6 learners. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	467 (Grades 1-10)
Number of teachers	24
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	19.45

This combined school is 20 km south-east of Ondangwa, in a village just off the Ondangwa-Tsumeb road. The learners come from the surrounding community, which is poor and dependent on pensions and subsistence agriculture. Most of the learners live with their grandparents and a few live on their own. A survey of the homes that the learners come from, conducted in 2011, found that these households drew their incomes from government grants and pensions, and the selling of poultry, goats, fish, baskets and traditional brandy. There is no local market, so selling agricultural products is not easy. A few parents own cuca shops and a very small number are police officers, soldiers, teachers and nurses. Almost none of the community members have electricity; only a few have access to clean water; and almost none have access to toilet facilities. The nearest health facility is distant at 7 km.

The school has 467 learners (excluding the Grade 0s) across 10 grades. The largest enrolment is in Grades 8 and 9 with 58 and 63 learners respectively, while all the more junior grades have 50 or fewer learners. Grade 10 has 48 learners. As the school has 24 teachers and 17 classrooms, many of the larger grades are split into two class groups, these being Grades 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9, while Grade 10 is split into three groups. This makes for manageable class sizes. The teachers and principal report that learner attendance is very good, particularly in the higher grades, even in respect of extra lessons. As one teacher said, *“We can go a whole year with no absentees in Grade 10.”*

The school is old and most of its infrastructure is in poor shape. Although all of the classrooms are made of plastered brick under zinc, many are in a dangerous state of disrepair, with ceilings falling in, and large cracks in the walls and plaster coming off the walls. Most of the windows are broken and the floors are uneven and cracked. The school yard is sandy with a few mature trees but no flowers. The school has an administration block with a principal’s office and staff room. It has a poorly stocked library in an old classroom which is also used for storing new textbooks, but there is no laboratory, computer room or kitchen. There is a mains electricity supply to half

of the school buildings including the admin block and the newer classrooms. It has piped clean water on site and 10 toilet stands for the learners (5 for girls), which are in a reasonable state, but do not cater for disabled learners. There are no facilities for menstruating girls. There are only three working computers (the one in the principal's office is non-functional). The two in the library are occasionally used by senior learners as part of Basic Information Science, but the teachers explained that it is pointless trying to teach 30 learners with two computers. The school has access to an open area with goal posts which is used for sports; it does not belong to the school.

The school has a fence but it is broken in places. Although most classrooms do not lock and only a few rooms have steel doors and thin bars over the windows, the respondents all stated that security is not an issue at the school.

The school has enough desks and chairs, but many are damaged and some are not the correct size for the age level. Generally the classrooms are not conducive to learning; there are few teaching aids on the walls, mainly commercial. Each classroom has a metal chalkboard which is in reasonable condition. Even in Grade 3 with 43 learners in one class, the classroom has enough room for the learners and teacher to move around, and most classes have fewer than 25 learners. The desks were arranged in pairs or singly; group work was used in only one lesson where the teacher got the learners to rearrange the desks for the group work.

The school has a large number of orphans. In total 76 learners are repeating, with the highest number of repeaters in Grades 1, 4, 8 and 9. The principal is particularly concerned that the learners in these grades have the foundation they need for the subsequent grades, hence the repetition rates. Fifteen learners left the school in 2015, with 3 moving to private schools and 5 to other public schools, and 4 completely dropping out – 3 due to illness or injury. The school was joined by 54 learners at the start of 2016, with most arriving in Grade 1 (12), Grade 2 (9), Grade 5 (8) and Grade 8 (8).

Apart from the 24 teachers (6 male and 18 female), all of whom are qualified, the school has three support staff, one being an administrative officer and two being cleaners/gardeners. The school has no professional support staff. None of the teachers live on the school premises as there are no school houses, but seven live in the local community, and most of the others live in Ondangwa. The teachers' attendance was also said to be very good, with very low levels of absenteeism.

## **School performance history and present**

Between 2010 and 2014 the school scored a consistent 100% in JSC. This dropped to 98.2% in 2015 as one learner failed JSC. However, prior to the present principal arriving at the school in late 2009, the school was performing poorly – the 2009 pass rate was a mere 38%.

The school conducts extensive analysis of its results, per subject and per teacher. Overall, of the 56 learners who sat the JSC in 2015, 31 scored an A symbol in Agriculture, 27 in Geography, 25 in Physical Science, 21 in Maths and 20 in Life Science. However, the school had no A grades in English, and under a third of the cohort scored an A to C grade in that subject, while 96.4%

scored A to C grades in Physical Science and 93% in Agriculture. It is interesting to note that the principal teaches Agriculture to Grade 10s. The poor school performance in English was of particular concern to the principal, as the pattern of this key subject pulling down the school's overall performance has been continuing for some years. One reaction to this in the school is to have a policy of speaking only English, as learners have little or no contact with English outside school.

In internal exams it is interesting to note that the school gives very few learners A grades. It seems that even from Grade 1, learners are taught that high grades are earned through hard work.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The teachers observed were proficient, and two scored 'achieved' and one 'fully achieved'. Although only one of the teachers had a fully prepared lesson plan, the teachers all presented well-structured lessons and achieved their objectives. Few teaching resources were available or used during the lesson apart from printed worksheets, textbooks and a number chart. One teacher used group work, with the learners discussing a poem together – however much more could have been made of the group-work opportunity with learners taking more control of their learning.

School starts at 08h00 (later than most schools because some learners walk up to 9 km) and standard lessons end at 14h00. However, Grades 4-10 have study sessions from 14h20-15h50. The learners in Grades 4-7 are meant to do their homework during this time, while those in Grades 8-9 are given extra lessons during this time, and the Grade 10s do tests (on 3 subjects per day, covering all 9 subjects in a week) and receive extra lessons during this time on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The Grade 10 teachers say that this gives them a lot of marking as they are always setting tests, but as one said, "*There is always enough time to mark tests.*" The extra lessons for the senior classes often extend until after 18h00. Further, as from two weeks before the final exams and for a month over the exam period, the Grade 10s camp in the school. The family of each Grade 10 learner is required to provide N\$450 for food and the student exam card. Community members also supply extra flour and other necessities to ensure that the learners are not hungry while sitting the exams. On Saturday and Sunday the Grade 10s have lessons from 07h00-15h00, with each day reserved for a particular subject. The Regional Office noted that this school had pioneered weekend lessons in the region under the present principal.

Homework for the upper grades is set in every day's lesson in a subject, while the lower grades should have five homework tasks a week. Homework is normally checked and marked.

Teachers generally collaborate in their scheming in the cluster – this school being a cluster centre – and if the department has more than one teacher teaching a grade, they also plan lessons together and share materials. When a teacher is absent, which happens rarely, another teacher will take the period and use it for an extra lesson.

Study periods and lessons when the teacher is absent are not supervised. The learners say that this is because "*the teachers believe that we are grown up and committed*". Further they said,

*“We are considered as their own children and they treat us with respect. Last year a girl failed the exam, so she didn’t want to come to the school anymore, so one of the teachers went to her house and persuaded her to come back to school. She is now in Grade 11 having scored 32 points.”* The learners and principal report that the teachers are very supportive of learners, and the teachers report that when they find a learner struggling with a headache or tiredness in the early morning lessons because of hunger, they share their food with that learner. The learners appreciate this attitude and the trust placed in them. The learners report feeling that they have a good relationship with their teachers, and they are confident enough with their teachers to ask questions, to which teachers respond well.

The school lacks adequate numbers of textbooks in a number of subjects and grades. Some classes completely lack anything but the teacher’s copy of a textbook, so a considerable amount of photocopying is done to ensure that the learners have sufficient access to the texts. The learners feel that their access to textbooks is adequate. The Entrepreneurship teacher stated that the textbook is so poor for Grade 9 that she refuses to use it, and the region has developed its own booklet, while the Physical Science teacher reported that he does not have full class sets of textbooks as he wants the learners to access various books and not get stuck using a single book. The library is inadequate to assist the teachers in their lesson preparations, so they use the Rössing Foundation resource centre in Ondangwa and their cell phones to access the internet.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

The school has two HoDs and a number of ‘shadow’ HoDs. However, while these managers are credited with being democratic and good managers, it is clear from all respondents that it is the principal who has set the tone and example for the school. All respondents, including the learners and parents, rated him as an excellent leader. He is admired for his work ethic, role-modelling and sheer visibility. He teaches more than the standard number of lessons for a principal, and is involved in the after-school lessons. The teachers also stated that, *“He gives us freedom to do what is best for the learners; we are not told what to do – he treats us like professionals.”* They went on to say that he is open and free as a manager, and will listen to any idea with understanding, *“as long as it is about the success of the school”*.

The managers are accessible and the general tone of the school is focused on continuous improvement, with a particular focus now on improving the number of A and B grades at JSC, and on maximising the overall learning experience in the school. This involves an increasing focus on the lower grades where bottlenecks have appeared. The principal recognises that most of the upper-grade teachers are young and energetic, whereas the lower-grade teachers are older and were in the school when he arrived, and he is determined to improve the learning in the lower grades. He also splits grades where he can and where he is concerned about the impact of a teacher, and also makes sure that no learners have weak teachers for two years in a row. Deployment of his staff is key to his strategy, and he focuses on appointment of teachers, with considerable involvement of the school community in the selection of new teachers. This helps to ensure that the school gets only good teachers.

The management uses targets set at all levels in the school – from learners to teachers to the school as a whole – to motivate learners and staff and to drive the school’s quality-assurance

process. The school is no longer focused on percentage pass rates, but rather aims to have all learners scoring a C symbol or higher in all subjects. The parents and teachers say that the school has high expectations of the learners. These expectations are communicated to the learners when results are pasted on the classroom walls and at morning assembly, and to parents at meetings, with the result that, as one teacher put it, *“Everybody wants to be the best.”*

The results from the previous year are used in the following year diagnostically to set new targets and as the basis for strategic planning. This was done in January – a week prior to the visit. The teachers were particularly unhappy about the 98% pass rate last year. As one teacher said, *“We are not happy; this is not our level of academic achievement,”* followed by another teacher stating, *“We are in a village but in the top 10 [schools] in the country – that is significant. We are not here to fail ... What a learner in Windhoek can do, they [the learners in this school] can do ... Schools with resources fail their learners.”* A third teacher added, *“Our learners are from a rural area. The only possible way when you are teaching is to talk to them. You let them understand; you respect and value them to promote self-esteem in the learners.”* In his interview the principal expanded on this view, saying, *“We take everyone from everywhere even if they are failing in another school. We boast that we get slow learners and get them to pass.”* In the strategic planning they consider why certain learners did not do well, and for the future consider how to remediate struggling learners through changes in the teaching approach to seating arrangements.

The school has a mentoring process for new teachers, which is not set, but is determined by the needs of the new teacher and starts with the new teacher spending the first week or two absorbing the culture of the school by observing lessons. The mentor, who is an experienced teacher, then sets the induction process with the new teacher. The length and inclusion in this process is determined by the needs of the new teacher. CPD is conducted in the school on Thursday afternoons. This involves discussing matters of importance. This augments the limited and patchy training that the teachers and principal say they get from the Regional Office. They agreed that the regional training is never allocated enough time to be effective.

The principal mentioned that the school has no Learner Representative Council (LRC), because they trust the children and do not need an LRC to keep them in order. He argued that the class captain system – based on elected members of each class – is a more democratic and useful system, and is strong enough to ensure sound communications between the educators and the learners. For the same reason the school does not use corporal punishment.

The limited funds that the school receives are all from the UPE and USE grants. The USE grant amount has yet to be set, so the school is dependent on its UPE grant, which was just below N\$200 000 in 2015. The staff say that the funds are used as effectively as possible to improve the teaching and learning in the school, such that the school is never short of paper or cartridges for the photocopier. The result is that other areas such as sport are starved of funds, and leads, as one teacher put it, to the learners asking, *“What is a javelin?”* or *“What is a shot-put?”*

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

The community members reported that the community respects the principal and teachers (whom they rated as ‘excellent’), and that they are accessible as they are always at school. This



is the basis for good cooperation by all school stakeholders. They also said that the principal works well with the community and follows up when learners fail to attend school. The school communicates with the parents as to how they can assist their children, and if a child is failing, the parents/guardian are called in together with the child to meet the teachers to discuss how best to assist the child. Parents are given free access to the teachers should they wish to use it, and the parents interviewed could provide examples of when they had done so. For example, one parent who had looked at her granddaughter's exercise book saw that she had been doing badly in Entrepreneurship, so she came in to see the teacher to discuss how the child could improve.

All stakeholders agreed that the parents appreciate the school and support it under this principal, not least because the parents see that the school is succeeding and that the teachers are always at school and are committed.

Parents' meetings are held termly and involve information sharing as well as engagement between the teachers and parents as regards their children's work. Everyone reported that attendance at these meetings, which prior to 2009 was very low, has become extremely good, especially for parents of learners in the higher grades. The principal and circuit inspector for the school believe that the parents and community want to be associated with the success of the school. At the parents' meetings the school checks off the names of the learners as the parents come in, and generally have found that *"less than 10 parents are missing – it is awesome"*.

The school feels under-supported by the Regional Office, although it accepts that the office has limited resources. The school is most irritated by the slow pace of response for sorting out its building and resourcing problems.

The school has little engagement with other line ministries apart from Health and Social Services, which provides sessions on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and vaccinates the learners.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The school's success is exactly linked in time with the arrival of the present principal. It is his leadership which everyone agrees has made the school what it is.

The school is successful in spite of the poverty of the local community and the school's physical conditions and infrastructure which are very poor.

There is a culture in the school of continuous professional development (CPD) and continuous improvement with a focus on how to improve the quality of education that the learners receive. This is combined with an assumption that every learner can succeed and that any child from the village *"can perform the same as any child from Windhoek"*. The school prides itself on comparing its results with the best in the country and not the region – including private schools.

There is general agreement that the principal, teachers, learners and parents are all highly committed and share a single vision for the school, and the teachers and learners are prepared to put in a lot of extra work to continue the school's success.

The upper phase in the school is dominated by young energetic teachers who are prepared to commit considerable time and energy to the task at hand. Their commitment is enhanced by the knowledge that any teachers who apply from this school for promotion get it, as other schools want to share in their success.

The school's extra-lesson schedule means that there is considerable time on task. This is used sensibly in order to avoid overtaxing individual teachers. This is supplemented by a heavy Grade 10 schedule of tests and mini-exams, and a focus even down to the primary grades on exam preparation and revision.

The learners report that the teachers treat them with respect, and trust them to take responsibility for their own learning.

The parental support, which is almost complete, is key. It seems that the parents want to be associated with the school's success.

# School E

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 10 English, Grade 10 Maths and Grade 9 Mother Tongue. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 4 parents (including 2 School Board members), 6 learners and 5 teachers. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	356 (Grades 8-11)
Number of teachers	18
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	19.8

This secondary school is situated south-east of Ondangwa in Oshikoto Region, about 30 km along the Ondangwa-Tsumeb highway, behind a small settlement strung along the main road. The school is reached along a hardly visible sand track. There are no signposts to it.

It serves a community which is dominated by subsistence farmers who grow millet and beans and keep small livestock and poultry, with some cattle. Drought has hit this community hard, with many of its cattle dying. Income is gained from pensions and selling liquor and baskets, and a few community members are employed. Almost all of the houses have no access to electricity or piped water, but some households headed by elders have toilets. There are a significant number of learners who stay in their family house alone while their parents work elsewhere. The school caters for 116 orphans, so there are also child-headed households. The nearest clinic is 6 km away.

The school environment is not very attractive, being very sandy with a group of Eucalyptus trees and some shrubs. New buildings, which were being constructed at the time of the visit, include classrooms, toilets and a teacher's house.

The school consists of three rows of old classrooms with a new row being built at the moment. All the classrooms are made of painted plastered brick under zinc with concrete or tiled floors. All the classrooms lock, although only one has bars over the window – this being the room used as a library and storeroom. Some of the concrete floors have crumbled, and some classrooms have serious cracks, but all windows are intact. The school is surrounded by a fence which is broken in places, but all respondents reported that the learners are safe in the school. The school has a staff room in an old classroom, and the principal's and secretary's office which is in a storeroom; there is no admin building. The school has no computer room or laboratory, but does have a poorly stocked library, a kitchen and a hall which is open with wood pillars holding up a zinc roof. All the buildings have electricity and the school has piped clean water. As it has

only three computers, learners never get to use a computer, but the Basic Information Science teachers expose them to what a computer is based on the library computer.

There are adequate chairs and desks for all learners, and they are the right size. All classrooms have visible metal chalkboards. There are almost no learning aids on the classroom walls and the classrooms are quite sterile. Only a few classrooms had the desks arranged in groups; most were in lines. The class sizes are generally quite small.

The school has 13 toilet units, of which 9 are reserved for girls and only 2 for boys and 2 for staff. New toilets are being built for the boys. The toilets are accessible by disabled learners and were clean. There is no provision for menstruating girls.

The school caters for Grades 8-11, although Grade 11 was introduced only in 2016. In the learner population, a small majority are girls. There are 90 Grade 8s, 110 Grade 9s, 72 Grade 10s and 84 Grade 11s. Each grade is divided into a number of classes, each with 20-30 learners, except in Grade 11 which has classes of 42. There is a large number of repeaters in Grade 8 (about half the grade), and about a third of the Grade 9s are repeaters or new learners at the school. No Grade 10s are repeaters and none are new in the school. It seems to be policy in this school (and School D) that new learners cannot join the school in Grade 10. The reason seems to be to preserve the integrity of the ethos created in Grades 8 and 9 among the new learners. The school had only 11 dropouts in 2015/16, half of whom stopped attending school entirely while three moved to another school and one got pregnant.

All 18 staff members are qualified, most having a professional diploma. The principal is pursuing a Masters degree and some of the other staff an Honours degree. The school has three support staff, including the secretary and two institutional workers, all three of whom are professionals. Two of the staff live on the school site, 12 in the community and 4 in Ondangwa.

## **School performance history and present**

The school has a history of attaining a 100% pass rate in Grade 10 JSC exams. In 2014 it scored 98%, but then rose again to 100% in 2015. Prior to the principal starting at the school in 2010, its pass rate was only 57%. It scored 84% in 2011, and 100% in 2012 and 2013. In 2012 it had the fifth-best results in the region, and ranked sixth in 2013, eighth in 2014 and seventh in 2015.

The school is not selective, and enrolment in the multiple classes in each grade is done arbitrarily.

## **Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process**

None of the lessons observed were particularly outstanding. All three teachers exhibited basic competence and knowledge of their subject, but failed to use any learner-centred methods, and 100% of all three lessons was spent with the teacher at the front asking questions and writing on the board, with the learners responding. Equally, none of the three teachers used any learning and teaching and support materials except printed handouts and textbooks. Only one of the teachers had a visible lesson plan, and none set the lesson objectives at the start, although all three teachers seemed to have a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve in the lesson.

Lessons in this school, as in various other schools visited, are linked to the afternoon study period. This encourages teachers to use a transmission mode in the lesson and then provide supporting written exercises for the afternoon session.

Lessons commence at 08h00 and stop at 13h45. Then there is a study period from 14h00-16h00, which is compulsory for learners in all grades. As learners live as far as 15 km from the school, these periods cannot go on any later. In these periods the learners do homework or tests, or receive extra lessons, with four or five staff members (including the principal) supervising each day. The pressure from teachers to access the Grade 10s during the study period has led to a timetable being developed for extra lessons, tests and mini-exams year-round. The school also organises extra lessons for Grade 10s and 11s on Saturdays and during holidays, and for Grade 10s even on Sundays. For these lessons all three Grade 10 classes are combined. These lessons start at 08h00 and end at 14h00. During these lessons, teachers apply for time for other extra lessons.

Grade 10s camp in the classrooms from a month before their exams and stay there throughout the exams, storing their mattresses in a storeroom. Local community members provide food and other necessities for the learners during this time. During the camp the learners are expected to wake up at 06h00 and to study from 08h00-13h00, then 14h00-16h00 and finally 18h00-22h00. Female teachers supervise them during the day and a male teacher at night – he sleeps in the library. The teachers report that the Grade 10s enjoy this ‘camp’.

The Grade 10 teachers aim to complete the syllabi by August. They are then set the standard mock exams and then a second mock to ensure that the learners are fully prepared.

Targets are set by the learners and teachers. The focus in 2016 is on quality, with the learners expected to aim for A, B and C symbols in all subjects. The parents and learners say that the school expects all learners to succeed, and has high expectations of all of them. The set targets are reinforced in the classroom and in assemblies. The school’s targets, once developed with the management, are shared with the parents through the School Board. Once the parents agree, the targets are put in place.

The school has a timetable for tests. The teachers report that this timetable sets a minimum of one test per subject every two weeks, and they generally set more tests than this minimum. The school has no timetable for homework. It is assumed that every lesson will lead to the setting of homework, but this is left to the individual teacher to determine.

The teachers report that they work strongly as a team, and they rank the level of collaboration among the school staff as ‘excellent’. They claim that they sometimes observe each other’s lessons, but it is much more common for the principal or HoD to observe them, and both use a clinical approach.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

The school has one HoD and a number of subject heads. The teachers ranked the management skills of the principal and the other managers as ‘excellent’, and the learners and parents ranked

the principal at the same level. There is general agreement that the principal's leadership has been critical to the school's performance. He sets an example that the others follow by being an exemplary teacher with high-level results – *“as I am a role model and motivator”* – always being at the school playing a role, including liaising with the community and intervening in cases of indiscipline. The teachers describe the management style of the management team as *“democratic”*. As one teacher said, *“We get involved in decision-making before it becomes a decision.”* Such consultation is conducted through regular staff meetings, the weekly staff-development meetings (on a Thursday but cancelled if there is too much work pressure) and in the staff room before school begins.

Target setting and strategic planning based on previous results are key to the school's success. As a teacher stated, *“We believe in our targets – it helps us and learners to work hard to reach those targets.”* The teachers report that if they fail to reach their targets, *“We are not embarrassed [by the principal]; we feel guilty as we know we have let the rest [of the staff] down.”* The prevailing ethos among the mainly young teachers who teach the Grade 10s was summed up by one teacher who pointed out that, *“Teachers are self-motivated [and they] fight to teach in the afternoon. That is why we need a timetable.”*

Learner attendance is generally good, particularly in the higher grades. (None of the Grade 10s were absent on the day of the visit.) Teachers say that they themselves are highly motivated and do not want to fall behind and feel 'left out', so are rarely absent. (One teacher was absent on the day of the visit.)

There is no use of corporal punishment in this school. As with School D, the learners are expected to be disciplined and take responsibility for their own learning. However, the learner behaviour in the lower grades is problematic and there are regular problems with absenteeism, learners refusing to come to school (the school intervenes if the parents request it to assist), and drunkenness. The teachers and principal view learner ill-discipline as the biggest challenge that the school faces.

Recruitment of new teachers is controlled largely by the school. It prefers to do its own advertising, and the management team and School Board do the interviewing and propose the preferred candidate to the Regional Office.

The school has an induction programme for new teachers. They are inured to the school by observing other teachers for the first week, and then they are under the mentorship of a senior member of their department. The mentorship lasts for as long as the new teacher needs it. As the principal said, this could be for as long as a year.

Financial management is open and the budget and expenditure are shared with the community. The priorities are entirely focused on enhancing teaching and learning, particularly when money is scarce, as at the start of 2016 because the USE grant had yet to be set for the school. When starved of funds the school undertakes fundraising events. As the principal said, *“We learned from the local primary school that USE/UPE (grants) will be delayed, so we had fundraising last year to tide us over.”*

## Community/stakeholder engagement

The school is well supported by the community, and the principal aims to “*make sure there is no gap between school and home*”. Since many of the parents attended school themselves, the parent body, according to the teachers, “*understands the importance of education and are literate*”. There is a high level of consultation with the parents. All key decisions are shared with staff, and those which have an impact on parents are shared with the parents at the termly parents’ meetings as well as in emergency meetings, which are called when there is a particular problem with learner discipline or anything else. These meetings are well attended, with up to 80% attendance according to the teachers, who said “*it is impressive*”. At the termly meetings the parents are told what the school received in funds and what these have been spent on, and there is a review of the school’s performance in that term, and there are discussions on key issues “*such as learner discipline*”. However, the teachers pointed out that male parents do not attend these meetings – it is women who account for the high attendance. After the meeting parents seek out the teachers to discuss their children’s work. If parents want to see a particular teacher, they are requested to come to the school in the early morning or afternoon, and the teachers report that they are happy to meet with the parents at those times.

The parents say that the principal and the teachers are well respected in the community as they communicate well with the community and “*are well behaved*”. The teachers report that they can drink in the local shebeens – but clearly do so with care. The community also see that the staff work hard and are successfully improving the school.

The school supplements its income – particularly this year with the stoppage of school fees (and the school not yet knowing at the time of the visit what grant it would get) – through fundraising events within the community. The last such event raised N\$10 000. Some parents assist with fundraising by bringing a goat or chickens or homemade items for the school to sell to other community members, and some parents contribute money.

The inspector focuses mainly on motivating the school stakeholders and learners and does not conduct any classroom visits.

Last year a youth organisation conducted drama workshops with the learners on the topics of drug and alcohol abuse, gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy. In addition, nurses visit the school to talk about HIV/AIDS and to provide up-to-date information on prevention and treatment.

A local pastor visited to advise the learners to behave and be motivated. The patron of the school is a lawyer. It is unclear why he chose this school. He helps with donations and assistance for the school.

The Regional Office is not seen as being very supportive, and the teachers commented that they would pass the Regional Director in the street without recognising him. The Regional Office mounts occasional workshops which are considered to be useful but less so than the circuit ones. The teachers report that when they call for assistance from the Advisory Teachers, they will come, but otherwise they rarely if ever see them.

## Analysis of why the school is successful

In this school, like in the other high-performing schools, it appears that the teachers, principal, learners and community all agree on almost all matters pertaining to the school. This seems to be a key indicator of high-performing schools.

Also as in other high-performing schools, the school does not use corporal punishment, and the principal's management style is described as democratic and is very inclusive.

Also as in other high-performing schools, the community is supportive of the school as it seems to be happy to be associated with success. The open-door policy that principals and teachers have towards members of the local community and parents, along with the responsible behaviour of the teachers when in the community and in their relations with the community, seem to be key to this positive relationship. This means that the gap between home and school is very narrow.

Ultimately the key to the school's success is the time on task. The teachers are not special; they are typical teachers. What is unusual is their commitment, teamwork and time on task.

The school's success is also due to the commitment of all partners in the school community, and to the fact that the parents, staff and learners work as a team.

The high performance expected of all learners and the setting of targets with a focus on quality symbols provides the vision and the focus that all stakeholders internalise and rally around.

In all of the high-performing schools, the key asset owned by the school is the photocopier, and any funds are used to service and feed the photocopier, since this is what is used to support the teachers' work. This school has two copiers.



# School F

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 7 English, Grade 6 Maths and a Grade 1 lesson. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (female), 5 teachers (all female), 3 senior teachers (2 female), 6 learners and 5 community members (3 female) including one School Board member. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet was completed by the senior teachers and administrator.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	992 (Grades 0-7)
Number of teachers	36
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	27.5

The school is situated in the town of Tsumeb in Oshikoto Region. It is in an urban setting and the school is old, set in gardens with shady trees and flowers.

Most of the learners' parents/guardians are employed – working in mines, shops, government offices, schools and local businesses – and a few are commercial (crop and livestock) farmers. Most of the parents/guardians are reasonably comfortable economically, but a sizeable number are elderly pensioners, domestic workers or security guards, or unemployed and/or unmarried, and not economically comfortable. Many in this group, which constitutes up to a third of the learners' families, lack electricity and running water, and struggle to pay for school uniforms and provide breakfast and packed lunch for their children. The school has no feeding scheme, and hunger leads to the children being tired, lacking concentration and looking ill. These parents/guardians also struggle with transport costs as taxis can cost N\$300 per month, hence some learners walk up to 4 km to school, and some, due to lacking access to water, come to school dirty. The school sometimes provides second-hand uniforms for free, but these are not always available for all children who cannot afford a uniform. Most children live with their parents and some with their grandparents. Most of the parents/guardians attended school and are literate.

Most of the parents are positive about their children accessing education, although most do not have a reading culture, and do not enforce good behaviour. The school is popular and has to turn away some children as it is over-subscribed. Senior teachers said that even educators and professionals living in Windhoek apply for their children's admission to this school.

Former learners at this school often do well at secondary school and after leaving school – and so are useful role models. The parents interviewed observed that as the children get educated they become better behaved and independent, and then get better jobs and develop the town, some becoming employers.

The nearly 1000 learners are spread across Grades 0-7. There are 515 girls and 477 boys. The largest groups are in Grades 1 and 2 with approximately 140 in each of these grades. Grades 0, 6 and 7 each have 117 learners. Four classrooms are allocated to Grades 1 and 2, and three to other grades except Grade 0 which is split into five classes. Only 11 registered learners were absent on the day of the visit. Eighteen learners are repeating, the highest number being in Grade 5, while only 4 are repeating Grade 1. The school had no learners dropping out in 2015. In 2016, 42 learners joined the school.

The school's medium of instruction is English throughout all grades.

Only one of the 36 teachers is male. All of the teachers are qualified, and one has post-graduate qualifications. All of the teachers live in the community. There are 7 administration staff – 2 school secretaries and 5 gardeners and cleaners. The school has no professional support staff.

The school has a large number of classrooms of various ages. All are painted plastered brick under zinc, and there are walkways in front of all of them. The buildings are in a reasonable condition, with all windows intact but some concrete floors needing repair. The school is protected by a fence with main gates and limited access to the keys. All of the classroom and admin block doors lock, but they do not have barred windows (only the library has such) and metal doors, but everyone states that they feel safe. The school has had a few minor break-ins. It is a well-resourced school with a well-stocked and managed library and computer room, a school hall (built with parental contributions), and a well-appointed admin block with a large principal's office, staff room and kitchen. It lacks a laboratory. The school is entirely electrified on the grid and has clean piped water. The toilet facilities are ample, with 25 toilets for girls and 19 for boys (allocated per age group), and 6 for teachers. The toilets are clean, functional and accessible for wheelchairs. Although there are no specific facilities for menstruating girls, the bathrooms with lines of washbasins outside the toilets serve that purpose.

The computer room has 18 computers, which are used by learners who pay N\$30 per month to use them. Those who do not pay this fee are not given access. The other 6 computers in the school are split equally between the staff room (where teachers were busy using them) and the admin block.

The classrooms lacked some 76 desks and chairs which were being repaired at the time of the visit. The desks and chairs are the right size for each class. Although the classes are quite large – all have around 40 learners – they are not too crowded. The desks are generally placed in rows. Metal chalkboards are visible and in good condition, and most classrooms have at least a few posters and other learning aids on the walls. Generally the classrooms are airy and pleasant working environments.

## **School performance history and present**

All respondents deemed the school a high-performing one, and noted that the region had recognised it as a 'school of excellence' for consecutive years based on the results of its NSATs (tests at Grades 5 and 7). In addition, the parents tell the teachers that the learners in this school cover more of the curriculum and do so better than in other schools. The teachers also

report that their children, on leaving school, stand out as being confident and able to take on leadership positions and speak in public.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

All three teachers presented competent lessons, but none were outstanding. All three scored an 'achieved' rather than 'fully achieved', as all could have introduced some improvements.

The teachers have a year plan, a term plan and a weekly plan. Those teaching the same grade or subject plan together as a team. The weekly plans are very brief. The level of collaboration among the staff is high, and the senior teachers report that the principal's main concern is that there is "*harmony*" in the school, particularly among the teachers. She goes out of her way to try to ensure this.

The teachers report that they set tests whenever they feel these are needed, but the principal encourages them to set smaller regular tests rather than a larger test after a longer time. Every test set is reviewed by the grade or subject head before it is administered. The school has decided to experiment with giving no homework this year. This decision was taken after the principal read an article about a school in South Africa and Finnish schools which have stopped this practice. She argues that some learners fail to do their homework at home, which then creates a problem in the classroom. Instead of homework, the teachers have to set classroom exercises which they mark immediately.

The school has a system of compensatory lessons in the afternoon. This is for learners whom teachers identify as struggling, and the teachers have to inform the parents prior to holding such lessons. One Grade 7 Maths teacher, however, regularly provides extra lessons to all Grade 7s to ensure that the syllabus is covered. The principal argues that since teachers are in class on time and teach for the full 40 minutes, they lose little time and the coverage of the curriculum is pretty good in lessons, without extra lessons needed.

Every learner has access to a textbook for every subject. The principal orders books well in advance, so the school always has stock. The learners can also access supplementary books in the library. The learners report that they do research and undertake projects as part of their school work. The teachers report that if a learner loses a textbook, his/her parents must replace it, failing which the learner is not issued with a textbook for that subject in the following term. There is a teacher who has responsibility for monitoring all textbooks across the school, although individual teachers are responsible for the books that they issue. The school has a storeroom of teaching aids managed by one of the teachers. Any teacher can access teaching aids for a lesson. The teachers use the internet and their section of the library to support their lesson preparations. They report that they rarely use the Teachers' Resource Centre in Tsumeb as it is not well resourced and is not located close to the school.

Each term, the learners write a mini-exam prior to the setting of the main exams, to make the learners 'exam savvy'. Lessons stop during the exam period, and the teacher for the subject to be written the following day makes herself available to answer any questions that the children have.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

All respondents rated the principal's leadership skills as 'excellent', and praised her openness, work ethic, dedication and commitment. One senior teacher said, "*She works harder than anyone.*" It was said that she always leads from the front, and believes in the school and its success. The senior teachers also reported that the principal trusts them and all teachers once she has seen that they are worthy of trust. The researchers observed while walking around the school that children kept running up to hug the principal. She has an easy friendly relationship with them and they obviously feel very comfortable with her.

The school has the same approach to target setting as the other high-performing schools visited. Each learner, with guidance from their teachers, sets a performance target for each subject based on the previous year's work. The teachers are advised that the targets should be realistic, as setting targets which are too high will leave learners feeling that they have failed. The teachers also set themselves targets, and the school as a whole has a target as well. A senior teacher noted that the school has high expectations of all learners and assumes that all can succeed, and added that the school's target "*must be 100%; you can't say I want 80% to pass, otherwise we are assuming 20% will fail and we are not trying our best*". The school communicates its learners' targets to their parents regularly. Learners who fail to reach their target can set a new one that is lower if they want, and if they achieve the lower one, they can set a new higher one.

New teachers are induced by their department or phase heads. They are given orientation and piles of information on the school and expectations, but are not required to observe any classes.

The principal and HoDs each conduct classroom observations once per term for all teachers – so each teacher has two lessons observed per term. One of these visits is 'formal' (announced) and one is 'informal' (unannounced). If a problem is identified, the teacher has a set period in which to rectify it, failing which the School Board is brought in to assist. During the observed lesson the principal or HoD fills in a form and then conferences with the teacher, and the teachers report that this is useful. Each term the management team checks a sample of learners' books to determine whether adequate work has been given, marked and corrected. The teachers are also given a form on which to report any problems they have, and finally the principal meets with each teacher to check whether everything is going well. The teachers seem to accept this strong monitoring system, and the system ensures that high standards are maintained and perpetuated even when new teachers come in.

The teachers and senior teachers report that school funds are used for teaching and learning purposes, particularly to keep the three photocopiers running and supplied. However, none of the teachers were aware of the budget and exactly how it is spent. A school secretary is responsible for the school's financing, and the books are audited professionally.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

The community members were positive about the school, and rated the principal and teachers as 'excellent'. They said that the school is located in an area where there is minimal noise. They praised the discipline of the teachers and learners in the school with consistent monitoring.

There are four types of meetings for parents:

- A meeting is held on the first day of the school year, in which the parents are told what is expected of them, and they can visit their children's classrooms and meet their new teachers.
- A formal meeting is held at the start of each term, in which the main focus is the setting of the school's and the parents' expectations.
- A mid-term meeting is held each term to discuss financial and other strategic issues.
- The fourth type is the standard parent's meeting in which parents can view their children's work and meet with their teachers. Before this meeting the teachers send out a 'dedication' report each child's parents, which details their child's behaviour.

All of these meetings are very well attended by both female and male parents. The principal and all teachers, parents and learners report that the school and the community have a good relationship. This is demonstrated by the good attendance at meetings and the contributions made in the school's regular fundraising events. Also, the School Board reportedly has a good relationship with the school community.

The teachers indicated that the relationship with the Regional Office is not very positive, and they feel under-supported, with only occasional professional development workshops provided to them. The principal indicated that the relationship with the Regional Office is good.

The school receives support from other stakeholders, such as: the Ministry of Health and Social Services which vaccinates the learners; officers of the Namibian Police who had visited the school during the previous week to talk about gender-based violence, vandalism and drug and alcohol abuse; a pastor who had visited to donate Bibles in various languages; Spur restaurant which donated lunch boxes to the learners; booksellers who come to the school annually, from whom the school and parents purchase books; and a number of other commercial and religious concerns which had visited. It was also noted that UNICEF had visited the school.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The school is well resourced, but it is what goes on in the school that seems to make the biggest difference. Most significant are the commitment of the learners, teachers, parents and principal, and their shared vision for the school. These are enhanced and given focus by the targets which commit all stakeholders to a specific level of performance and to improving performance against set benchmarks which all understand and all have been involved in setting. This commitment takes the form of maximised time on task in the classroom, and where this is not adequate for a specific learner or class, there is a system of compensatory lessons, which is fully operational.

The school's funds are spent on enhancing the teaching and learning in all grades, and particularly on the photocopiers, as was the case in other high-performing schools.

The teachers have high expectations of all learners, irrespective of their backgrounds. These expectations are reinforced through tight monitoring of all that goes on in the school, with a continual focus on acceptable behaviour which is constantly reinforced as from Grade 1. At the same time the teachers emphasise the importance of the learners enjoying being at the school, and point to the low rates of absenteeism as proof that they and the children enjoy being there.

# South and Central Namibia

## School G

### Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 5 English Second Language, Grade 3 Mother Tongue, and a Grade 3 Maths lesson conducted in both Khoekhoegowab (KKG) and Afrikaans (so two media of instruction used in one lesson). Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 2 male senior teachers (who have been co-opted into the school management), 2 female teachers, 3 School Board members (all female), 8 parents (3 male, 5 female) and 6 learners in Grades 5, 6, and 7. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

### Details of the school

Number of learners	215 (Grades 0-7)
Number of teachers	8
Percentage of teachers qualified	75%
Learner-teacher ratio	26.9

This school is located in a settlement in Bethanie District in //Karas Region. The settlement is some 125 km west of the nearest large town, being Keetmanshoop, the regional capital where the Regional Education Office and Regional Council headquarters are situated. Currently the school has 215 learners, with more or less an equal numbers of boys and girls. It has a high number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) – 115 are orphans. It has 8 classrooms – one per grade including Grade 0. The media of instruction in the lower primary grades are Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans, and English is the medium in the higher grades. The learners' home languages are Khoekhoegowab, Afrikaans and Oshiwambo. Apparently the Oshiwambo-speaking learners in the lower primary grades opted to be taught in Afrikaans. The extracurricular activities include soccer, netball and traditional life skills.

All of the teachers were present on the day of the visit. All of them reside on the school premises, and the school does not face the problem of teacher absenteeism. Some learners come from the local settlement, but most are boarders who come from settlements and farms around the district, and from the fishing town of Lüderitz and mining areas in the region. The teachers' qualifications are as follows: 2 have O-levels, 5 have professional qualifications and 1 has a Theology degree and various diplomas. The school has one administrative support staff member with O-level qualifications.

The children's parents are mostly farm labourers or low-level workers on mines or in the fisheries in Lüderitz. The Regional Office places a good number of OVCs in the school, including street

children. On the day of the visit the Regional Office counsellor brought an OVC and was going to bring two more the next day. The parents of the local children are unemployed and depend on income from relatives who work outside the settlement. The settlement was established for Khoekhoegowab people who were displaced from Bethanie under the previous regime. It is owned by a Traditional Authority. There is a NamWater station which employs a few local people. The school employs about 100 people. Some of the local people do communal farming. A number of the local parents are young single mothers. Some of the learners are looked after by grandmothers who depend on their pensions and income from the children's parents who are working on the mines and in Lüderitz. The local parents and School Board members were available for the visit. In fact, in spite of the short notice, many more than were required showed up for the focus group discussions.

Given the high unemployment rate and the dependence on grandmothers' pensions or the intermittent income from the parents working in the mines and in Lüderitz, families struggle to provide uniforms for their children. Literacy levels are low. Water and electricity are available at the school, the hostel and the teachers' homes. Local residents cannot afford electricity. The nearest clinic is in Bethanie, 35 km from the school, and the nearest hospital is in Keetmanshoop 125 km from the school. Transport is problematic as most residents do not have cars and there is no public transport. The parents who are working elsewhere sometimes neglect their children. Some of the children are in the support programme of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. There are also children whose only meal for the day is the one provided by the school.

The school grounds are kept clean. The learners said that the principal and teachers work with them to keep the school and hostel clean. However, the administration of the school seemed quite poor; it took a long time to fill in the data collection instrument. The school grounds are fairly secure. There seemed to be an open and friendly ambience, and the learners and the school as a whole are orderly. The school yard is large and the buildings are in a fair condition – no broken windows but some renovations are needed. There is a sports field and netball courts, but they are in a terrible condition. Although clean water from a borehole is available for the school and hostel, the water has a strong chemical that makes the pipes rust. There is also a vegetable garden, a chicken coup (with no chickens at the time of the visit) and a kraal with a herd of goats for feeding and for the school's special events. The fencing is poor, so animals are able to enter the school premises. The learners' toilets (especially in the hostel) are dirty and are flooded due to a leakage problem. Learners in the hostel live in poor conditions (e.g. a thin old mattress, 1 thin blanket and no pillow). The boarders are kept busy on weekends cleaning and studying, but they did say that they have time to play and watch movies on Saturdays.

There was a higher-than-required turnout of parents for the focus group discussion. The School Board was well represented – by the chairperson, treasurer and two parent representatives. The chairperson and treasurer seem to be quite active in both the school and the community. The chairperson in particular is a community activist. She is leading a drive to have the settlement owned by the community, and is fighting for the clinic to be rebuilt and for the community feeding programme to be reactivated. It seems that the community's older generation consider education important. There is a concern that young people might not hold the same view. The school has noted that a number of its learners drop out at Grade 8 when they go to high school, returning to the settlement and doing nothing.

The school has low dropout and repetition rates. It is a strict school, with a daily routine for the learners from morning until bedtime. Teachers encourage the learners and treat them as their own children. One gets a sense that discipline is of paramount importance. This could be the reason for the Regional Office using this school so extensively for accommodating OVCs. On the whole the school has an ambience of openness, with open spaces, and with parents and other community members coming in and out. It seems to be a conducive environment for studying. The parents spoke of a disciplined and caring environment, and the learners and parents said that the children are safe. The school has a high teacher-retention rate.

The School Board representatives said that there is no corporal punishment, but staff do “*spank*” children as a parent would. They mentioned that one teacher who had been abusive was fired. The learners confirmed this and painted a rather descriptive picture of the cruel and high levels of abuse perpetrated by this teacher, who happened to live right next to the hostel and would come into the hostel drunk and physically assault children – both boys and girls.

## School performance history and present

The focus group engaged at the Regional Office, composed of subject advisors and one official responsible for analysing school results, was surprised that this school is reputed to be a high-performing one. These officials stated that in fact it is one of the lowest-performing schools. The office provided statistics for all grades. The statistics provided are not easy to understand, however a perusal of the statistics for Grades 5, 6 and 7 show that most learners do not perform well in Mathematics, scoring mainly Cs and Ds, and a few below D. The statistics for English show a similar picture, however the learners in the focus group were able to express themselves quite confidently. The teachers at the school reported that the hostel children were performing better than the day scholars. There may be a need for a deeper investigation as to what precisely is going on in this school.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The teachers of the three lessons observed were well prepared for these lessons. For the higher grade (Grade 5 English Second Language lesson), the seating arrangement was the traditional classroom style of rows facing the front of the classroom, but for the lower grade (Grade 3 Mother Tongue and Maths lessons) the learners sat on the ground in a semi-circle facing the teacher, to optimise concentration as the teacher read a story or explained a maths concept. The Maths teachers switched between KKG and Afrikaans with ease. She would explain a concept in both languages directly addressing the two language groups. On completing the explanation for one language group, she divided that group into sub-groups and gave them task to do while she explained the same concept to the other language group. She then gave the second group a task to do in sub-groups while she checked the work of the first group, and then that of the second group, and then moved on. It was interesting to note that there seemed to be learners who were picking up the learning in both languages. There were various visual aids available in the classrooms. The teaching tools include photocopies and textbooks, and for Grade 3 Maths there were tools such as bottle tops and wood blocks for doing sums – division being the focus of this particular lesson. Nonetheless, the teacher-centred approach dominated in these lessons, with the teachers doing a lot of talking even while the learners were busy with a task.



As is the case with the boarding schools visited, the school has an extensive after-school study programme, for one hour per day on Monday to Thursday. The local children are encouraged to attend. For the boards there is also a study period in the evenings and on Sundays. The school has built in support for struggling learners, with support classes limited to no more than 15 learners. The teachers' main concern is that so much effort is put into remedial support that little support can be given to gifted learners. They are of the view that this issue needs attention and they are thinking about how to deal with it.

At the time of the visit, the textbook situation was not as good as in the previous years when there were enough books, due to the change in syllabus and the new textbooks not having arrived yet. The learners were sharing the few books that could still be used. The school has no ICT provision or internet, but it has a library of sorts, which the learners do use. The classrooms have reading corners which have books that learners read during reading time. The teachers were trained by Molteno and THRASH to run reading programmes, and they have the materials for such programmes but are not using them optimally. The principal would like to see these used more. Homework is checked and marked. An interesting remark from a learner was that the learner support consists of the teacher "*giving you a little bit of work and then give you again and again*", so really a repeat of the normal work but in smaller chunks and repetitively.

The teachers seem to work as a team and collaborate quite extensively. Because of their isolation they have to depend on each other and support each other. They can make use of the Teachers' Resource Centre only when in Keetmanshoop. They are hoping that the cluster system in their area will be revived so that they can have access to other teachers' ideas, materials etc.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

No HoDs are appointed in this school, but the principal has selected two senior teachers to constitute the management team, of which he is the only other member. These senior teachers' responsibilities are to: ensure that all teachers translate the scheme into lesson plans in their lesson files; ensure that compensatory teaching takes place during study time in the afternoon; ensure that tests occur; observe the other teachers to ensure that they are teaching effectively; and run the school when the principal is absent.

The parent component of the School Board is all female; they are all mothers of children from the local settlement. The School Board members said that they work as a team with the school personnel. The School Board members are quite active in the school. When a teacher is absent they sit in and supervise the class in question, making sure that the children do the work they have been given. They get involved in fundraising for the school, organising events, and they draw up the school budget together with the principal and teachers.

The principal is quite active. He started at the school as a teacher when it was still a combined school. It was then made a primary school only, and the hostel closed down because numbers dwindled. He then took it upon himself to rebuild the numbers, actively going to recruit learners and opening the hostel "*illegally*". He was steadfast and eventually the Regional Office gave the school the right to run a hostel. The Regional Office officials said that the principal is seen to be vibrant and committed to growing the school and serving the community – which might

account in part for the school's reputation as a good school. He carries a great deal of respect within the community, which appreciates his efforts to get the school up and running again. He is now focusing on getting the Regional Office to make the school a combined one again. The teachers said that the principal is not authoritarian, and that he believes in people and delegates duties across the staff, and encourages the staff to upgrade themselves. One of the senior teachers in the school's management team is studying through the North-West University in Namibia.

The teachers stated that, "*Although target setting is expected across schools in the region, ... we have these as pledges.*" The teachers are required to make these "pledges" regarding what they want to achieve in the year, and they are monitored against these. The School Board had met with the teachers to look at what challenges they were experiencing, and had come up with solutions to deal with them.

The school's finances seem to be well managed. The school does a fair amount of fundraising, and the principal also encourages parents to donate something (e.g. a goat) in lieu of money. The parent representatives on the School Board are the signatories to the school's account. All parents are given accounts for the money received and clear accounts, which they appreciate and makes them feel that the principal is being open and that the financial management is good. All agree that the school is inadequately resourced, but is managing especially now that there is guaranteed funding.

The school aims to install an internet service this year, and is acquiring a few more computers for the learners' use.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

The local community is very engaged and supports the school. The parents of the boarders do not come to the school often, but the boarders interviewed said that their parents do phone the school to find out how they are doing. Parents in the local community cook one meal per day for the children. The principal said that attendance at parents' meetings was very low before he devised a way to remedy this, and it does seem to be working: every parent who attends a meeting is given a certificate of appreciation.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The school is not a PD school in the true sense: it has some features of a PD school, but it lacks some key features of such schools, and the Regional Office does not consider it to be a high-performing school.

The school has a very committed principal. He has worked hard to keep the school open, and consequently the community greatly appreciates and respects him. His teachers feel that he gives them space to do their work. They did say, however, that in dealing with the School Board on certain matters, such as acquiring materials for core learning and teaching, he needs to be a lot more decisive. He is pretty much the driving force behind the school. He seems to understand the community he serves (e.g. he allows parents to give things in kind), and has

managed to win the community's confidence and to get them quite involved in the school's activities, as both workers and volunteers.

The engagement of the local community and parents is quite high. Parents are not only involved in the non-curricular activities of the school, but also provide assistance in the classroom. The School Board members interviewed gave the impression that the school 'belongs' to the community, rather than belonging only to the principal and teachers.

The average class size is 27, which is well below the national norm for primary schools. This means that the teachers can give learners individual attention, and mark their class work and homework regularly. The learners also have enough textbooks and other resources.

Extra lessons and structured study time of the sort that this school provides, along with teacher commitment to provide or supervise them, is often more a feature of schools catering for post-Grade 7 classes. Its replication in this primary school is symptomatic of the school's and the teachers' focus on academic success. The compensatory lessons are possible because the teachers are committed and also because all of them reside on the school premises.

Target setting is expected at schools in the region, and the teachers at this school regard the set targets as "pledges".

The learners emphasised that they feel that their teachers care about them, even though they are quite strict and emphasise discipline. The presence of so many parents working and volunteering in the school may be a way of ensuring that the children from outside the settlement share in the local community's 'parental' care.

# School H

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 12 Maths, Grade 12 English and Grade 11 Biology. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the male HoD, 5 teachers (3 male, 2 female), 6 learners in Grades 11 and 12, a male member of the School Board and 4 parents (2 male, 2 female). The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	473 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	18
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	26.3

The school is located in a settlement of mainly Herero people about 60 km from Karibib in Erongo Region. Most of the settlers are subsistence farmers (cattle and goats), and a few are informal vendors and employees of the few government services offered in the area. The settlement has high unemployment rates and low literacy rates. There is a lack of transport to the nearest town (Karibib). Prepaid electricity is available. Water, though available from central water-collecting points, boreholes and wells, is very limited and the water from the wells is not clean. The one shop in the settlement stocks only basic necessities. The settlement has a clinic with four nurses, and a doctor visits once per month. There is no proper sanitation as there are no community toilets, so open defecation is common practice. Over half (60%) of the settlers live in corrugated-iron structures. The vast majority (90%) of the families depend on the old-age pensions of grandparents or social grants, and drought relief (eating one meal per day). Alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy are prevalent among the youth.

The overall impression of this school is that it is not well organised. Although there were files neatly ordered and labelled in the principal's office, some information required on the data collection tool could not be retrieved. The school could not provide data on the JSC pass rates, yet interviewees said that they had been called to the Regional Office where these results were discussed and they were asked to develop and present an improvement strategy. The school was also going through a leadership transition, as the principal had been transferred at the end of 2015. She seems not to have been popular with the teachers and learners. Apparently she was autocratic, made decisions on her own, and would not take on board any other ideas or suggestions. This autocracy was felt by all stakeholders – learners, teachers and parents. When things went wrong, she apparently blamed everyone else.

The school is comprised of brick buildings, most of which are very old with dirty, cracked walls, paint coming off walls, and broken windows. There is also a block of four new classrooms donated by a private company. The administration block has a tiled floor, and all other buildings

a cement floor. The number of desks and chairs seems insufficient, and some were broken. The school grounds were dirty, with paper lying around, but all of the building interiors were clean. The school grounds are fairly secure, and there is a security guard at night. There are playing fields available, but they are in a terrible condition and cannot be used. The learners complained that they would like to have sports at the school, but this is not possible because the school does not provide any equipment nor usable sports fields. The hostels were also in a terrible condition: overcrowded rooms with 16 learners per room, and leakages and floods in the toilets, which were extremely dirty. There is a laboratory which has some desks but absolutely no equipment. Electricity is available, but water is limited and sometimes there is no water at all in both the school and the hostel.

Most of the learners are from other regions. Only one of the six learners interviewed is from the settlement. The learners said that the school acquired its reputation as a good school because in 2011 the top learner for the National Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) came from this school. However, in these learners' opinion the schools is not good, because it does not have science laboratories, a library and a computer room. Consequently the choice of subjects is very limited and the science being taught is textbook-based. The learners were complimentary about the teaching staff, however, saying that they are committed and most of them know their subject matter. They noted that staying in the hostel depends on not failing. Boarders who fail have to leave the hostel, even though they are allowed to repeat. The other issue they raised was that the school has no extracurricular activities, thus all they do is study every day of the week. The Grade 11s in the focus group (last year's Grade 10s) feel that they had over-studied and had felt so pressured that they did not perform as well as they would have if they'd been given time to relax.

The school is not selective in its admission policy. The dropout rate is low. The repetition rate is also low, in part due to the school practising the transfer rule with automatic promotion. Teacher attendance is high. All teachers reside in the teacher housing provided just outside the school. The Grade 11 learners' subjects are chosen by their teachers based on their Grade 10 results.

## School performance history and present

In 2015 the school pass rate at JSC was 47%. The results for ordinary level are indicated in the table below. The pass rate indicated is for learners who acquired a minimum of 25 points in five subjects – this being the minimum required for entry into university.

Year	Total enrolled	Number of passes		
		M	F	T
2013	45	2	1	3
2014	51	1	1	2
2015	52	2	2	4

The school population did not seem convinced that they were a high-performing school, and the results shown in the table on the previous page attest to this. On the other hand, performance in Erongo Region is low compared to other regions, and the assessment of this school as one that is performing well may have been made from a very low base.

Parents said that they “*move their children to this school because it has rules and is seen as disciplined and strict*”. For instance, the learners are not allowed to have mobile phones, and fraternisation across the sexes is forbidden. The School Board chairperson said that parents treat the school as a rehabilitation centre and send their troublesome children here in the hope that they will be disciplined. As a result, the school has experienced problems with drug abuse (smoking of dagga), and disciplinary problems of various kinds, particularly among boys.

A determination will have to be made as to whether this is truly a high-performing school. Possibly the impression that it is a high-performing school is based on factors such as its isolation and the fact that learners have to study daily, the strict rules for hostel learners, and the learner who topped the NSSC candidates nationally in 2011.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The lessons observed (Grade 12 Maths and English and Grade 11 Biology) were not particularly innovative. The traditional teacher-centred format was followed, entailing teaching and asking questions intermittently with learners expected to respond. However, the teachers seemed to have good grasp of their subject matter. The lessons were clearly linked to the syllabus, with the teachers constantly referring to the syllabus and what to expect in the exams. The teachers were relatively young. The learners seemed at ease. They would raise their hands to ask questions and the teachers would note and respond to the questions. The main materials used for teaching were the chalkboard and photocopies. The desks were arranged in the traditional rows facing the front of the classroom. A few learners had textbooks. The learners do not have access to other sources of information as there is no internet and no community library nearby, and the school library has outdated materials which are not very useful. There is an insufficient number of learning and teaching materials, with three learners sharing one textbook. The centralised system for distributing learning and teaching material delays the distribution process in class.

The learners said that they are able to question in class, and to ask for extra assistance outside of class. Tests are set once a topic has been covered, and the teachers give and mark homework every day. Some learners reported that they organise study groups amongst themselves, and that testing is something that happens all the time. The teachers pushed to complete the syllabi early so that they can have a longer time to revise. The Grade 12 Maths lesson observed was for Core Maths, which is the lowest level of Maths that learners can take. The teacher had already completed the syllabus and will be doing revision for the rest of the year.

Lesson plans are drawn up individually by the teachers from an annual scheme of work. Daily lesson plans are submitted weekly to the HoD. Teachers claim that they share materials. There are monthly tests on the school calendar, and additional tests are set by the teachers at random. Targets are set for learners, grade teachers and at school level. Target levels are set at not less than 50%. Managers are allocated to each grade to motivate the learners. They encourage peer

tutoring amongst learners in the hostel. There are formal study sessions from 15h30-17h00 for all learners, and for hostel learners from 19h00-20h30 on Monday to Thursday. Teachers identify learners in Grades 10 and 12 who are struggling, and offer them free extra lessons after school or on weekends. Generally the learners and teachers are very committed to succeeding, and top performers are recognised through awards and prize-giving.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

Currently an acting principal is managing the school. She is viewed as having good leadership skills, and as being very democratic, welcoming and approachable, with an open-door policy. This view emerged mainly from the learners and teachers. The acting principal has years of management experience as HoD in the school. In contrast, the previous principal was seen as an autocratic leader who made decisions on her own without consulting or informing the staff and the School Board. Apparently she had no people skills, victimised colleagues and practised favouritism. During her tenure there was almost no communication between the community and the school's management, and teamwork and close collaboration between teachers was minimal.

The School Board meets twice per term and holds one parents' meeting per term. The School Board is involved in planning for the school. The chairman shared a document developed by the Board which outlines challenges identified for each stakeholder group in the school (parents, learners and teachers) and some suggested solutions. The Board is involved in budgeting and acts as an observer in interviews for the selection of teachers. The parents believe that the teachers are well qualified and disciplined. The School Board members interviewed said that the previous principal was tough on the learners and teachers but a good leader.

Exam and test results are analysed for each subject, and these scores and analyses are discussed, leading to the development of an improvement plan of action. Management participates at cluster-level meetings and the Regional Office meetings in which pass rates, dropout rates and targets are analysed. Teachers conduct self-evaluations which test for strengths and weaknesses. The management conducts monitoring and evaluation, which includes addressing classroom management, dress code and a code of conduct. Induction and mentoring for novice teachers is mostly done by the subject heads.

The school feels that its resources are inadequate. When this was a fee-paying school, a number of parents who were said to be able to pay fees had failed to pay them. As a result, for many years the school has had to survive on a limited budget, and some areas had to be neglected, including infrastructural maintenance and improvement. In addition, funding of core learning and teaching elements were affected, which led to the sharing of textbooks and a lack of new classroom equipment for teaching. The School Board chair felt quite strongly that more funding is required in addition to the grant which the school now receives. At the time of the visit, the school had not yet received confirmation of the size of its grant.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

The School Board is very engaged and supports the school. The school holds a parents' meeting once per term. Due to the fact that most learners' parents live in other regions and towns,

attendance at these meetings is low. Parents are given the opportunity to observe lessons and view their children's books, but reportedly not many parents use this opportunity.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

It seems that the previous principal operated in isolation and did not display qualities of good leadership, whereas reportedly the acting principal is doing a lot better. It is not yet possible to determine the acting principal's effect on performance.

The school seems to adhere to minimum Ministry requirements, and there was very little that was outstanding in this school. It does not appear to be a PD school, but it does have a few of the elements seen in PD schools, such as teacher commitment, extended study periods and a disciplined environment. While waiting for the data instrument to be completed when the school went for lunch, a few teachers were seen continuing to conduct lessons. The teachers were also professionally dressed. The learners seemed to like their teachers and praised their teaching skills and commitment.



# School I

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 9 English, Grade 10 Maths and Grade 12 Science. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (female), 2 male HoDs, 5 teachers (2 male, 3 female) and 6 learners in Grades 11 and 12. No parents or School Board members were available for the interview. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	349 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	16
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	21.8

The school is located some 15 km north of Windhoek. It is a semi-private Catholic school that receives substantial support from the State: teachers' salaries, textbooks and maintenance of school buildings. Because it is semi-private, it charges school fees, which include fees for the hostel. Parents are responsible for getting all of the stationery needed. This school is 110 years old, having been established by the Catholic Church as a school and teacher training college. The teacher training component no longer exists. The school has a strong tradition of being a top prestigious school in Namibia, and boasts of having the highest numbers of professionals in the private and public sectors as graduates of the school. The principal kept on referring to the school as a "*science school*" because the emphasis is on producing ordinary- and higher-level certificated learners in science subjects.

The school has no community nearby. Its learners come from all over the country and are all boarders. All but three of the 16 teachers live on site. Their main feeder primary schools are Catholic, but the school does take children from elsewhere. There was a mixed response as to the learners' socio-economic status. The teachers said that it is mixed, with some poor and unable to pay the school fees. The HoDs said that most of the children came from educated families and the poor are in the minority. The principal said that the few poor learners were being supported by a church grant. Some learners were being supported by older siblings who were working in jobs in the government and private sector. There was a debate with the Regional Office officials as to whether this school fits into the combination low socio-economic/high-performing category, as the view was that the majority of parents who have sent their children to this school cannot be classified as low-income earners. The sense was that the school is by and large not serving children of low-income households. It is isolated in that there is no community nearby, and learners said that their parents sent them here because there are no distractions, and also because the school has a history of producing "*top people*" in the country, and study is compulsory, discipline is emphasised, and they receive "*doctrine teaching*".

The school buildings contain 12 classrooms – more than two classrooms per grade. These are well maintained, as is the school yard, which has a few trees and some flowers. The school yard and classrooms are not particularly attractive though. The desks look old. There were few learning aids on classroom walls. The hostels are well maintained and a new hostel had been built for boys. The dining hall and large hall were in good condition. The kitchen is well equipped, with two cooler rooms and some freezers. The storeroom for dry foods (maize, rice etc.) was fairly full. At break time during the visit, the learners were given a substantial snack of jam sandwiches and tea. There is a large office for the principal, an office for the secretary and a staff room. There are also other offices attached to the teaching areas, one being for the HoDs, and there are offices attached to the laboratory block.

The laboratories seemed to be in disuse, with no chairs and almost no equipment. The learners mentioned that the available equipment was insufficient for all of the classes to use. The library is large, and has chairs and tables and a reasonable number of books, but was locked. The learners said that it is “*hardly opened*”, and that they need permission to use it. The principal explained that they did not have a librarian or a teacher who could take responsibility for the library, hence it remains shut most of the time. There is a computer lab for the learners taking computer courses. They are the only learners who are allowed to use the computers. Other learners do not have access to computers. The principal stated that she is raising funds through the alumni for a new laboratory block.

The teachers said that the school is not selective. However, the learners interviewed believe that they got in on the basis of their marks. One said that she was interviewed by the principal in the presence of her mother. The principal did assert that good marks in English and Mathematics are criteria for entry. Other criteria include indicating seriousness and commitment. When the principal was appointed about five years ago, she found that the secretary admitted children on a first-come basis. As a result the school had experienced a decline in performance. On her arrival the principal set up a selection committee and put entry criteria in place.

The principal had been difficult to reach in the days prior to the visit. Eventually a text message was sent to her in the afternoon prior to the day of the visit, outlining what she would need to arrange. She said that she saw the message in the evening. On the team’s arrival at the school, the principal had not made any arrangements for the visit, including inviting parents and School Board members to attend the interviews. The process for the day began only at 09h15 and was completed at 15h30 with the principal’s interview.

The school appears to be an orderly environment, and the learners said that the school is a safe environment. There was an incident last year when some boys who had been at the school and had not been allowed back came into the girls’ hostel and assaulted a few girls. Since then the girls’ hostel has been made more secure.

The learners seem to be disciplined. Most of the teachers are young. According to the teachers, the principal “*has the interest of the learners at heart, and learners are free to go to her office any time*”. The HoDs said that the parents respect the principal and teachers. One HoD mentioned that because of the discipline imposed in this school, some parents sent their children there “*to rehabilitate them*”.

One teacher complained that “*the class sizes are too large, especially in comparison to when this school was fully private*”. It seems that since accepting some support from government, the school has had to compromise on the numbers of learners taken in. Teacher and learner attendance is not an issue as most of the teachers reside on site and the learners reside in the hostel. The repetition and dropout rates are low. Learners tend to stay at the school from Grade 8 to Grade 12. The school used to be well known for sports, and is trying to revive that reputation by acquiring resources from the alumni. It has large sports fields which are not in good condition and need attention. The Life Skills teacher serves as the school counsellor and organises seminars once a month on social issues such as sexuality. The school cleaner also serves as a school ‘nurse’ when children are sick.

## School performance history and present

The school is ranked ninth in the JSC exam in Khomas Region, down six places from 2014. The pass rate for the JSC in 2015 was 66.7%, down from 85.9% in 2014. No one seemed comfortable to say why this was the case. The general comment was, “*There were many challenges and obstacles that the school had to deal with last year.*” The Regional Office was also not forthcoming as to what had caused the big drop in the JSC results.

The pass rates for the ordinary and higher levels are indicated in the tables below, showing the number of learners who acquired 25 points or better in five subjects – the minimum points needed for entry into university.

### Ordinary Level

Year	Total enrolled	Number of passes		
		M	F	T
2013	54	6	10	16
2014	44	7	10	17
2015	50	4	9	13

### Higher Level

Year	Total enrolled	Number of passes		
		M	F	T
2013	19	4	5	9
2014	10	5	5	10
2015	13	9	4	13

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The three lessons observed were Grade 9 English, Grade 10 Maths and Grade 12 Science. In the English lesson the teacher first explained that she was continuing the oral work started on the previous day. She sat on her chair, called up the learners one by one, and had them talk for about three minutes on a previously set topic. The other learners in the class were not listening to their peers, and the teacher did not try to involve the others by asking them to comment on the oral input of their peers. In fact, most of the learners seemed to be doing other things such as reading newspapers, and a couple were even openly sleeping. The teacher did not comment on each learner’s presentation. When one learner finished, she called up the next and so on. It was difficult to understand the objective of this activity. When all learners had presented, she told them to read quietly until the end of the lesson. Even at this point she did not get up from her chair to see whether they were in fact reading, and if so, what they were reading.

The science lesson was not particularly innovative. A teacher-centred format was followed, with the teacher asking intermittent questions and the learners responding. The teacher seemed to be very knowledgeable on his subject. The lesson was clearly linked to the syllabus, with the teacher constantly referring to the syllabus and what to expect in the examination. The learners seemed happy and would raise their hands to ask questions, and the teacher responded positively to their questions. The main materials used for teaching were the chalkboard and textbooks. The desks were arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom.

The Maths lesson started with the teacher checking the learners' books to see whether they had done their homework. He then selected volunteers to go up to the front of the classroom to answer questions – one volunteer per question. The learner would answer, and explain the answer, and the teacher would ask the rest of the class whether they agreed. Where an answer was incomplete, he would allow another learner to go up to complete the answer and explain it. The remainder of the lesson was spent with the teacher teaching a new topic, and it ended with a written task. The learners were engaged and participated when given the opportunity.

The teachers did not seem to be using extra resources. In the focus group they claimed that they do source additional material via the internet. The school has WiFi and most teachers have laptops. Those with no laptop are able to access a computer in the principal's office which they can use to access the internet. All teachers said that they do not use the Teachers' Resource Centre as the material there is outdated.

The school follows Ministry policy for planning lessons, implementing the syllabus etc. Study and compensatory teaching are offered. The latter enables teachers to finish the syllabus early in the year and spend the rest of the year doing revision. The learners are also given regular tests and past exam papers to practise answering exam questions. There are holiday classes for Grade 10s in April and Grade 12s in August. Learners said that they organise their own study groups.

The school sets targets at all levels, and uses them to monitor performance throughout the year. The principal and HoDs noted that their internal pass rate was set at 50% – higher than the Ministry's 35%. The Life Skills teacher worked closely with learners on monitoring their targets. The principal also said that she had done away with assessments in April and August, and rather uses the raw marks to assess progress. She has introduced what she referred to as "*control tests*". These are the same tests given every week to test an area of weakness that has been identified for all learners in a grade. A different subject is written each week, and the tests are set by one of the subject teachers and moderated by HoDs or subject heads.

This year, because of the drop in JSC results, the teachers have been told to analyse their own subject results – the quality of the symbols and the factors contributing to the results – and to develop a strategy for improvement. The strategies will be examined by the management. This will be followed by an open discussion with the full staff to plot a whole school-improvement strategy. The teachers confirmed that this is what they are working on.

The school has done away with automatic promotion. When a learner fails for the first time, a contract is drawn up, which includes academic targets and behaviour criteria. The learner and his/her parents are required to sign this contract. Progress is monitored closely, and if the learner

is not performing, the parent is called in. At the end of the year a learner who continues to fail is not allowed back. One of the teachers has been tasked with designing a test to diagnose learners who have learning difficulties before they become a real problem. Each learner is encouraged to choose a 'competitive partner'. They choose one who is at the same level as they are, and continuously measure their performance against this competitive partner. The school chooses the learners' Grade 11 subjects based on their Grade 10 results. The same applies when it comes to whether to take a subject at ordinary or higher level.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

The principal is apparently a good administrator but not very strong when it comes to people management. As a result, conflicts between her and teachers are not always managed well, and teachers see her as somewhat autocratic. On the other hand, parents respect her and trust her management. The learners see her as a disciplinarian and committed to academic excellence. The two HoDs were of the view that parents value and trust the school's approach to discipline and academic excellence, and support its uncompromising approach to setting and imposing high standards. Every morning the principal meets with the HoDs to discuss issues for the day, and then she and the HoDs have a briefing meeting with the teachers to make any announcements or deal with any issues that emerged. The class register period includes a topic being discussed. This may be one topic for the week, and class teachers and their classes decide how to conduct these discussions, e.g. a learner prepares a short input followed by discussion. The principal is well respected as a teacher and a manager. She is a good teacher who sets a benchmark for other teachers. She has the reputation of attending all her lessons. She is well informed and up to date on current information pertaining to education.

Not much was said about the School Board. It seems as though this School Board is one in name only. The principal did say that it was not a very active board as most of the parents were fully committed to their jobs and did not stay in the vicinity of the school, although she also commented that the deputy chairperson, who lives in Windhoek, does make himself available from time to time, especially when financial decisions have to be made.

The teachers are self-driven, and lead by example, take initiative, and are committed and disciplined, thus the learners look up to them. There is good communication between them, but the level of collaboration among them was less clear. They claimed to collaborate well, but walking around during break time a few things were noted: there were no teachers in the staff room; teachers were sitting individually or in small groups in classrooms while others had gone to their residences. It seems their collaboration is in terms of complying with Ministry policies and ensuring that certain curriculum-related activities are standardised and tests moderated. The HoDs and the principal, in separate interviews, said that when this principal was appointed, efforts were made to bring staff together. The school even set up various committees, such as a fundraising committee, as a way of getting teachers to work together on issues. The lack of coordination and cooperation can still be seen in relation to novice teachers. Asked how novice teachers had been supported, the teachers in the focus group unanimously said that there was no support; novice teachers simply had to find their own way. The teachers in the focus group are all quite young. The learners said that the teachers are always ready to assist and are open to being consulted, but they do expect high levels of commitment and hard work from the learners.

The view across the board was that the school's finances are moderately adequate. The teachers, HoDs and principal concurred that if the school is to excel and revive its former reputation, fundraising is key. The teachers also felt that the school has to be modernised with internet access for learners, and for this to happen, more funds are needed.

The relationship with the Regional Office seems to be quite limited. Apparently the inspector is supportive with regard to the school's administration, while the impact of the subject advisory service was not being felt strongly. One comment was, "*The Regional Office seems to forget our existence from time to time.*" The HoDs said that now and again they are invited to workshops.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

Because of the work that parents do and the fact that they do not live near the school, they are not always able to attend meetings. The school holds two parents' meetings per year, the first being a general meeting and the second focusing on learners' performance. The principal did not seem perturbed by the parents' apparent lack of commitment as in her view the meetings are well attended given the circumstances. She commented that parents call the school, and those who are able to drop in do so.

## Analysis of why the school is successful

The principal's administrative abilities and her interest and emphasis on academic excellence are quite evident. She seems to have a good relationship with the learners. She has adapted Ministry policies to befit her views of what to do to achieve academic excellence. She leads from the front in many aspects. She seems totally committed to the school and determined to make it a school of excellence again. The Regional Office officials stated that she is an efficient administrator, and that as an alumna of the school she is deeply invested in returning it to its former glory. The moderate finances are being put to good use.

There is a rigor in the school's target setting, and the management, teachers, learners and parents take the targets very seriously. The principal's drive to inculcate commitment and to strive above the normal standards bodes well for the improvement of results. Her drive to put in place a host of measures that force the teachers and learners to rise above the standards set in policy, and also get the parents committed to the same standards, makes for a solid foundation for success.

The one concern is whether the principal is able to pull her teachers along to the same level of commitment as hers. Teachers gave the impression that they are committed, but there was no palpable energy and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the teachers have shown willingness and commitment to supporting learners through additional classes and organised study periods. They obviously expect commitment on the part of the learners. Learners in turn are motivated to succeed and take advantage of the care and support that the school provides. There was a sense of discipline on the part of the management, the teachers and the learners. The learners said that this is a good school because study is compulsory and this is good for learners who do not have self-discipline; time and punctuality helps them to be organised; their parents like the principal's strict and disciplined approach; and they themselves feel comfortable with their teachers and the dormitory staff, who "*treat us fairly*".

# School J

## Who did we see?

We observed two lessons: Grade 9 Maths and Grade 12 Biology. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 2 female HoDs, 5 teachers (3 male, 2 female), 6 learners in Grades 11 and 12, a female member of the School Board and 2 female parents. The learning walk was conducted and the school returned the data sheet some weeks after the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	955 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	36
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	26.5

The school is located in Katutura Township, a densely populated part of Windhoek. The school serves children from disadvantaged households. There is a squatter camp nearby, from which a high number of the children come. The squatter camp has limited social infrastructure, with communal access to water and sanitation, and a limited supply of electricity. The communities around the school are characterised as poor, with low incomes and high unemployment rates. The average family income would be no more than N\$5 000 per month. Most of the school's parents are illiterate or semi-literate. There are parents who do not understand what the grade symbols mean. A high number of households survive on informal work such as hawking and owning shebeens. Some are domestic workers and low-level government institutional workers. Some of the learners at the school are orphans who are in the care of unemployed older siblings or grandparents relying only on pensions and social grants. Most parents live in structures made with corrugated zinc sheets, without any running water and electricity. Few live in brick structures.

The parents interviewed consider education important. They see the benefit of education as a good number of graduates from the school have managed to uplift themselves and their families. All of the learners interviewed said that they take education seriously as they want to leave these home conditions and this area for a better life. The challenges experienced in their homes are hunger, lack of funding, noise pollution and living in an environment which is not conducive for study, and some children have to do household chores or help their parents in their informal businesses. Due to a lack of money, some children walk to school, up to 15 km, and most do not eat anything during break time. Learners from households headed by grandparents and single mothers, and those dominated by alcohol and drug abuse, experience the most challenges as there is no proper supervision. Households tend to be overcrowded.

The School Board chairperson said that the parents appreciate that the school offers compulsory study after school and on Saturdays, as this shows that the teachers are committed. Some of the teachers offer extra study on Sundays, according to the learners. Learners from other schools

attend Saturday study at the school. On average attendance at the Saturday lessons is about 85%. The parent community has great respect for the principal and teachers. According to the parents, the high level of commitment of learners and teachers is clearly evident to the parents.

The school has 955 learners, of whom 352 are in Grades 11 and 12, 64.5% being girls. In Grades 8-10 there is a similar proportion of girls. The dropout rate is low (6 in 2015), but the repetition rates in Grades 8-10 is reasonably high, with 30 repeaters in 2016, which is 5% of the total learner population in these grades. The learners asserted that the dropout and repetition rates are low.

The school grounds are clean, and the administration is well organised. Teachers are young, organised and full of enthusiasm. There seems to be a good working relationship between the learners and teachers. The learners, by and large, are disciplined. There is no hostel, yet the school provides lunch to the learners. The school has access to clean water and electricity. The buildings are of brick and are well maintained. The school is fenced, though the fence has been vandalised in one spot. The grounds are safe, but learners said that after 5pm they do not feel safe there, as sometimes locals attempt to come in and there have been cases of vandalism. The environment outside the school is also not safe, and the learners make sure to get home in daylight. The school has laboratories, but they are not well equipped. One interview was held in a classroom which has a smart board and is air-conditioned. The school has two computer labs and a library. All windows have bars and all doors have locks.

The classrooms did not have much in the way of learning materials on the walls. There is no school hall and no sports fields. The school has converted a room in the admin block into a sick bay. There is an ambience of friendliness and openness, but seriousness at the same time.

In total there are 36 teaching staff in the school and one administrative staff member. The ratio of one teacher per 26.5 learners is below the norm for a secondary school. Most of the teachers live outside the community immediately surrounding the school. The school has three Life Skills teachers who also offer counselling to learners. The school sometimes calls in people, including alumni, to give motivational talks. Although the school does not have an overt selection policy for admission, the learners said that they had been admitted on the basis of their primary school results. The Regional Office officials agreed, saying that the school's success has attracted high-performing learners for whom this was the first choice as a secondary school. As one official said, the school has the benefit of *"getting the best at their doorstep without much effort."*

## School performance history and present

The school is ranked third in the JSC exams in Khomas Region, up three places from the 2014 results. The pass rate for the JSC in 2015 was 79%. The Regional Office shared its draft analysis of the senior certificate, and indications are that the school ranked tenth in the NSSC exams. The office would complete its analysis in the first week of February. The school's performance is attributed to the encouragement of healthy competition among teachers and learners, and the fact that learners are highly motivated by teachers. The attendance rates for learners and teachers are high. Some learners (top performers) were taken on an excursion to Germany. There is a prize-giving ceremony for both learners and teachers. One of the teachers received a best-performance teacher award for Maths in the JSC exams in Khomas Region. The Regional



Office mentioned that the school's success has influenced the performance of other schools in the area, in that they are also working hard to improve their performance.

The principal, who has been at the school for almost all 11 years of its existence, said that the school's performance can be attributed to a culture instilled long ago, the previous principal having been a great motivator who encouraged self-motivation, a team approach and the setting of high expectations, and was quick to resolve conflict. The Regional Office officials agreed with that analysis of the school's culture and the previous principal's role in laying a good foundation.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The lessons observed were not particularly innovative. They followed pretty much the traditional teacher-centred format, with the teacher teaching and asking questions intermittently, and learners responding. The teachers seemed knowledgeable about their subject matter. The lessons were clearly linked to the syllabi, with the teachers constantly referring to the syllabi and what to expect in the exams (especially in the Grade 12 Biology class). The teachers were energetic, moving around back and forth between the desks as they lectured. The learners seemed at ease. They raised their hands to ask questions and the teachers noted and responded to those who raised their hands. The main teaching materials used were the chalkboard and photocopies. The desks were arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom. A few learners had textbooks. Both classes observed were quite crowded, with about 45 per class.

The learners said that they could ask questions in class, and also could ask for extra assistance outside of class. Tests are usually set for every topic once covered. Homework is set and the teachers check the homework. Some learners organise study groups amongst themselves. The learners are encouraged to source their own information, and they do a fair amount of projects and research. Learners rarely leave school before 4pm as their home environment is not always conducive for doing homework, so they prefer to do it at the school. There is a community library which they can access. Most learners apparently access the internet via their mobile phones.

The school sets targets at all levels, and uses these to monitor performance throughout the year. The school has a Statistics Committee which analyses the results at subject, grade and learner level. The principal mentioned that when the results were released to him, he informed his teachers via WhatsApp that they would be released officially the following day. He explained that the teachers always want to access their results as soon as possible to see if they have achieved the targets which they each set for their subject. The issue of performance is also discussed with the School Board, according to the School Board chairperson, who went on to state that, "*We as parents appreciate that the school offers compulsory study after school and on Saturdays, as this shows the teachers are committed.*" The learners' subject choices are left to them to determine, although teachers may advise learners based on their marks in particular subjects.

The principal said that the school receives visits from teachers from other schools, who come to observe how they do things, or to observe best practice. He cited the example of a neighbouring school which arranged to send some of its teachers to spend a day at the school. Each of these visiting teacher was assigned a teacher to observe, and at the end of the school day these and the visiting teachers gathered in a classroom to discuss the visiting teachers' observations.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The principal is supported by three HoDs. He also delegates different types of responsibilities to other teachers. The School Board is very active. The chairperson said that the board members can “*come and sit and monitor*” classes if they wish, and that they are involved in the recruitment and selection of teachers, and actively keep up to date with the teachers’ performance. “*As a School Board we talk about how we can improve on a particular teacher.*” They also play a role in motivating learners: “*We bring in old students to encourage the learners.*” The school also actively talks to parents about getting involved in their children’s learning, and being watchdogs of the school and seeing it as their own asset.

The principal is well respected as both a teacher and a manager. He is reputed to be a good teacher who sets a benchmark for other teachers. One of the teachers said, “*He is one of the best Physical Science teachers around.*” The teachers said that the principal is results and goal oriented, and friendly but firm, while being understanding and outspoken. He is complimented for motivating teachers and learners to always strive for the best results. Where teachers lack skills, he supports them, and also assists teachers with understanding and appropriately implementing Ministry policies and directives. In addition to his management duties, he teaches all of his lessons. He is well informed and up to date on current information pertaining to education.

The teachers have the reputation of being self-driven, committed, disciplined and able to take initiative, and they lead by example. The learners look up to them. There is good communication between the teachers. They somehow balance competitiveness and collaboration. As one HoD stated, “*The school’s performance is attributed to the encouragement of healthy competition amongst teachers and learners, as well as learners being highly motivated by teachers.*”

The Regional Office officials attested to this good working relationship, which they said they had observed when visiting the school. Apparently there is also a good relationship between the staff and management, with decisions taken democratically with the relevant stakeholders. The teachers are always consulted before and after decisions are made. The learners said that the teachers were always ready to assist them, and were open to being consulted. In return the teachers expect the learners to be very committed and to work hard.

The school used to ask for fees, but no longer has to do this as it now receives a grant. The grant covers the basic learning and teaching needs. The limited school funds are well managed and geared towards teaching and learning. The school is relatively poorly resourced, with no school hall, sports fields or other sport facilities, a lack of classrooms and a vandalised fence. The staff want to build a school hall and provide better-equipped laboratories, and were planning to embark on fundraising for these projects.

There are insufficient numbers of textbooks for the learners and teaching materials for the teachers, and the local Teachers’ Resource Centre materials are outdated. Each department at the school deals with its own needs, such as acquiring extra teaching materials. The teachers claim that the centralised system for distributing learning and teaching materials delays them. They have a very slow internet connection. The school has computers but no ICT teacher.

The school has a mentorship scheme for new and novice teachers (being teachers of less than 5 years' seniority). CPD and orientation are provided by the mentors. The school has a system of study periods from Monday to Thursday each week, for one hour per day – 15h00-16h00. Teachers who need to conduct compensatory lessons do so in these periods, and the learners are expected to do their homework during the study period.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

The School Board is very engaged in supporting the school. Because of the work that parents do, they are not always able to be involved in their children's learning. The School Board is on a drive to motivate parents and get them more involved. Parents' meetings are held every term. They are not particularly well attended. However, parents can come to the school to follow up on their children's performance any time that they wish to do so. The low level of parental involvement does not seem to hamper the school's performance. The school has access to a social worker, although the Life Skills teachers do most of the counselling and refer only complex cases to the social worker.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

Clearly the management is key, and is building on the leadership foundation laid by the previous principal who retired two years ago. The school performance for JSC in 2014 was 57.7% and rose to 79.2% in 2015, so despite his departure the school has improved. The new principal leads from the front in many respects, such as being a good Physical Science teacher and attending to all of his teaching commitments. He has management experience, having been an HoD prior to being appointed principal. The management team works well together and is respected by the teaching staff. The School Board's role in governing the school is recognised by all, and its members are given full responsibility for the Board's own performance. The Board is engaged in all aspects of the school, including what goes on with regard to core teaching and learning activities. The use of resources (financial and infrastructural) is good, and the resources are well maintained.

The target setting creates the competitiveness required among teachers. The school management and staff take the targets very seriously. The school fully implements policies and directives on lesson planning, the work scheme, and teaching and learning assessment and monitoring.

The school is well organised. There is a mentoring process for novice teachers, who are assigned a senior teacher of the same subject. Grade 8 learners are orientated at the start of the year, when they are informed of the school's expectations of them. The school has a WhatsApp group to discuss school-related issues.

Most of the teachers are young, energetic and highly motivated. They have shown willingness and commitment to supporting learners through additional classes and organised study periods. They obviously expect commitment on the learners' part. The learners in turn are motivated to succeed and take advantage of the care and support provided by the school. The collaboration and support among teachers enhances the school's performance. There is a sense of discipline on the part of management, teachers and learners.

# School K

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 7 Maths, Grade 5 English and Grade 5 Afrikaans. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), a female HoD, 5 teachers (3 female, 2 male), 6 learners in Grades 5, 6 and 7, a male member of the School Board and 4 parents (3 female, 1 male). The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	271 (Grades 1-7)
Number of teachers	9
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	30.1

The school is located in a small settlement near the Kuiseb River on the edge of the Namib Desert, some 60 km from Walvis Bay in Erongo Region. The school has 61 orphaned learners. It has hostel for both boys and girls from the surrounding settlement and Walvis Bay. The teachers, including the principal, reside on the school premises.

The local community consists of about 2000 people who live along the riverbed. These people depend on the *Inara* harvest for a living, which is seasonal. They sell the *Inaras* and use the money gained to buy food. A few have livestock. Other than the *Inara* income, the community lives mainly on pensions and social grants. A few of the community members work at the school. The local community is largely illiterate, with little regard for formal education. The school is implementing an education programme for adults this year. The whole school, including the teachers, learners and institutional workers, do silent reading for three periods every Friday. Only about 6% of the learners are from the local area; the majority are from Walvis Bay and a few are from the country's northern regions. The learners' parents generally work either on ships or in factories, and prefer their children to reside in the school hostel. Most of the children who come from Walvis Bay are sent to this school because their parents want to get them away from distractions in the Walvis Bay townships. Also, some parents who work at sea are away from home for long periods, and prefer to have their children at a boarding school rather than looked after at home by an older sibling with no adult supervision.

There is no electricity in the settlement area. The settlers get clean running water from the school or the agricultural centre, or the few communal taps. There are no sanitation facilities available in the community. The dwellings of the local community are made of wood and zinc. There is a small clinic next to the school, with one nurse. Transport is practically non-existent; the locals use donkey-carts. Sometimes staff members and other workers at the school have to walk from the main road to the school, which is about 56 km. Apparently the school used

to experience power failures because of low voltage, but the power line has been upgraded. There is no network reception at all, and this hampers communication. On the day of the visit we were told that the telephone line had not been working for a week. Whenever there are strong winds or rain, the telephone line is affected.

The school has a total of seven classrooms – one per grade. The school is clean with a well-organised administration system. The learners stated that on weekends the principal leads the school-cleaning activities. At the assembly, the week’s cleaning roster is indicated for all classes including the lower grades. All cleaning is supervised by prefects and teachers. All files were in place, with the required information readily accessible. There are visible organograms of the school and the Regional Office. The school’s policies, guidelines and standards are displayed on the wall in the principal’s office.

The school buildings are made of bricks, prefab and zinc materials, and are old but well maintained. The school had a new block built last year. There is no administration block. A storeroom was converted into an office for the principal, which he shares with the secretary. The school grounds are fairly secure, with no criminal activities reported. Due to the arid environment, there are no trees that grow naturally, but the school has planted a few trees which are well kept to keep the environment looking pretty. There are no playing fields. The school has access to clean water and electricity from NamWater and Erongo RED respectively. The hostels are old, and rooms are in a terrible condition, especially those occupied by learners in Grades 5-7. The girls’ hostels were generally much cleaner. There are 16 learners per room, and not all learners have a locker, so they share. The boys’ toilets were not in a good condition and had leaks. There is one dining hall, which is kept very clean with polished floors. The teachers live in poor conditions; in fact one staff building had been written off by the health inspector. The library has two computers, which are used by learners.

The school offers the learners extracurricular activities including a school choir, soccer, netball, volleyball, traditional life skills, and the HIV/AIDS awareness club called “Windows of Hope”. The attendance rates are high for both learners and teachers. There is a recognition system for learners, with certificates given out every term and a medal at the end of the year. The school had no dropouts last year, its repetition rates are low.

## **School performance history and present**

In 2015 the school had a 100% pass rate in the upper primary grades (Grades 5-7) and a 96% pass rate in lower primary grades (Grades 1-4). Among the region’s primary schools it is ranked third for performance – although this is a region whose performance rates have been on the decline when compared nationally. Both the principal and a senior teacher mentioned that some of the school’s learners have gone on to do well in secondary school and in their tertiary education. They cited two girls who last year were the best performers for the senior secondary certificate, and others who have become accountants, electricians, doctors and teachers. The school has traced its former learners and is trying to form an alumni, which it hopes it can utilise to raise resources for the school. The principal’s own children completed their primary schooling at this school – which could be regarded as a testament of his own faith in the school’s academic performance.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The three lessons observed were Grade 7 Maths, Grade 5 English and Grade 5 Afrikaans. The school does not have a particular mother tongue due to the variety of ethnic groups there, but Afrikaans remains a lingua franca in some parts of the country, including Walvis Bay, so an Afrikaans lesson was selected for observation. The teachers at this school tend to follow the syllabus quite closely.

The classroom in which the Grade 7 Maths lesson was observed is actually the Grade 6 classroom (home room). The class target was very visibly displayed in the front of the room. The average school target is C (60%). Targets are set at learner, subject, grade and school level. The desks were arranged in groups, although this particular lesson did not involve any group work. There were learning materials on the walls, a good number of which were created by the teacher. In the learning walk it was noted that this seemed to be the case generally in the classrooms. The children were quite attentive in the classrooms. The Maths lesson entailed going through a class test given on the Friday before. The teacher handed out the tests, stating each learner's mark as he did so. He went through each of the questions, explaining the answers. The learners were then given time to make corrections and the tests were taken in again. The teacher walked around checking learners' work as they made corrections. Thereafter, the class was given a written exercise with the task written on the board. This implies that there are no textbooks available. The learners worked individually and the teacher walked around checking their work.

The teachers of the language classes seemed well prepared. The main form of teaching materials used were handouts. The topic was explained and the teachers asked the learners questions, which they generally answered as a group. The learners, though, would put up their hands and seemed very enthusiastic to give responses. The English teacher was quite theatrical as she gave instructions and explanations, using a lot of gestures. She would ask learners to translate words into their mother tongues, possibly with the intention of increasing their understanding.

The lessons were teacher-centred, with learners given the opportunity to respond to questions. Generally they were well disciplined, with very little fidgeting and talking, and with considerable attention paid to the teacher. All lessons ended with the assignment of homework. Movement between classes was organised and quick – very little time was wasted. The prefects played an important role in ensuring order. This could be interpreted as an attempt to build responsibility and leadership.

The school has afternoon and evening study periods, which are also used for learner support. There is also a study period on Sundays. Towards the end of the year the school completes a CUM Card, which entails observing learners to determine their socio-psychological status.

The school organises educational tours which are indicated in its year planner, and it has a close relationship with the research centre located nearby. Learners are taken to the research centre and researchers at the centre come to the school to talk about climate change and the centre's work. The teachers attend cluster meetings once per term to discuss problems and exchange materials with teachers from other schools. The school also twins with a few good schools in the circuit, and sends teachers to these schools to observe and get 'tips'.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The school has one HoD. The principal called her in at the start of the visit to participate in the organisation of the visit. She seems to work very closely with the principal in managing the school and the teachers. Three senior teachers assisted with completing the data instrument. The school assembly was run by teachers. The school had typed out its year plan, which conveys the key activities and dates, and the staff members responsible. It seems that the principal works with his teachers and delegates quite substantially. The year plan reflects a wide range of activities, such as staff meetings, management meetings, School Board meetings, subject meetings, parents' meetings, topic-related tasks, investigations and projects, file checking, cycle tests, continuous assessment moderation, class visits and extracurricular activities. Teachers are expected to return to school before the school terms start.

Teachers have phase meetings to discuss classroom management and assessments. In class visits, which the HoD conducts, problem areas are noted and the ways forward to improvement are discussed. Induction for novice teachers is the task of either the HoD or a subject head. All staff attend a day-long training session on classroom management conducted by the Regional Office, and the Regional Office also provides extra demonstration lessons by subject advisors for struggling teachers, although it was not clear how frequently these lessons are needed. The HoD has attended workshop training, especially on the new curriculum, and the principal has attended such training on finance, public relations and examinations.

Other activities in the year plan are educational tours, participation in the circuit science fair, readathon and entrepreneurs' day, and a variety of commemorative days. The school year is full, with the school keeping the learners busy and interested in matters beyond the classroom. Enrolment for Grade 1 happens early in the year – in May. Mid-year the school staff have a team-building session where issues are discussed along with policy, teaching approaches, etc. They have a relationship with an NG Kerk pastor who runs these sessions for them as well as for the school's LRC.

The principal has an open-door policy. He is seen to have strong leadership skills. He motivates and encourages self-improvement and further studies for the teachers. The teachers and principal are well-respected community members. There is a strong culture of collaboration among the teachers. Because of its remote location, getting relief teachers is a problem, so the school has come up with its own solution: Grade 12 learners step in to help out when a teacher is sick.

The School Board chairperson noted that there is good coordination between the teachers and the hostel staff, and that the principal is transparent and shares key information with the Board, such as teachers' attendance, Ministry circulars and general performance-related information. He also said that the principal *"is soft and a couple of the teachers abuse his kindness"*.

Because the school is located in an area that sees high volumes of tourists, it often receive visitors – who probably visit out of curiosity as this school is in the middle of nowhere. This has had spin-offs for the school in the form of some small donations from overseas visitors, but another result is that the principal and School Board will be embarking on a drive to raise funds for an internet connection and solar power offered by a group that visited and initiated discussions to

assist the school. The school will also sell its *Inara* harvest this year to raise funds towards this initiative. Improving the school transport is another project being undertaken this year.

The grant that the school receives is adequate for the basics. The school budgets 70% for its core needs and to cover other needs it raises funds from the *Inara* harvest and social events. The School Board chair was of the view that the hostel conditions are not sufficiently comfortable and that the food is insufficient. Sometimes the sewage system gets full and invites mosquitos. Together with the principal, the School Board has drawn up letters to get funding to improve the hostels.

On the whole, the school makes good use of its resources, and carries out an inventory of all materials (textbooks etc.). The School Board and the teachers draw up the budget. They have the basic resources for teaching and learning, but lack recreational materials. The school gets donations from companies. There is no school hall. Teachers do not have access to adequate teaching materials, and the nearest Teachers' Resource Centre is in Swakopmund. The teachers improvise by making materials such as posters from cereal boxes. The learning materials, such as textbooks are insufficient for the number of learners. There is no community library, but there is a school library which is stocked.

The learners and School Board members were of the view that the school is safe. The teachers and hostel staff are trusted and seem to be caring. The learners said that their parents sent them to this school because it is isolated with no shebeens, so they can focus on their school work, and also they said that the teachers have a good reputation and discipline is strong without the use of corporal punishment. According to the learners, the school's good reputation is known as far as Windhoek.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

There is not much of a community around the school, and most of the parent community is in Walvis Bay, so the school holds its parents' meetings there, in the classroom of a school, on Saturdays. As most parents do not live near to the school, rather than volunteer to do work there, parents buy things for the school, such as bags of maize. On parent days the teachers bring learners' school books for the parents to look at. Direct parental involvement is thus limited by the school's remoteness, but most parents support their children financially by buying toiletries etc. Some parents call the teachers to check up on their children, and the HoD mentioned that *"The school has a WhatsApp page for all the parents with children in the hostel."*

## Analysis of why the school is successful

The principal believes in team work. He works collaboratively with his HoD and his teachers. He delegates quite extensively, as evidenced in the year plan and in how he related with his teachers and HoD on the day of the visit. The School Board chairperson confirmed this aspect of the school's management. The one key challenge picked up regarding his leadership was that he was not firm enough and staff might take advantage of this. However, the staff seemed very committed and supportive of one another. That there was a detailed year plan available is indicative of a school that is run efficiently, with everyone having clarity from the beginning of



the year on what their responsibilities will be. The efficient running of the school seems to be co-owned by all stakeholders on the school premises.

For both teachers and learners, discipline seemed key to the running of the school. The learners are exposed to a range of activities and experiences outside the school, which they appreciate. The School Board and management seem to have developed a way of leveraging support from companies and individuals in the area and from tourists who come through the area.

The school sets targets because this is Ministry policy. It is not possible to assess the extent to which target setting adds value to the school's performance, except to say that the school has implemented the policy and the grade targets are clearly visible. Extra lessons and structured study time are provided, as well as learner-support lessons. These are made possible by the fact that teachers are committed and all are accommodated on the school site. The school does not have an adequate number of textbooks, but teachers create learning materials to compensate. The teachers are pretty much the source of most knowledge.

The engagement of the parent community is hampered by both distance and the fact that a good number of the parents work on ships, spending long periods away from home. The school has tried to be innovative in attempting to meet parents half way through Saturday meetings in Walvis Bay and through the WhatsApp page. It does seem that the parents show their support for the school in other ways, such as making monetary and in-kind donations.

The school seems to have a caring environment. The School Board chair pointed out that it is a relatively small school run by teachers and a small group of parents – mostly the hostel staff who have children at the school – hence it is like a family.

# School L

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 10 Maths, Grade 9 Physical Science and Grade 8 English. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), the male HoD, 5 teachers (2 male, 3 female), a School Board member (male), 5 parents (3 female, 2 male), 6 learners in Grades 8, 9 and 10 and a female former Grade 10 learner who had been the region's top performer. The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	392 (Grades 8-10)
Number of teachers	17
Percentage of teachers qualified	88%
Learner-teacher ratio	23.1

The school is located in Karasburg in the south of //Karas Region near the Orange River. It has an enrolment of 392, with 197 girls and 195 boys. The school reports that 26% of the learners are orphaned. There are 17 teachers, 15 with professional qualifications and the other two having completed two years of a professional qualification. It has hostels for both boys and girls from the surrounding farms and settlements. The teachers reside either on the school premises or in the community.

The children's parents are mainly poor farm labourers. Some are employed as labourers in the few government agencies with offices in Karasburg, and some work for the few businesses as domestic workers (mainly in guesthouses), till operators in supermarkets etc. Most of the parents are illiterate to semi-literate. The local settlement is made up mainly of small housing units and shacks. Running water, electricity and sanitation are available, but most people cannot afford to pay for the electricity and water. There is a clinic and relatively easy access to a hospital. Other challenges faced by the community served by the school include a high rate of unemployment, high rates of alcohol abuse, and children who stay with grandparents and rely on their pensions. Many households comprise extended families and are overcrowded. Transportation is a problem, especially to the settlements and farms. Until last year the school depended on parents paying fees, and many parents defaulted on payments due to poverty. The new grant system for schools has relieved the school of the challenge of collecting fees, and will allow it to budget based on guaranteed funds. Other challenges faced include parents not having enough money to buy school uniforms, and learners having to live in the location due to the limited space in the hostel, with very limited supervision at home for the children.

The older generation in the community see education as important. The chairperson of the School Board mentioned that the School Boards in the area have set up a type of inter-school committee which includes representation of the police. This committee has taken up the task

of bringing discipline to the youth in the community, by getting them out of shebeens and off the streets and into school. Young people seen taking drugs are reported to the police. Apparently parents are also confronted by the committee if their children are absenting themselves from school. According to the principal and teachers, with the high rate of youth unemployment in the community, and the only available employment being work on the farms, the young people do not see the benefit of education. A number of pupils from the school have gone on to become lawyers and teachers and other professionals.

The school has 11 classrooms. The buildings are made of brick, and are well maintained – but could do with a lick of paint. The hostel is dilapidated with many leakages in the bathrooms. A soccer field and netball court are available, but both are in a poor condition. In spite of these conditions, both the school and hostel are kept clean. There is water and electricity. The home economics, technical drawing and computer rooms have basic equipment. The learners have access to the internet under the supervision of a teacher. The laboratory, however, is merely a lab in name, with no lab equipment evident. The library has a fair amount of books. Apparently the local children have access to the community library which has just been renovated and expanded, and learners can access the internet there for a fee.

The principal's office seemed well organised. He was able to complete the data instrument quite quickly as he seemed to have all of the information required on file. On the whole the school had an ambience of openness, with open spaces and parents and other community members coming in and out. It seemed to be a conducive environment for studying. The parents talked of a disciplined, caring environment, with teachers who counsel and talk to the children "*like a father or mother*". Both the learners and the parents said that the children are safe. The school has made provision for menstruating girls. It tries to offer extramural activities such as soccer, netball, chess and a choir.

The school yard is quite bare; it has very few trees and is quite sandy. The grounds had been raked and there was no litter. The classrooms were neat, but did not have much on the walls. The learners' desks were in a good state of repair. Some classrooms have a small cupboard containing a few additional textbooks and other resource materials. The desks were arranged in rows facing the front.

Attendance of both learners and teachers is high, and the teacher-retention rate is high in this school, as was confirmed by the focus group of Regional Office officials. The school experiences low dropout and repetition rates at Grades 9 and 10. Grade 8 accounts for 74% of the repetition rate and 76% of the dropout rate.

## **School performance history and present**

The pass rate for the last three years was 62% in 2013 (regional average 46%), 50% in 2014 (regional average 44%) and 41% in 2015 (regional average 40.4%). The principal did mention when contacted to make arrangements for the visit that he thinks the school is not doing well. Nonetheless, the top-performing learner for the JSC in the region in 2015 is from this school. According to the Regional Office advisors, the school offers JSC Additional Mathematics and achieved a 100% pass for the learners who sat the exam.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

The teachers had prepared for the Grade 10 Maths, Grade 9 Physical Science and Grade 8 English lessons observed. All these lessons were essentially in three parts: delivery on the topic by the teacher; the asking of some questions by the teacher and the responses being given mainly in chorus format; and exercises/activities which mainly involved learners going up to the board to do tasks while the others looked on, followed by the teacher verifying with the rest of the class whether the answer on the board was correct. Each lesson ended with the teacher going through the questions answered on the board and repeating the concepts, and then setting homework. The Maths teacher also set a short test which she marked in class. The homework given was in preparation for the next topic. In the Maths and English classes, each learner had a textbook. The Physical Science class used photocopied material. The principal mentioned that not all of the textbooks ordered had been delivered to date. In his view the previous system of schools being responsible for buying their own textbooks was better. The new centralised system, whereby a company has the tender to supply textbooks, is resulting in delays in receiving textbooks for the new school year.

The learners in the Physical Science and Maths lessons, though not organised in groups, tended to automatically pair up to discuss the task questions with each other. The teachers seemed to approve of this. The learners stated that group work is sometimes used, depending on the activity. The English teacher tried to get the learners to work in groups. The Physical Science teacher had the learners quite active, getting them to prove their understanding of the concept (classification) by giving examples from their environment. The Maths lesson was quite teacher-centred, and the learners worked individually on the tasks given, such as the test. On the whole the teachers were well prepared with a sequencing of activities, teaching materials and tasks/tests on photocopied paper, and the homework to be done. The only teaching tools were the chalkboard, textbooks and photocopied materials.

The school has an after-school support-cum-study system. An hour (3-4pm) on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday is set aside either for learners to study or for extra lessons. Also in this period, learners who so wish can get into the computer room to use the internet for investigations and projects. This afternoon study period is not compulsory for day scholars in Grades 8 and 9, but it is compulsory for all Grade 10s. The children residing in the hostel have evening study between 6pm and 8pm, and two hours of study every Sunday. The JSC candidates had a holiday camp last year and this will continue. The learners said that not doing homework is “*not tolerated*”, and the teachers check that homework has been done. The learners report that they can be caned for not doing homework. The learners were of the view that their teachers are committed, and that they themselves are expected to show commitment.

The primary school next to this school is the feeder school. The School Board members, parents and Regional Office officials reported that it is a good primary school, and that as the main feeder school for School L it contributes to School L's performance.

The School Board members notes that they would like to appoint more Nama- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers, the rationale being that these are the languages spoken in most of the learners' homes, and if teachers and learners share a home language, the teachers could use

this language to support their teaching, even though it is understood and accepted that English is the medium of instruction. According to the parents, when the school had a large number of Nama- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers, the standards were higher as teachers would draw on these languages to aid their teaching. The principal bemoaned the fact that people from the region were not taking up teaching, with the result that qualified teachers tended to be recruited from areas where people do not speak these two languages.

## **Quality and key features of the management and governance processes**

There are two HoDs, one of whom was on maternity leave at the time of the visit. The principal shared minutes of the first management meeting of the year, held on 10 January, prior to the schools opening, in which the two main agenda items were the allocation of administrative duties to the two HoDs, and the allocation of teachers to the HoDs for the management and monitoring of those teachers' work. The latter includes class visits, inspection and support of CASS and written work, and inspection of lesson plans. Both the School Board members and the Regional Office officials described the principal as being firm but not a dictator. They also described him as fair and caring, having no favouritism, communicating openly and not being averse to taking on responsibility and being accountable. Apparently he is the examinations officer for the school, which is a role that most principals delegate. After the Regional Office met with schools to share its analysis of the examination and assessment statistics with them, he is the one principal who took the statistical analysis of his school to use in planning with his staff. The principal is well respected in the community, as are the teachers generally. The School Board had dismissed the one teacher who had been violent and abusive to learners.

The school is not selective in its admissions. The learners confirmed that they had not heard of any peer's application for entry being rejected due to their primary school results. Any rejection, they said, would be due to the school being full.

There are very clear guidelines from the Ministry regarding schemes of work, lesson planning and CASS, and there are tools available for management and monitoring of teachers, such as that for the conduct of class visits and checking of CASS. The basis of the management and monitoring of teachers is the job description of the HoDs. Each year teachers sign an agreement which specifies their subject areas, duties to support core learning and teaching, and allocation of supervision of extracurricular activities. The teachers' performance is managed using this agreement, and it also ensures that the teachers adhere to the guidelines regarding schemes of work, lesson planning, CASS, setting of examinations, etc. Each teacher has to keep a file which is checked at least once per term. Generally, performance is discussed, improvements are identified and support is given within the school, through collaboration and sharing of ideas, tips and materials.

Three levels of targets are set and agreed in the school: a school target for the JSC pass rate; teacher targets per subject and per class; and learner targets which are agreed with the learners and their parents. The targets provide a basis for monitoring performance. The teaching staff and management do professional development in-house. Novice teachers are inducted by the Life Skills teacher and a mentor allocated for the year. Apparently there is also an attempt to have an active cluster system which should provide more support for teachers in this school and

other schools in the area. The principal mentioned that they have twinning arrangements with schools in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, mainly with regard to cultural activities. The Regional Office officials acknowledged that they tend to concentrate their support on the weak schools. They have undertaken to support this school and other well/high-performing schools, particularly in the use of the monitoring tools and CASS practices, which apparently are a weakness in all of the schools.

Teachers for the school are selected by a panel drawn from the school, which includes Schools Board members. Recommendations are made to the Regional Office, which makes the final decision. The teachers mentioned that there is not much support from the subject advisory at the Regional Office; even on request they rarely come. There are no subject advisors for Commerce. Subject advisors support only new teachers – a situation that the Regional Office confirmed. The school does engage with the circuit inspector. The teachers complained that there are often delays in finalising appointments of teachers, paying the teachers' salaries and the like. The Life Skills teacher has been trained to provide counselling, and liaises with social workers. There are health visits in the school calendar, and the local clinic helps with hostel health (e.g. a case of TB).

The finances seem to be well managed. The School Board is engaged in the budgeting process from the outset, and it is the Board's responsibility to take the budget to the parent community. The school treasurer gives monthly reports (with the principal's assistance). The School Board is consulted before the school buys anything. Even before the introduction of the grant system, the school was able to utilise its limited funds for core business, as is illustrated by the home economics, technical drawing and computer rooms, the library, the internet access and the good copying facilities. Until the recent grant, the budget was limited with no funds for sporting and extramural activities. The school tries to raise funds through hosting events such as a beauty pageant and bazaars, and also requests donations from parents and the business community.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

Parents' meetings are held every term, and parents have the opportunity to speak to the teachers and go through their children's books. Attendance is quite poor as many parents do not live in the area. There are local parents who are active and support the school and their children. The School Board was newly elected at the time of the visit and had yet to hold its first meeting of the year, but it already had some ideas for improvements. The previous Board was active and involved.

## **Analysis of why the school is successful**

The principal was cited regularly as the main reason for the school performing well. The Regional Office said that this was perhaps the most critical factor in its success. The principal has been at the school for some time, and lives in the community. He seems to be committed to the school, and has a management style that is firm but not dictatorial. He is well respected in the community, and the parents seem to trust his leadership. He has assisted the school in managing its limited resources well, ensuring that spending is prioritised for the core business of learning and teaching. He seems to have a participatory management style with his HoDs. He does not seem averse to taking accountability for both core and administrative functions.

The parents of local learners are actively involved in the school. The parents of those from the settlements and farms have challenges getting to the school and engaging, with the result that the teachers and hostel supervisors have to play the role of surrogate parents, but it seems that do this willingly.

The average class size is 23 which is well below the national norm for junior secondary schools. This means that the teachers can give learners individual attention and mark the class work and homework regularly. The learners also have enough textbooks and other resources.

The extra lessons and structured study time that this school provides, along with the teachers' commitment to running these, is a key factor in the school's performance. The compensatory lessons are possible only because the teachers are committed and all are accommodated on the school site or in the location next door. The support system for struggling learners is a value addition. The collaboration and team spirit among the teachers was quite evident. It is possible that other factors such as the school's location in an area with little or no entertainment further promotes the school's success. The principal and some of the teachers are 'of the soil', in that they come from the area, and this could be an added advantage.

Although target setting is expected in all Namibian schools, the way that this school has adopted the policy and taken ownership of the targets, setting them at every level in the school, again indicates its commitment to academic success.

The teachers, hostel supervisors and principal have provided a caring environment for the children. Evidence of this lies partly in the cleanliness of every part of the school in spite of some dilapidation and the lack of beautification features, and partly in the cleanliness and neatness of the children despite most coming from poor households. The caring environment is supported by high levels of discipline on the part of both the learners and the teachers.

# Comparison Schools

## School M

### Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 11 English, Grade 12 Ordinary Level Physical Science and Grade 11 Ordinary Level Maths. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), the male HoD, 2 female teachers, 6 learners in Grades 11 and 12 (2 boys, 4 girls), 5 School Board members (3 female, 2 male) and 4 parents (1 male, 3 female). The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit, but it took the school a long time to do the latter.

### Details of the school

Number of learners	705 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	32
Percentage of teachers qualified	100%
Learner-teacher ratio	22

This school is located in a suburb of Katutura Township in Windhoek. Currently 705 learners are enrolled, about 55% of whom are female. The school has a high number of OVCs, though we suspect that the number said to be orphans, being 198, is inclusive of all OVCs. Most of the learners come from the closest suburbs in Katutura. The number of classrooms per grade varies from 3 to 8: Grade 8 has 8 classrooms and Grades 11 and 12 each have 3. The medium of instruction is English for all grades. Most of the learners speak Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero, Afrikaans or Oshiwambo. The extracurricular activities include sports, debating, a school choir, educational excursions and life skills programmes such as “My Future is My Choice”.

Regarding teachers’ qualifications, 5 have professional diplomas, 26 have professional Bachelor degrees and one has a post-degree professional qualification. The school has one administrative support staff member with O-levels. Two teachers were absent on the day of the visit. The school does not experience the problems of teacher absenteeism, and among the learners, only Grade 8s exhibit a high level of absenteeism.

Many of the learners’ parents work as domestic workers and street vendors, selling anything from cool drinks to sweets and meat for survival – and in some cases the children themselves start selling after school to help generate more income. Other parents are government institutional workers, or are self-employed running shebeens from their homes, or are unemployed. A few have two jobs in order to make ends meet. Some learners who are orphans or not living with their parents are being looked after by their grandparents and depend on their pensions and social grants. Most of the households are overcrowded, and given the high unemployment rate,



many households struggle to provide basic essentials such as food, a school uniform and study materials for their children.

Low to semi-high literacy rates typify the school's community. Water and electricity are available at the school, but the same cannot be said for the local residents, as most do not have electricity and they collect water at a central point which for some entails a 2 km walk. The nearest clinic is quite close to the school and the nearest hospital is about a 15-minute drive away. Transport is readily available by municipal buses and taxis, but affording the fares presents a big problem for many people, this being one of the reasons for parents sending their children to this school within walking distance.

The parents and community seem to understand the importance of education, as there was a high turnout for the parent and School Board focus groups, even though the principal informed them about these discussions that morning. The meetings were held in the evening as most work as domestic workers in the more affluent suburbs or attend to their small business during the day. The meetings were attended by 4 parents of high-performing learners and 5 School Board members. The parents seem to be involved in their children's education. They do this by encouraging them and making sure that they have all the basics required for school. However, they did not know much about how the school is run, and do not have much contact with the teachers or principal between parents' meetings, which are usually held on Saturdays and are well attended. The principal mentioned that the school hosted the parents' trimester meeting on the previous Saturday which was also well attended.

The learners said that they have the support of their parents, who motivate and encourage them to do their best so as break the poverty cycle. Those who are able to help their children with homework do so, but most of the time learners get help from their older siblings or friends. One concern of the parents was that some learners do not understand the importance of education as they roam the streets after school, not taking their studies seriously, and are in the company of "*bad friends*" who have long dropped out of school and pressure these children into using drugs and alcohol. According to the principal, the school works together with the community police and the crime prevention networks to patrol and keep an eye on the learners and ensure that they reach their homes safely and are not in bars, as the school is situated in a street lined with shebeens and with a consequent high crime rate.

The school has a number of specialist education buildings including a library and computer rooms with 46 computers. However, these buildings are not operational as there are no teachers available to run them. The school does have a fairly well-equipped laboratory. There are few teaching aids on the walls. The buildings are made of brick, and every door and window has burglar bars. The fence is made of barbed wire. The environment is not conducive for study due to noise pollution from the bars and shebeens nearby. Another factor hampering performance is the social problems experienced by learners at home. The learners are disruptive and ill-disciplined, and pay little attention to the principal and teachers. The teachers are disorganised, strolling to class with classes starting 10 minutes after the bell had rung.

The school grounds are extremely dirty, with litter and weeds everywhere, despite the presence of a number of large rubbish bins. The respondents attribute this to the fact that there is only one

cleaner available for the entire school. There are 8 toilet units in total – 4 for the learners (2 for girls and 2 for boys), which were extremely dirty, and 4 for the teachers, which were somewhat cleaner. The school administration seemed to be quite poor; it took a long time to fill in the data collection instrument. The school grounds are fairly secure during the day, but at night a security guard is needed as the area is generally dangerous after dark.

The school yard is relatively big, with a soccer field in a poor condition and thus not used. The school buildings are in a good condition, owing to the fact that the school is relatively new – operating since 2007. However, the facilities are not well maintained; there are a few broken windows, and in some classrooms the skirting board is being eaten by termites.

The school has a relatively low dropout rate, but in 2015, 27 Grade 8s dropped out of school or stopped attending school. The repetition rate is around 40%, and Grade 8 has the highest number of repeaters. The staff-retention rate is high, with only two teachers leaving in the last year.

The School Board said that there is no corporal punishment in the school.

## School performance history and present

According to the circuit ranking, this school ranked twelfth in the JSC results in 2015. In that year the school’s pass rates for the JSC and NSSCO were 34.6% and 34% respectively. The Regional Office would be completing its analysis in the first week of February 2016. The teachers said that the school’s low performance is attributed to the fact that it has become a “*dumping ground*”. It receives “*below-average*” learners from the Regional Office, and does not apply any selection criteria for enrolment. The Regional Office officials said that the school gets the “*leftovers*” after other schools have taken the more successful learners. Furthermore, the principal said, due to the school’s location, it rarely attract learners from further afield.

The Ordinary Level and Higher Level pass rates are shown in the tables below. These tables show that fewer than half of the learners passed Grade 12.

### NSSCO

Year	Total enrolled	Number of passes		
		M	F	T
2013	61	6	17	23
2014	64	10	12	22
2015	69	10	14	24

### NSSCH

Year	Total enrolled	Number of passes		
		M	F	T
2013	2	2	-	2
2014	4	4	-	4
2015	4	4	-	4

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

In the three lessons observed (Grade 11 English Second language, Grade 12 Physical Science Ordinary Level and Grade 11 Maths Ordinary Level), the teachers were not well prepared; in fact it was noticeable that very little effort had gone into lesson preparation. In the English

class the teacher started off by checking and correcting the previous day's homework. She managed to provide incorrect responses to some of the learners' answers. Thereafter she gave the learners a class exercise for about 7 minutes while she sat down and did other work. The exercise was on prepositions, which seems inappropriate for a Grade 11 class. The exercise was corrected, and then she gave homework, instructed the learners to start with it in class, and went back to her seat.

The Physical Science class was somewhat better, but also inappropriate for the grade. The learners were seated in groups, but the teacher did not use any group work. She demonstrated a practical example of filtration and distillation. Then the lesson moved on to test corrections. There were only 14 learners in the class, and it appeared that more than half of them had failed the test. However, the teacher had forgotten to provide handouts on some of the content of the test. Class participation was minimal as the learners did not seem to understand what was being taught. Two learners answered all of the questions asked.

The Mathematics teacher seemed more prepared and had handouts. The lesson started with test corrections, and it appeared that most learners had performed poorly in the test. Thereafter the teacher introduced and explained a new topic, namely "improper and proper fractions and percentages", which also seemed to be grade inappropriate. Learners had to share calculators as not all of them own one. The teacher was an HoD, and due to office shortages other teachers would walk in and out of the class while he taught, disrupting the lesson. The teacher was a bit more attentive to the learners than the other teachers observed, and walked around the class to help those having difficulty after he had given out a task. The class was also a bit livelier than the others, as the teacher used humour to capture the learners' attention.

There was no group work in any class; teacher-centred methods dominated and the teachers rarely checked for learner understanding while continuing to give tasks. Class participation was generally low, and some learners looked very bored or lost in the lessons. One learner said, "*I feel scared to ask questions in class because the teacher's response would be why were you not listening when I was talking ... explaining,*" hence learners feel victimised and do not ask when they do not understand, their experience being that very few teachers are willing to explain concepts which have not been understood. One of the School Board members mentioned that her daughter often had to struggle through homework on concepts that the daughter said had not been explained in class. There were no textbooks used even by the teachers, who relied on handouts. The school year was in its fourth week and the learners had still not received the syllabus from the teachers. Homework was given by all the teachers.

In line with recent policy, the school had developed a compulsory formal study programme for all grades for two hours per day from Monday to Thursday. They have a weekly cycle of tests scheduled in the school calendar, and a few other tests are set by teachers during subject lessons. The teachers have built in support for struggling learners, and give extra lessons on the weekends, especially for Grade 10s and 12s. The teachers also provide extra classes two to three weeks before the national examination, which are dedicated to revision.

There is generally a shortage of textbooks for the whole school, so learners share. According to learners, the Grade 11 and 12 classes also share textbooks, so if the Grade 11s are given work

from a certain textbook, then the Grade 12s cannot use that book. The parents complained that because learners share textbooks, they struggle to study for tests. The teachers said that they buy their own teaching materials or make use of the Teachers' Resource Centre. The learners cannot access the computer room and library, but there is a community library no more than 2 km away from the school, which they use for the internet and projects, and as a study centre.

Targets are set at school, class and individual level, and are monitored by the management, who also analyse the previous years' pass rates and come up with improvement strategies, such as the formal study sessions and remedial teaching.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The principal, who has been at the school for almost four years, seems to battle to manage the school and keep the teachers motivated. The learners are extremely ill-disciplined, and truancy is part of a daily routine, with learners hiding behind classroom blocks and toilets. Teachers give classes while they are seated, and some do not bother to turn up for their classes at all. Learners are left with exercises to complete which few do while most are being disruptive. The principal is supported by four HoDs who help to manage, monitor and oversee departmental needs of the school. He also stated that they act on his behalf, teaching and planning activities for the learners. The School Board members are involved in the affairs of the school, but seem to be unhappy with the principal's leadership, believing that he is too lenient with teachers. The School Board is also not happy with the teachers. Board members are of the opinion that the teachers do not make the effort to teach their children well – or at all. The Board is involved in the recruitment and selection of teachers, and recommends the three best candidates to the Regional Office. The Board members noted that they struggle to get teachers for certain subjects, citing the example of 3 months in 2015 when they had no Maths and Physical Science teachers.

The teachers said that they are not motivated and lack inspiration. Although the principal was previously posted at a high-performing school, the teachers find him “*too lenient*” and “*not firm*”, and said that there is no implementation and follow through of policies. They claimed that there is no support from management as they concentrate more on teaching and neglect their managerial duties. For their part, management bemoaned the inadequate support from teachers, stating that they do not put in effort or go the extra mile to ensure quality teaching. The Regional Office seemed to agree with management and the principal, adding that the former principal was weak and lacked competence to lead the school, creating a legacy of under-performance.

The principal carries a great deal of respect within the community according to the parents, who said that the community appreciates his efforts to ensure that teaching and learning take place. The parents described the principal as a man of principles, who adds a personal touch to his work as he goes as far as calling parents when high-performing learners' grades drop, and continuously motivates them to do better. The principal would like to see a hostel added to the school, as this would help curb some of the social challenges faced by learners at home.

The school's finances seem to be well managed for its operation, and the school receives quite a few donations from the Chinese Youth League through the Chinese Embassy which donated plants in 2011. The school was also part of the Millennium Challenge Account School Project

which saw the renovation of classrooms in 2015. All agreed that the school is inadequately resourced, but is managing its few resources well, especially now that there is guaranteed funding.

## **Community/stakeholder engagement**

Some of the local community supports the school. Parents' meetings are well attended. They are held on Saturday to accommodate those unable to attend during the week due to work and other personal commitments. However, the parents do not use the opportunity provided by the school to check on their children's performance. A local catering company provides a meal for the learners once a week at break time. The school also receives motivational speakers from local NGOs such as Star for Life to encourage the learners and give study tips. The police work closely with the school, combating crimes and speaking to the learners about crime, and patrolling to ensure that the children arrive safely at their homes.

## **Analysis of why the school is unsuccessful**

The principal seems to have little or no control over the school, and allows the learners and teachers to do as they please with no consequences. The management does not offer sufficient support and advice to the principal and teachers. The staff exude a sense of low morale and do not collaborate. The teachers lack motivation, dedication and commitment. The learners respond with similar attitudes. The principal should set the tone and agenda of the school, but his influence seems to breed laziness, as there are no firm rules and there is a lack of accountability in the school. The previous principal may be responsible for the decline in the school. Apparently he was nearing retirement and paid little attention to the school. The Regional Office officials said that the current principal had run a high-performing school in the north, and it was unfortunate that he had inherited a school which had been badly managed, and he was struggling to turn it around. The regional officials realise that they need to provide the principal with a lot of support to turn the school around as they believe he can do. There is a lack of commitment from the staff and some of the learners. Targets are set in the school by learners and teachers, but not much is done to motivate learners to meet or exceed these targets, and there is no serious enforcement of these targets. A formal study schedule is set, and teachers attend the sessions because it is compulsory to do so, they do not attend with commitment.

The School Board seemed determined to put in effort to have their school perform better. They said that if School J, which is in the same area, can perform so well, they do not see why this school should not do the same. Their main areas of focus for improvement were: improving learners' commitment to learn; motivating parents to be involved in their children's education by monitoring their children's work; getting learners to visit other schools to see how other learners are performing and committing to studying; and appealing to teachers to be committed and getting them to learn from better-performing schools in the area.

The average class size is 26, which is well below the national norm for secondary schools. This means that the teachers should be able to give learners individual attention and mark their class work and homework regularly. Learners should also have enough textbooks and other resources, but this was not the case. Some learners emphasised that they felt that their teachers cared, even though they are not strict and lack discipline.

# School N

## Who did we see?

We observed three lessons: Grade 12 Maths, Grade 12 English and Grade 10 Physical Science. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with the principal (male), 2 senior teachers (1 male, 1 female), 4 teachers (3 male, 1 female), 6 learners in senior classes, 5 School Board members (2 male, 3 female) and 4 parents (1 male, 3 female). The learning walk was conducted and the data sheet completed during the visit.

## Details of the school

Number of learners	420 (Grades 8-12)
Number of teachers	18
Percentage of teachers qualified	94%
Learner-teacher ratio	23.3

This secondary school is located a few kilometres off the main Trans-Zambezi/Trans-Caprivi Highway, 110 km from Katima Mulilo in Zambezi Region. It includes Grades 8-12, and has a total enrolment of 208 in Grades 11 and 12. There are 108 girls and 100 boys, and boys predominate in Grade 12 by 51 to 47. The school has 137 orphans. It also has some 20 San learners who are bussed in each term. About 50% of the learners (according to the principal) are local and the remaining 50% come from all over Zambezi, and are housed in the hostels which take 192 learners. The school takes in many new learners at Grades 8 and 9 and particularly at Grade 11 (83 this year in the latter). The school has few dropouts, officially, although last year 10 or 11 learners got pregnant. They were mainly living in temporary shelters rented from the community with no parental supervision. As the school requires that all Grade 10 and 12 learners can attend study classes at 15h00-17h00 and 19h00-21h00 every day except Friday and on the weekends, learners who are not accommodated in the hostels resort to this solution. Few learners repeat, but in both Grades 9 and 11, weak learners, with their parents' involvement in the decision, are held back a year. They are referred to as "listening learners" when doing their first year in that grade.

The school claims to be non-selective. It take all of the learners from the nearby primary school and then top up with other learners at Grade 9 and 11. Many of the learners who apply and enter Grade 11 have not scored well in the JSC. As the school is fairly remote and has a serious water problem, it is not attractive and therefore has little ability to attract or select learners. Teachers compared their open policy with those of other schools which select and even give learners exams to pass before enrolling them.

The school has 18 teachers, 13 of whom are male. Seventeen have professional diplomas or degrees, and one has a science degree, thus all are qualified. All 18 reside in houses belonging

to the school. However, the rate of absenteeism among staff in the last year is reported to be unacceptably high. Teachers who go to town over the weekend often are not back in post until late Monday morning.

The community is mostly dependent on subsistence farming (maize, sorghum and millet) and fishing. The soil is very sandy. Rain is increasingly unreliable. Many of the learners stay with their grandmothers and so depend on pensions and farming. There is limited access to livestock in most families. The main form of housing is traditional huts made of mud-clay, surrounded by reed enclosures. Income levels are low.

The school is composed of two groups of single-storey brick classrooms on concrete and brick bases, under tin roofs. The school has a large administration block with separate office space for most teachers and a separate staff room. The school has a science laboratory which is not well stocked with equipment and has no chemicals at all. Most windows are intact, but there is a small shortage of desks and chairs, with those sent for mending by the Regional Office reportedly not returned – it was reported that they were sent to other schools. The admin block and classrooms are connected to mains electricity. The key problem is water. The school's water pump which brought untreated river water to the school and hostels has been broken for months – however the principal got the pump working on the day of the visit. This was after pressure was placed on the Regional Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry as the school was concerned that it might have to send all of the boarders home. For the last months the learners had not had any water apart from untreated river water from the borehole which they had to fetch in buckets to wash in. As no water was available for the toilets, the learners have been forced to go in the bush. This has created some safety issues for girls who feel uncomfortable as the 'young boys' hide in the bush to watch them, and there is a danger of stumbling across wild animals in the bush, as the school is in a conservancy area. The hostel's fence has been broken down on one side, and the school itself has no fence, and a public gravel road runs through the school to the clinic and the primary school.

The school has a Teachers' Resource Centre which is non-operational and is being used by a teacher as a dwelling. The books are stacked on shelves and the 13 computers for the TRC are locked in the storeroom and have never been used. The library run by the Life Skills teacher, is operational and reasonably well stocked, and is used extensively by learners. It has only one computer which is used for administration, as are the other two computers in the school.

The school is set with a number of mature trees, but there has been little attempt to beautify the environment, which is sandy. The school is surrounded by teachers' houses made of brick under tin. None of the classrooms had any displays or learning aids on the walls and the learning environment seemed sterile. However, about half of the classes had the desks arranged in groups, and group work was being used quite widely across the school.

## **School performance history and present**

The school was selected on the basis of its 2014 JSC and NSSCO results, which were good. However, the results for 2015, following a change-over of principals, were fairly disastrous. The reasons for the drop in performance dominated all of the interviews.

## Quality and key features of the teaching and learning process

On entering the school at 07h30, the school was quiet and most teachers were in class teaching. The school seemed to be fully functional in the second week of the year. However, it turned out that some classes were without a teacher through absenteeism.

We observed three lessons: a Grade 12 Maths lesson, a Grade 12 English lesson and a Grade 10 Physical Science lesson. Teaching aids were used only in the Physical Science lesson, and the teacher used a measuring cylinder in an experiment to show displacement of liquid by a rock. All the three groups in the class did their own experiment and compared the results, although the teacher could have let each group discuss what they had found and the implications to reach the results and conclusions that he provided. The Grade 12 lessons were competently presented, but lacked the use of aids, and none of the three teachers used a plan, although two of them seemed to be working to a plan. All three teachers clearly know their subject but perhaps would benefit by closer supervision. Teachers were sticking to the timetable and were moving between classrooms on the bell. Learners were in class, with very few moving about during lessons.

The Grade 12 Maths teacher was particularly impressive. He stated the lesson objectives, and used prior knowledge of the learners, and got those who were not participating to engage. He played a facilitator role, and clearly the learners were understanding the lesson, and they were questioning him. He got different viewpoints from across the class before opening the discussion. Once he was satisfied with the learners' level of engagement and knowledge, he gave them an activity based on relevant questions. While they worked, he walked around checking their work and also marking it as they completed it.

## Quality and key features of the management and governance processes

The respondents made clear that there was a contrast between the management styles and capacity of the former principle who left the school in February/March 2015 and the present principal who was then appointed.

The present principal is sincere and seems to have good intentions, but he has faced a series of setbacks and challenges which he has struggled to overcome.

There are two functional HoDs, both of whom are middle-aged males. They seem competent if uninspiring. The HoD for Maths and Science passed on in 2015, and everyone agreed that his loss on top of the previous principal leaving along with four other teachers impacted greatly on the school. The principal has been allowed to introduce some strange ideas such as using the class captains to monitor each teachers' attendance and whether they had taught in line with their plan. Such lack of trust in the teachers is not likely to see results improve.

Proper monitoring of teaching is done by the principal and the HoDs. The principal has modelled good practice by allowing the HoDs to observe his lessons, and in turn he observes their lessons. However there is no wider use of peer-support supervision. Teachers said that they saw this in practice in a school they had visited and they thought it should be introduced in their school.



The system of study periods in the afternoons and evenings of Monday to Thursday has been maintained since before 2014. All learners are expected to attend the two-hour afternoon study period and hostel-based learners are also expected to attend the evening one at 19h00-21h00. Grade 8, 9 and 11 learners use the time to catch up on work and do homework, with their teachers offering remedial lessons to those who are struggling. Grade 10 and 12 learners are given extra lessons during this time. All study periods are supervised by teachers. The concern over results last year had led to agreement in a meeting a few days before that exam class learners will come into school for early-morning “compensatory timetable” lessons starting at around 04h30 or 05h00. While this works reasonably well for the 192 learners in the hostels, it leaves the day learners hungry and very tired – and many of them have no support to make food.

Homework fell away to a large extent last year, having been a part of the school culture in previous years. It had now been agreed among the staff that they will set homework for every lesson. However, according to many of the teachers, this regularity is such that it is unworkable, as they will not have time to do all the marking. Eventually it was clear that they had already decided to largely ignore this new ‘rule’. This, along with other rules, is on a 23-rule list which all learners and teachers are meant to follow and obey. These rules were being printed at the time of the visit. In addition the school has set targets for itself and for individual teachers and learners to achieve this year. The aim is for each exam-class teacher to finish the syllabus as early as possible to maximise revision time.

There was no evidence of corporal punishment being used. The code of conduct forbids it, and new teachers are inducted into the code. The school seemed to be quite disciplined, yet the teachers believe that the learners are ill-disciplined. This may reflect on their own teaching abilities.

Absenteeism of learners and teachers was rife last year. This was not the case before, when learner absenteeism was minimal partly because teachers generally kept registers of learner attendance. This practice largely died with the leaving of some teachers and the arrival of others with different methods. The principal is particularly worried about misuse of compassionate leave. He believes that he can monitor sick and annual leave, but sees compassionate leave as open to abuse. It seems that the principal is not keeping adequate records of leave taken.

Teachers are employed through a process whereby the school and the School Board have the final say in who gets appointed. The principal is determined to use this power to increase the number of female teachers in the school. The school recommends the preferred candidate to the Regional Office for appointment.

Induction of new teachers to the school is practised but is not too extensive. For transferred teachers it involves familiarisation with the school’s code of conduct and an orientation process, but for teachers who are new to the profession, induction is a more extensive process, which is run by the department in which the teacher will work, and covers teaching methods, discipline, and school ethos and dress.

The principal and senior teachers believe that the relationship between the school and the Regional Office is positive, and that they and the school get adequate support from the office.

The principal cited some examples of such assistance, including the gas for cooking in the hostels, diesel for the water pump and the fixing of the pump. Some teachers had cited the same example of the water to indicate how slow the Regional Office is in responding to the school's needs. The senior teachers commented that the school is also well served by the subject advisors who are responsive when called upon, but who tend to focus on schools with real problems. The principal also indicated that the school is assisted by various other government ministries and local professionals such as nurses, social workers and agricultural officers. It also gets some financial assistance from the conservancy.

## Community/stakeholder engagement

The main point emphasised by all respondents was that parents used to engage with the school but have stopped doing so. The reasons for this were discussed, and some of the main reasons were as follows:

- The new principal does not instil cooperation and teamwork, like the previous principal had done.
- The sharing of information with with parents and the School Board has stopped.
- It seems that the teachers have fallen into factions, which is undermining the school. Formerly they all worked together. Interestingly, the staff room seemed to be used much less than the teachers' offices, which indicates that teachers try not to meet as a group.
- The School Board members reported that teachers are now having relationships with school learners, which has led to the lack of respect that the community increasingly has for the teachers.

Under the previous principal the parents at a School Board meeting had suggested contributing N\$10 per month for a photocopier. In 2015 this arrangement was stopped and parents then refused even to attend meetings at the school. It was unclear why this change had occurred so quickly. However, the School Board members were not entirely negative, as they reported with approval that the new principal had organised an exchange visit with another region to join other teachers in teaching each other's children and co-teaching to improve teaching. He is also the first principal to take results seriously, because he makes predictions based on early results, and he also does proper budgeting.

The School Board members said that the previous principal engaged with both the community and the School Board constructively. He clearly made all feel engaged and fully involved in the school.

The principal and teachers claim that they are well respected in the community. One member of the School Board agreed, on the basis of the position he held in the community. However another School Board member disagreed, saying that the principal allowed abuses to go on, such as some teachers drinking and dating learners. While the School Board members claim that the present principal is a good leader, this is contradicted by the community's reaction to him. Equally they argued that teachers are in the school all the time, largely due to the new circuit inspector. However, the inspector cannot monitor the school so closely as to see each and every abuse.

## Analysis of why the school is unsuccessful

This school has experienced, in the space of just two years, great success and real failure. The reasons for this were discussed extensively. The senior teachers made clear that the success and the present failure have nothing to do with the resourcing. The core reason, the teachers agreed, was that the principal has changed. Even though the previous principal stayed for only one year, he made a big impression on the staff. They admitted that under the previous principal the school had a few suspect practices, such as holding back a small number of Grade 10 learners with parental agreement, so that they could do Grade 10 twice. These were learners who were sure to fail otherwise. These learners are known as “listening learners” because they attend the lessons in their first Grade 10 year but do not register for the exam that year. They register in their second year in Grade 10. The teachers claimed that this helped such learners to pass and kept down the school’s failure rate.

Unlike the previous principal, the present principal appears not to take control of policies and directives, but lets them control the school. Many examples were given from the introduction last year by the Regional Office of five hours of study sessions every Saturday and Sunday for hostel dwellers. It was claimed that the previous principal would have shown the Regional Office that he was already doing much of what the head office wanted successfully, and so would have avoided the introduction of unpopular weekend lessons for the hostel dwellers. The present principal lacks this self-assurance, with the result that about 50 learners vacated the hostel to live in informal huts and thereby avoid the weekend study lessons. The result was that the school lost influence over these learners, and the ones who left the hostel scored worse results than those who stayed in the hostel. The teachers complain that their ‘bush allowance’ is lower than that of the teachers working in the primary school next door. It was noted that the principal treated these problems as if they were defeating him. This leads to staff losing confidence in the principal and the school.

Equally the present principal appears not to take control of problems, but lets them fester. The issue of the bush allowances and the water situation should have been easy to take up with the Regional Office and have them resolved, yet both are unresolved, and have left the principal looking ineffective, even though the last principal also failed to solve these problems – but he had an aura of success around him, so this failure was not noticed. The aura of failure around the present principal seems to have extended out into the community. Parents who were very willing to attend meetings and were called by the last principal now refuse to come to meetings at the school. They claim that this is partly due to abuses committed by the teachers. It was unclear whether these abuses are happening only now, or whether they were just ignored under the previous principal.



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