

IMPACT OF THE NAMIBIAN EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF GRADE TEN LEARNERS IN
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ACROSS THE KHOMAS REGION
BETWEEN THE YEARS 2007 AND 2010

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the Namibian Educational Language Policy in the subject of English, through the investigation and analysis of the Grade Ten English as a Second Language examinations results for the Khomas region of Namibia between the years 2007 and 2010.

This stage of a pupil's education is a key one, as it is close to the final years of their Secondary education, after which a learner either enters Further Education or employment. Close to half of all Grade Ten learners in Namibia in 2010 did not score a sufficient total points score in their examinations to progress to Grade Eleven, leading to Doctor Abraham Iyambo (the current Minister of Education) ordering an urgent review of the reasons for this failure rate, as well as declaring that these students must be allowed to repeat the year.

This dissertation therefore focuses upon whether the results in English as a Second Language have been declining over a period of time, both nationally and within the Khomas region, and asks the participants involved in the study their views regarding why the Grade Ten results have been declining and what actions must be taken in an effort to improve the results.

The study mainly uses empirical research through the use of questionnaires and comparative analysis of the Grade Ten English as a Second Language results from 2007 to 2010. The topic's main findings are that whilst the results declined nationally from 2007 to 2009 (with better performances in the subject in 2010), the Khomas region has performed consistently and thus the results are of a more national concern.

Therefore, the dissertation concludes that more research is required in order to identify the specific subjects and geographical areas where learners are experiencing difficulties and that, given that the decline has been over a number of years, the language policy must be reevaluated.

The study argues for examinations results to be thoroughly analysed by researchers on a yearly basis, and that pupils would benefit from an increased exposure to literature at a much earlier age. In addition, the dissertation recommends that a Bachelor of Education should be offered at a postgraduate level, following the completion of a Bachelor of English.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

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To my late mother: There is not one day that goes by where I do not think about you. I miss you but I will always treasure the memories of you and you will always be in my heart.

Dedicated to the memory of my mother – my rock, and the most wonderful human being I will ever have the privilege to know.

May the road rise to meet you,

May the wind be always at your back,

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

May the rains fall soft upon your fields,

And, until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palms of his hands.

(Traditional Irish blessing)

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the Polytechnic of Namibia. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the Polytechnic of Namibia.

Nicholas Stewart Aston, October 2011

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Problem/Question

This research topic explores Namibia's Language Policy by focusing upon its relevance to education, specifically with regards to English as the compulsory medium of instruction in teaching and English as a Second Language¹.

Although questions have been asked previously as to the proficiency of Namibian learners in both written and spoken English, the examination results of Grade Ten students across Namibia in 2010 have become a matter of significant national interest. Consequentially, concerns have been raised amongst language policy planners, teachers, academics, the media² and the general public as to the reasons for the declining pass rates at this level and who are responsible for striving to improve the performance of pupils.

The statistics from the 2010 Grade Ten examination results illustrate the reasons for the level of concern, as well as the scale of the challenge currently facing Namibia. Last year, close to half of the 33,570 full-time pupils (48.8 percent) studying at Grade Ten level in Namibia failed to progress to Grade Eleven due to their total number of points falling below the minimum required to gain admission to Grade Eleven. These results led to The Namibia Teachers' Union³ arguing that the Ministry of Education must introduce a supplementary examination for all Grade Ten learners who scored between seventeen to twenty two points last year (<http://www.namibian.com.na/news->

¹ Henceforth ESL.

² Although I refer to some media commentary in the course of this study, it is my desire to utilise educational resources more extensively, given that this study focuses more upon the context of schooling.

³ Henceforth NANTU.

articles/national/full-story/archive/2011/january/article/nantu-calls-for-grade-10-supplementary-exam/).

Thus, the topic itself is broad due to the number of students that would be investigated if my research explored the entire country, particularly if one were to analyse each subject of every Grade Ten student. I therefore shall limit my research specifically to Grade Ten, as this is a key point of a pupil's education in Namibia as they prepare for the final years of their education and either employment or Further Education. Furthermore, I shall delimit the study by focusing upon the subject of ESL.

Since English is the official language of Namibia, and was chosen to improve a Namibian's job prospects and linkages with the global market, it can be thought that it is imperative that students are both literate in the language and can express their thoughts and feelings effectively. When one considers that many of the textbooks which children read are written in English and that the medium of instruction at Grade Ten is English it is thus imperative that pupils can comprehend what is being communicated to them. At the same time however, as I shall discuss in more detail later, it must be pointed out that English is not a first language for the majority of Namibians and hence the focus upon ESL, rather than as a first language.

1.2 Background to the research problem/question

The challenges facing Language Policy and Planning⁴ in Namibia are the product of a range of historical factors over a period of more than twenty years. To begin with, I believe that the effects of the colonialist rules of Germany and South Africa must be considered.

⁴ Henceforth LPP

The Ministry of Education and Culture Namibia ('Towards Education For All: A Development Brief for Education, culture and training', 1993: 2) argues that both the German and South African periods of colonial rule deprived Namibia's black community of the right to education. Whilst education was still available, Bantu education prevented the teaching of key subjects such as mathematics.

Consequentially, the Ministry concludes, "of those who went to school, most did not go far". Apartheid segregation therefore denied the black community equal opportunities. Thus, their job prospects and the capitalist notion of wealth creation were severely limited.

As a result of denying equal educational opportunities and enforcing many black Namibians to work in unskilled and semi-skilled professions under apartheid rule, many thus experienced increased difficulties in gaining admission to Further Education and, ultimately, fully prospering in their chosen careers. Therefore, in declaring that education should be for all, the Namibian Government aimed to address the imbalances of not only education, but additionally the social and economic inequalities that came with the deprivation of education before independence.

As a result of gaining independence in 1990, Namibia desired to create two important strands leading to their self-identity. Firstly, it wished to separate itself from the former colonial and apartheid rule of South Africa and in turn, be recognised as a country with its own culture, history and governance. Secondly, and equally important to consider, is that Namibia wished to form a national, unified identity for its citizens as Namibians. Although Namibia is a country with a wide variety of indigenous communities, as Maho (1998) discusses further, the LPP strategy of the South West African People's Organisation⁵ aimed to create a mutually recognised and accepted

⁵ Henceforth SWAPO.

collective identity (Ministry of Education and Culture Namibia, *ibid*). As the elected political party for Namibia, SWAPO pledged to move away from 'elitist' education, in favour of 'education for all' (Ministry of Education and Culture Namibia, *ibid*). Therefore, in declaring that education should be for all, the Namibian Government aimed to address the imbalances of not only education, but additionally the social and economic inequalities that came with the deprivation of education before independence.

Addressing the issues of the past and the challenges of the present however required extensive planning, deliberations and evaluation of the costs, potential problems and feasibility of the measures considered. In creating Namibia's National Development Strategy, the Government hoped: "Access to education should not be limited to a select elite, but should be open to all those who need it- especially children and those adults who previously had no opportunity to gain education" (Nujoma, *ibid*: i).

This universal right to education for all can be seen in Article 20 of the Namibian constitution. This states that: "All persons shall have the right to education... Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge" (*ibid*: 3).

SWAPO chose English as both the official language of Namibia (with each indigenous language, such as the Oshiwambo group of ten languages, recognised as national languages) and the compulsory medium of instruction in schools from Grade four., as well as being the mutual, neutral and universal language for all Namibian Government meetings and documentation.

In Education, English also forms a vital part of the curriculum. To pass Grade Ten, a pupil must score at least twenty three points across a minimum of six subjects. This must include a pass in English. However, as English can be thought of as being a foreign language to the majority of Namibians, it can be said that Namibia is part of what Jenkins (2003) refers to as an 'expanding circle'. An expanding circle is one in which the language (in this case, English) has been introduced into a country where the language has not yet reached the level of proficiency to be considered fluently spoken by the majority of people. Although this idea is found within the debate of New Englishes, it is relevant to my study because in making English the official language of the country, the Government has thus elevated the status of English. Hence, there is a perceived importance imposed upon its citizens to acquire the language in order to assimilate into the community.

Yet English was a language which many Namibians had had little exposure to, if any. This therefore raised issues in education as to how the language should be introduced and taught. Since independence, the focus has been towards communicative English – that is, an emphasis upon spoken English. The belief here is that learners must be able to communicate fluently in the language and possess a sound corpus of lexis before they can write fluently. It can be thought that after more than twenty years of independence and this approach to teaching, the aims of this strategy have been achieved. Yet, in continuing with this approach, rather than focusing upon written English (grammar in particular) grammar and syntax development may be being neglected.

As the 2010 Grade Ten results perhaps showed, not all students are achieving the standards expected of them by the government. Of the 16,383 students who failed grade ten nationally last year, 3,380 scored between 0-13 points

((<http://www.namibian.com.na/news-articles/national/full-story/archive/2011/january/article/nantu-calls-for-grade-10-supplementary-exam/>)). Such was the level of Governmental concern and media attention, Doctor Abraham Iyambo (the Minister of Education) ordered that each student who had failed Grade Ten must be allowed to repeat the year on a full-time basis.

Whilst this decision perhaps raises its own questions (particularly with regards to the increasing pressure this will put upon classroom sizes, as NANTU stated), Doctor Iyambo, the current Minister of Education, justified the decision by stating that: “This is critical as such children have a future to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country” (ibid).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Taking into account the background to Namibia’s challenges in LPP, the research problem can be stated as:

The Grade Ten results in Windhoek were lower than those in 2009 because the Namibian educational English Language Policy is not being implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the Namibian Government.

1.4 Aims of the research

The aims of the research are:

1. To identify whether a sound Language Policy exists in Namibia.
2. To investigate the awareness and understanding of both schools and subject experts with relation to the policy.
3. To investigate whether the policy has been reviewed since its implementation and who writes the policy and whether it needs to be rewritten.

4. To investigate the implementation of the policy and its success/failure.

Thus, I seek to investigate whether the language policy of Namibia is clearly perceived by teachers, or whether it is misunderstood and therefore misinterpreted and relate the findings of my research to these aims.

In addition, I shall analyse the 2010 academic results for Grade Ten students in the Khomas region by drawing contrasts and similarities between the schools and additionally comparing the results of 2010 with previous years with a view to identifying common statistics and differences between these results.

In particular, as Du Plooy (2001: 19) states, it is important to remember that “science is public”. That is to say, research should be replicable and its findings must be accessible to other researchers for future comment, analysis, critique and investigation. LPP is a constantly developing and changing field of research, and therefore it is my aim that this research will serve to provide recommendations and suggestions to the Government, schools, teachers and other critical agents in LPP decision making.

Finally, as Stewart (2002: 5) points out, research “is reflexive, or self critiquing”. Researchers, as he argues, constantly evaluate their own work and therefore I shall aim to identify where my research has both succeeded and experienced difficulties.

1.5 Research questions

Thus, the research must ask the following sub questions within its investigation.

1. Are subject experts and planners interpreting the policy differently to teachers?

2. If teachers are interpreting the language policy differently to what is written, are they consequentially teaching their pupils differently to what is outlined by the Namibian educational language policy?
3. Who writes the policy and does it need to be rewritten?
4. How do these results compare to those of previous years? In other words, are the failure rates declining or increasing? For how long has this trend been noticed? Were the results of 2010 an exception to a general pattern?

1.6 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of my study is:

“Whilst there is a language policy in place, its content and aims are not fully understood by teachers, leading to ineffective implementation”.

1.7 Rationale/Justification, significance of the study

In order for individuals to achieve their full potential and assimilate into society, LPP is thus a long-term, strategic and carefully considered procedure, which utilises the Government and stakeholders (such as schools, religious organisations and subject experts) to make carefully considered policy decisions on behalf of citizens that will benefit the country’s educational system.

It is important to consider that English was chosen as the official language of Namibia as an independent language. Although it is a global, colonial language, English was not colonial to Namibia, in contrast to Afrikaans from the apartheid rule of South Africa, or German from the previous occupation. By choosing English, the Namibian government aimed to provide all Namibians with a sense of independence and unity.

At the same time, the current concerns in LPP suggest that the use of English in education has yet to fully achieve these aims. Since the publication of last year's results, conferences on education have been held in Windhoek to discuss the strategies used in teaching and their effectiveness. In addition, teaching resources have been developed by organisations such as the British Council, who recently published a series of essays relating to LPP in the country in a book entitled 'Policy and Practice in English Language. Education in Namibia: Selected Papers from the National Conference on English as an Official Language' (2010).

A series of radio programs for teachers has additionally been developed by the British Council, which provides advice relating to teacher's concerns such as how to plan a lesson. These developments show that developing educational standards and training is an important concern at present in Namibia and that there is a view that pupils are underachieving – and have been for some time, in that much action has been taken in an effort to improve the subject knowledge and skills of teachers and to identify where greater teaching support is required. LPP, then, is not a static process. It is cyclical, and discussions such as these are an important process of rewriting and in order for the policy to be reevaluated and rewritten.

1.8 Scope, limitations and delimitations of the study

Although Namibia's population is low for a country with a large land mass, the number of students nationally is still close to thirty five thousand. The 2001 census⁶ states that Namibia's population was 1,830,330, of which 250,262 of these people lived in the Khomas region (<http://www.npc.gov.na/census/index.htm>). The area has the highest population in the country, and therefore I feel that focusing upon this region, rather than the country as a whole, will provide an ample and more manageable quantity of data to analyse and provide possible explanations for the Grade Ten results.

Similarly, both the Namibian Constitution and the Educational Policy are vast, detailed documents, which cover many subjects beyond the fundamental topic to be researched. Because of this, this study therefore focuses upon the Namibian Language Policy with regards to the use of English as the medium of instruction in teaching, rather than the Policy as a whole.

The attention that LPP and teaching have received in Namibia from the Government, experts and the media shows that the subject has become both of great importance to the country and that LPP is currently one of Namibia's greatest challenges. Action must be taken now to ensure that Namibian schoolchildren have the best possible opportunity to progress in both their education and their careers. Without action, one could argue, the poor results may continue, and thus students may consequentially lack the necessary skills which they require to gain employment and integrate into society.

1.9 Assumptions

⁶ At the time of writing, the 2011 census had recently been completed and the results of this were not yet available.

In stressing the seriousness of the problem there must be a clear reason for the failure rates. The Namibian's coverage of the 2010 Grade Ten results (<http://www.namibian.com.na/news-articles/national/full-story/archive/2011/january/article/nantu-calls-for-grade-10-supplementary-exam/>) states that "Namibia has again recorded a worrisome pass rate" and therefore that the national results have been declining for some time. At the same time, it is possible that the results in Khomas were better than those of other regions, such as remote rural areas, and therefore that the high failure rate of students is attributed to a combination of results from more rural areas, and furthermore that the challenges lie beyond the subject of English.

1.10 Definition of terms

Apartheid: The segregation and unfair treatment of the non-white population under South African rule.

Bantu Education: An educational system imposed by South African rule, whereby the non-white population were taught subjects such as religion and domestic science, rather than mathematics and science.

Capitalism: An economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by private individuals or corporations, especially as contrasted to cooperatively or state-owned means of wealth (Dictionary.com).

Colonialism: The control or governing influence of a nation over a dependent country, territory, or people (Dictionary.com).

Khomas: An area of Namibia comprising of Windhoek, Katutura and suburban Windhoek.

Language Planning: “Structured, organised decisions [made by the Government] to solve problems in communication” (Fishman, 1979: 11).

Language Policy: Incorporates language planning by drawing up the framework and aims to implement planning’s recommendations.

Lingua franca: A system of attempting to ensure a medium of communication between two communities who do not share the same mother tongue.

Mutual intelligibility: The idea of being able to understand one another’s communication (Jenkins, 2003). This is important to the context of the study, as English was designed to be a ‘lingua franca’ for Namibians.

National language: A language, or dialect, that has a particular connection with the population of a country. These may be given equal status to official languages, as is the case in Namibia, and is designed to recognise and respect a culture.

Official language: A language that is given an elevated, or equal status within a country, or state. An official language may be used for Government purposes, such as documentation, court hearings and parliamentary discussions, however may also be used by the general public.

SWAPO: South-West African People’s Organisation. SWAPO are the ruling political party of Namibia and were responsible for constructing the language policy.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In conducting a research project in language, we must first ask: “Why should one study language?” Perhaps one of the greatest defences of the importance of language was made by the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein claimed that: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”. In other words, without the knowledge of language, particularly lexis, how can one communicate effectively?

At the same time, one can suggest that LPP can both extend and limit an individual’s ability to communicate with the wider world (Tollefson, 1991: 5). As Wittgenstein’s comment perhaps suggests, one’s ability to socially interact through language and (since conversation is a form of social interaction), linguistics, it can be argued that communication is limited by an individual’s proficiency in language.

2.2 Language Policy and Planning in Namibia

Thus, it can be argued that the use of English as Namibia’s official language has created both opportunities and challenges to Namibian citizens. Whilst universal languages such as English can create opportunities for economic growth, for example, for many, English is neither a first, nor second, nor (in many cases) a third language (British Council, 2010). Rather, it is a foreign language which is treated as a first language by the compulsory use of English as the official language of instruction in Namibian schools.

Before debating the impact of LPP in Namibia, however, it is important to attempt to define what is meant by a language policy. Finding a commonly agreed definition has

proved challenging for academics, as is evident by the differences between Cooper (1989) and Fishman's (1979) views. Cooper interprets language planning as "deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others" (ibid: 45), yet this definition does not explain who makes the decisions (one can presume the Government, if we take a Marxist view), nor who the 'others' are.

Fishman (1979: 11), on the other hand, suggests that those in power make structured, organised decisions to solve communication problems, with strategies then implemented and 'enforced' upon the country. Yet, we can argue that the challenges facing Namibia lay beyond simply communication.

Indeed, as Alidou (2004, cited by Brock-Utne and Kofi Hopson, 2005: 3) argues, one needs to consider Africa in both pre and post colonial times. She believes that there were no difficulties in language instruction, as "each group used its own language to educate its children". She concludes that: "The medium of instruction problem in Africa emerged in the late 1800s with the introduction of Western education in Africa". The use of colonial languages in basic education provided by the colonisers and Christian missionaries, Alidou continues, "Created a social division among Africans based on the mastery of the colonial languages" (ibid: 3).

Amukugo (1995: 60 – 62) expands this point further to explain that as well as depriving Africans of knowledge, the Bantu teaching of literacy in African languages denied black citizens the ability to communicate with the outside world and understand complex written documents that they may be forced to sign. Furthermore, it led to reduced job opportunities, since many did not complete their education and hence were forced to work in manual labour positions requiring little education.

Consequentially, one can suggest that the colonisers had their own ideologies and objectives towards education in Africa (such as the early missionaries' objective of bringing Christianity to Africa). Yet this is not to say that with independence comes a non-political way of thinking. As Kofi Hopson (2005: 91) cautions, "language policies are never neutral nor apolitical but, as ideological constructs, reflect and reproduce the distribution of power in a larger society".

Maho (1998: 185) also discusses the idea of colonialism and agrees that it had a damaging impact upon society. Discussing LPP in Namibia, Maho explains that following colonialism and apartheid (and the Bantu educational system), SWAPO aimed to adopt a language which was not that of its colonisers, namely Germany and South Africa. Namibia wished to break away from segregation and discrimination, and in doing so, the party desired to create an identity for both Namibia as a country and for its citizens (Kofi Hopson, 2005). As Cluver (1991: 9, cited by Maho, 1998: 185) argues, "It would seem that the South Africans were preoccupied with political matters and simply ignored the question of languages until the seventies when they were confronted with SWAPO's well-worked out language policies" and the choice of English, rather than Afrikaans, as the official language of Namibia.

As a universal language, English provided Namibian citizens with an opportunity to mutually communicate with one another. As Jenkins (2003: 35) argues, one could say that "English may have a role in providing a neutral means of communication between its different ethnic groups as it does, for example in India" and thus a method of "mutual intelligibility" (ibid: 36). Equally, as Graddol (1997: 6, cited by Kibbee, 2003: 47) points out, "English is remarkable for its diversity, its propensity to change and be changed. Analysts see this hybridity and permeability of English as defining features, allowing it to expand quickly into new domains and explaining in part its

success as a world language”. English is dynamic, constantly evolving, with new lexis entering a language, sometimes through diglossia, a high and low variety of language (Jenkins, 2003). In addition, languages may influence each other, sometimes borrowing vocabulary from each other (Kibbee, 2003: 51).

Moreover, Noam Chomsky (1965) argues that it is possible for an infant to both acquire and produce language, without requiring any knowledge of the grammatical structure, through an “innate facility”, or instinct, which he terms a ‘language acquisition device’ (LAD). This congenital device, located within the brain, allows complex new vocabulary to be learnt quickly, meaning that a child can easily acquire several languages at a young age and thus become multilingual. However, Chomsky additionally states that as the infant matures, the LAD is slowly ‘lost’, and new languages consequentially become more difficult to learn. Therefore, the argument here seems to be at what age English should be introduced within schools.

However, Brock-Utne and Kofi Hopson (2005: 3) contest the use of English in Namibia, and say that the use of colonial languages has been detrimental in African education. This point can be seen in their comment that: “The retention of European languages as the dominant media of instruction has had a serious negative impact on African education and on the academic performance of African learners” as this has often been at the expense of a child’s mother tongue. Furthermore, they believe that: “educational vehicles and policy-making apparatus often fail to follow established facts” (ibid: 4). Therefore, Namibia perhaps has a difficult balancing act: on the one hand, English is the official language of the country and so there is an expectation of Namibians to learn the language. On the other hand, the country’s rich and diverse indigenous culture and languages must be retained, as they too are part of Namibia and ultimately, one’s very identity.

The status of English as a global language then is not without its problems. We may be living in a “global village” (McLuhan, 1967: 63), where ideas and communication can be shared more easily than ever, yet one can debate whether Namibians can fully communicate effectively in English at present. The country’s unemployment rate is more than thirty five percent

(http://www.indexmundi.com/namibia/unemployment_rate.html) and therefore questions perhaps need to be asked as to whether the use of English, a global language with status, in education will improve this statistic. As Brock-Utner and Kofi Hopson (2005: 4) argue, “There has been much concern about education for all and the need to increase the literacy rate, but little concern about the language in which literacy should take place”.

Moreover, theorists such as Bernstein (1961 and 1972, cited by Wardhaugh, 2006: 336-340) have argued that those considered to be in the ‘lower classes’ are restricted in their use of language (he calls the language of the lower classes ‘restricted code’, as opposed to the ‘elaborated code’ of the upper classes⁷) and so are unable to progress economically and socially. Bernstein believes that “a particular kind of social structure leads to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour and this behaviour in turn reproduces the original social structure” (Wardhaugh, *ibid*, 336). Therefore, an individual is unable to expand their communicative competency, as they are bound by their social class. As Kofi Hopson (2005: 90) argues, “There is a danger of reconstructing social inequality through language education policy and culturally irrelevant education” because it is an unfamiliar language to many Namibians.

Similarly, the Ministry of Education and Culture (*ibid*, 1993: 63) raises a concern that English in Namibia is not yet a lingua franca. A lingua franca is a language allowing

⁷ These are also sometimes referred to as public and formal codes

two differing cultural groups (whose mother tongues differ and are not understood by the other group) to communicate mutually. This view differs to that of Jenkins (2003: 34), who discusses the spread of languages through an 'expanding circle'. Her argument is that there are countries in which a language is the first language (and therefore is spoken fluently), which she calls the 'inner circle'. The 'expanding circle' is thus countries which have adopted another language which is not yet fluently spoken, but is nevertheless gaining an increasing number of speakers and fluency.

Despite the contests of Bernstein, Brock-Utner and Kofi Hopson and the concerns of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Kibbee (2003: 51) disputes these arguments. He defends the use of English, saying: "I firmly reject the equivalence of language to species, and the notion that the loss of a language is equivalent to the loss of a natural species". Yet as Hale (1998) argues, more than ninety percent of indigenous languages are dying at the expense of global languages.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Government views English as a language which can assist Namibians and become an additional language, rather than a replacement of the indigenous languages (echoed by the equality of each national language). If one looks at the current objectives of the Namibian government, it is evident that increased economic prosperity and job creation remain a high priority. The Government states that one of its aims for the future is to increase "the process of job creating by increasing support for small and medium scale enterprises, including the creation of 50 000 jobs over the next five years" (<http://www.grnnet.gov.na/grnabout.html>). If this aim is to be realised, however, it can be thought that the failure rate of Grade Ten students in English must be addressed to enable them to complete their secondary education and thus increase their job prospects through gaining academic qualifications.

Thus, it can be argued that the use of English as Namibia's official language has created both opportunities and challenges to Namibian citizens. Whilst universal languages such as English can create opportunities for economic growth, for example, for many, English is neither a first, nor second, nor (in many cases) a third language (British Council, 2010). Rather, it is a foreign language which is treated as a first language by the compulsory use of English as the official language of instruction in Namibian schools.

Thus, ensuring that all Namibian students are given the opportunities to reach their full potential and assimilate into society (as Anderson, 1983: 6 calls it, "an imagined political community")⁸ is a view that is at the forefront of LPP in Namibia. Dr. Abraham Iyambo's statement that those students who did not pass Grade Ten last year and who wish to repeat the year must be given "maximum learning support" reflects the importance that has been placed upon this challenge and of lifelong learning (<http://www.namibian.com.na/news-articles/national/full-story/archive/2011/january/article/nantu-calls-for-grade-10-supplementary-exam/>).

Whilst lifelong learning remains a high priority, at the same time, it would appear that although more than twenty years have passed since Namibia's independence, historical factors are still being attributed as part of the causes of the current challenges. For example, The Ministry of Education and Culture (ibid: 12) says that:

Lifelong learning is central to education in contemporary Namibia in several ways. First, the previous education system did not equip us well for Independence. Quite simply, our pool of educated Namibians is too small to staff the jobs our development requires. Consequently, we have had to ask our people to assume responsibilities for which their training and experience are not entirely adequate.

⁸ Central to Anderson's (1983: 6) belief are the ideas of nation and nationalism – the sense of a mutual, shared identity (for example, Namibia has many indigenous groups, but collectively they all share the identity of being Namibian) to create a sense of belonging and togetherness and national identity through symbols such as the national flag.

In particular, the Ministry highlighted a concern that training would be required for teachers following independence, yet appeared to express some concern at doing so. “We could regard many of our current teachers as short term substitutes for a new generation of better prepared teachers”, they claim, “but it would surely be both economically inefficient and socially irresponsible to employ those teachers now and then to dismiss them in a few years when we have a larger pool of graduates from our teacher education institutions”. Yet this comment appears to discount the need for continuous professional development amongst teachers – and, moreover, the Ministry’s earlier claim that education is a lifelong process. If education is for all, and lifelong, it can therefore be argued that all teachers (old and new alike) must receive regular support and training, regardless of their experience. Not only will this improve subject knowledge and teaching skills, it could in turn lead to students improving their own academic performance.

Krishnamurthy (December 2007: 14 - 22) echoes this and argues that teachers must constantly review the methods they use to teach. Examining the poor performance in English of students at the Polytechnic of Namibia, she argues that there are disagreements in teaching on whether marking should focus upon language (and correcting the incorrect usage of this) or the content. In particular, she argues that newly qualified teachers must be given the opportunity to critically reflect on their teaching. Critical reflection, she explains, is “the process by which adults identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways of thinking” (cited Stein, 2000). By doing this, Krishnamurthy says, teachers can learn from their mistakes and re-evaluate their teaching methods.

Yet education goes beyond solely academic knowledge. It provides learners with the ability to not only converse, but to understand a broad range of social issues and to formulate a considered, intellectual opinion. “Literate citizens are better able to understand the issues that confront us and the alternatives that we must consider”, the Ministry of Education and culture (ibid: 15) says that: “Education for all will make it possible for all citizens to be active participants, not just voters, in governing our country”. At the same time however, if government documentation is in English, a language which the 2010 Grade Ten results in English suggests that Namibians are not yet fully literate in, how can Namibians be active participants?

If one looks at the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality⁹ II Report (December 2004: Figures 7.1, 7.2), particularly at the reading scores of teachers and students at Grade Six, there is some evidence to support the above view. Whilst Namibian Grade Six teachers scored just under the SACMEQ average, the country’s Grade Six learners scored far below the average (only Zambia and Malawi scored lower than Namibian students). Thus, one must ask why Namibian students scored low and whether the issue lies beyond the subject knowledge of Namibian teachers.

This very point was made by Simataa Simataa (July 8, 2011: 9), a journalist for *New Era*, a Namibian newspaper. Simataa asks: “How can one afford to keep quiet if there is some silence to be broken as regards this particular workforce” when the teaching environment is one which (in the journalist’s opinion) is constrained and where little Government assistance is given?

⁹ Henceforth SACMEQ. SACMEQ consists of 15 Ministries of Education in Southern and Eastern Africa: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, Simataa describes the teaching environment in the country as “dire”, warning that the challenges facing teachers in Namibia will worsen before any improvements begin to materialise and claims that teachers are “only allowed to achieve predetermined academic achievements”. In other words, in Simataa’s view, there is little room for creative teaching or to expand upon what a learner is required to know. Sinataa offers a damning view of this ‘limitation’, arguing that the current teaching environment is “an endeavor tantamount to mental subjugation, or colonisation of the mind”.

The Language Policy discussion document of January 2003 (3) appears to address this concern and states that: “Education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in Grades 1-3 and the teaching of mother tongue throughout formal education. Grade 4 is a transitional year in which the mother tongue plays a supportive role in the teaching. Mother tongue should be taught as a subject”.

At the same time however, the discussion document points out that changes have been made to the policy, including “the strengthening of mother tongue instruction” from Grades 1-3 and in pre-school education and a greater emphasis on mother tongue languages in general (ibid.).

Yet Simataa argues that much more is required if teaching standards and environments are to improve, and makes a number of recommendations to the government. Of particular note however is the comment that: “Teachers were never remunerated for any extra academic achievement beyond the required academic prescription, a four-year university degree”. In other words, there are few Government bursaries for Further Education and therefore little motivation and encouragement for

teachers to further their training, knowledge, skills and job prospects. Finally, Simataa expresses concerns that many teachers have been encouraged to leave urban schools in Namibia, driven by government incentives to move to the north.

LPP is therefore a complex area and debates exist regarding the 'correct' strategies which a country should take in ensuring that the policy and planning produces the most effective and successful educational and sociological outcomes. It aims to balance the idea of a collective national identity with an individual's own identity.

In the case of Namibia, this has proved somewhat difficult and the use of English as the medium of instruction in schools has been both praised and criticised by academics. In the context of this study, the argument appears to centre upon which approach one should take in education: communicative or grammar, and which approach, or approaches, would best address the current LPP challenges that the country is presented with.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I wish to outline the methods which I shall employ in my research, the participants necessary in the research, why these methods shall be used and explain the potential challenges to my research.

In the introduction to this study, I stated that the study focuses upon the Namibian language policy by exploring the use of English as the compulsory language of instruction, ESL and that due to the large number of learners across the country, the study would be limited to Grade ten learners in the Khomas region.

This research project largely uses empirical research, which Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005: 6) define as a scientific approach which “is an evidence-based approach that relies on direct observation and experimentation in the acquisition of new knowledge”. In other words, it seeks both quantitative and qualitative data and hard, factual information. Ultimately, they conclude, empirical approach “is best thought of as the guiding principle behind all research conducted in accordance with the scientific method”.

3.2 Questionnaires

In order to ask whether the language policy of Namibia is clearly perceived by teachers and other educational staff in Namibia (and, moreover, whether they are aware of the language policy and its aims), the study shall made use of questionnaires¹⁰ to produce a variety of quantitative and qualitative data.

¹⁰ See appendix for an example of the questionnaire’s design.

Twenty four questionnaires in total were distributed to staff at six schools across the Khomas area. The six schools were Hage Geingob and A. Shipena from the Katatura region, Windhoek High School and Centaurus (located close to the city centre) and St Paul's and St George's schools, located towards the suburbs of the city. Four questionnaires were distributed to each school: one to the Principal, one to the Head of Department, and two to English teachers at the school.

This cross-sample of schools of staff aids the study by ensuring that a wide variety of views from schools with a broad socio-economic spectrum of students are surveyed. Teachers are likely to have varying degrees of teaching experience and their views may differ to that say of organisational and governmental employees. Furthermore, given the differences between the areas in which the schools are located in, it can be thought that the challenges which each face in English may differ accordingly.

In addition to the twenty four questionnaires, a further ten were distributed to Ministers from the Ministry of Education, three to lecturers at the Polytechnic of Namibia, three to lecturers at the University of Namibia¹¹, two to the Institute for Public Policy Research¹², two to NIED and one to the British Council. In total, forty five questionnaires were distributed to ensure that there were adequate questionnaires to gain a satisfactory response rate, and additionally that the educational experience of the participants would be as diverse as possible.

The questionnaire made use of demographic questions, quantitative questions which asked those surveyed to choose the answer they felt they agreed with most and qualitative questions, which required participants to write a more detailed, individual

¹¹ Henceforth UNAM.

¹² Henceforth IPPR.

answer. The answers from section four would be used to formulate some of my conclusions and recommendations.

3.3 English as a Second Language examinations results, Grade Ten (2007 – 2010)

In order to establish whether the results of Grade Ten learners in the ESL examinations have been declining over a period of time and prove or disprove my hypothesis, I utilised the full national results of Grade ten learners in the Khomas region from 2006 to 2010¹³ for ESL¹⁴.

The results, which are tabulated by the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment¹⁵, use an accumulative percentage system to show the distribution of grades at each school, as well as nationally. Each school is ranked based upon the average percentage mark of its students.

This research topic shall principally analyse the results solely for the Khomas region, although comparisons will also be made between the results of the Khomas area and the national average to draw comparisons and to identify correlations between certain results. In addition, I shall be investigating the distribution of grades A to C nationally and locally to identify how strongly schools in the Khomas region performed.

Although I do not wish to look at the performance of more rural schools in great detail, the study shall nevertheless explore those schools ranked amongst the lowest in the country to identify whether there is a common pattern between academic results and geographical location.

¹³ The 2006 examinations results were unavailable, however all schools in Namibia are ranked by their performance. The 2007 results contain the 2006 rankings of each school.

¹⁴ English is also taught as a first language in Namibia. However, the concerns nationally lie more with ESL.

¹⁵ Henceforth DNEA.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.1 Questionnaire response rate

Of the forty five questionnaires that were distributed, nineteen were returned. This is a response rate of forty two percent.

4.2 Questionnaire demographics

The first section of my questionnaire asked the respondents' demographics – their gender, age, highest qualification earned, how long they had worked in education and their profession. Figure One shows the results of this.

<u>Demographic</u>	<u>Answers</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
Gender	Male	6
	Female	12
	Did not answer	1
Age group	20 – 35	6
	36 – 45	3
	46 – 55	5
	56 – 65	5
	66+	0
	Did not answer	0
Highest qualification earned	Bachelors (Undergraduate level)	2
	Bachelors (postgraduate level)	7
	Masters	6
	Doctorate	1
	Other	2
	Did not answer	1
How have you worked in education?	1 – 4 years	3
	5 – 8 years	2
	9 – 12 years	3

	13 – 16 years	1
	17 + years	9
	Did not answer	1
Profession	Teacher	11
	Principal	4
	Ministry	0
	Organisation/institution	2
	Other	2
	Did not answer	1

Figure One: A table to show the demographics of the respondents to the questionnaire

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents (sixty three per cent) were female. Although a much larger survey would need to be conducted, one could nevertheless perhaps ask whether there are more female teachers within secondary education than there are male. However, the latest statistics from Trading Economics (<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/namibia/secondary-education-teachers-percent-female-wb-data.html>) suggest otherwise.

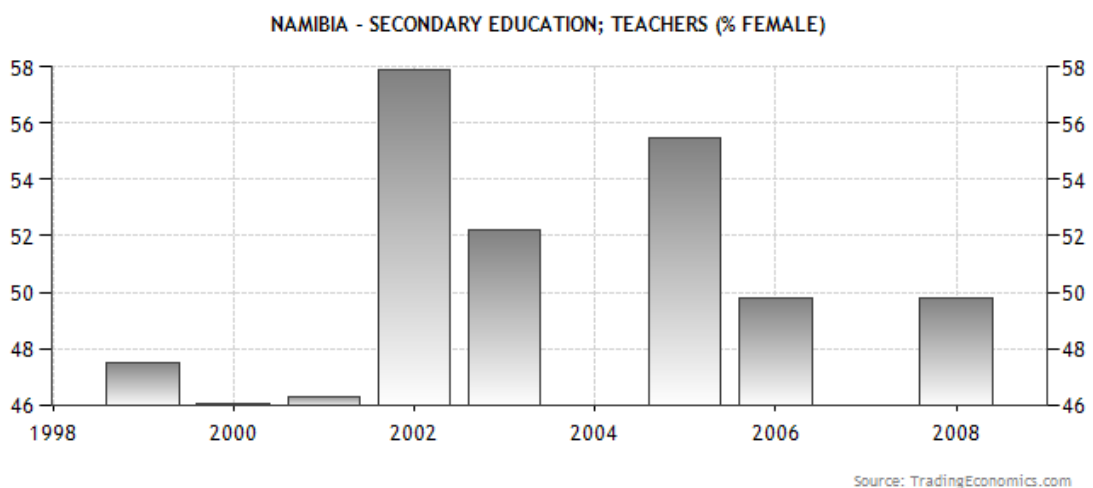


Figure Two: A bar chart to show the proportion of female teachers within secondary education in Namibia from the years 1998 to 2008 (Source: TradingEconomics.com)

The above bar chart shows that although there were a higher proportion of female teachers in Namibian secondary schools in 2002 and 2005 (fifty eight per cent and fifty per cent, with a slightly higher proportion of female teachers in 2003), the general balance of female to male teachers has remained almost equal since 1998.

Figure One shows that there was a mixture of age groups in the respondents, which eight of the eighteen surveyed between the ages of twenty and forty five. At the same time, ten of the nineteen were between the ages of forty six and sixty five and this may explain why nearly half of the respondents had more than seventeen years of experience in education. Indeed, thirteen of the nineteen surveyed had at least five years' experience, with only five people having eight or less.

It is interesting to note that although nine of the nineteen respondents hold a Bachelors degree, which is the minimum requirement for an employee to teach at secondary level in Namibia, seven of the nineteen surveyed (or thirty seven percent) hold at least a Masters degree. Therefore, despite Simataa Simataa's claim that there is little (or no) support for those working within education to further their qualifications¹⁶, one could argue that this statistic suggests that those who work within education in Namibia recognise the value of additional qualifications and the increased skills, job prospects and quality of life that these can bring.

The majority of the participants were teachers or principals from either one of the six schools or lecturers from the Polytechnic of Namibia. No questionnaires were

¹⁶ See the Literature review section for more on this.

returned from the Ministry of Education or NIED¹⁷, meaning that the majority of the responses given are from the perspective of those directly working with students.

4.3 Respondent’s views regarding the proficiency of spoken and written English in Namibia

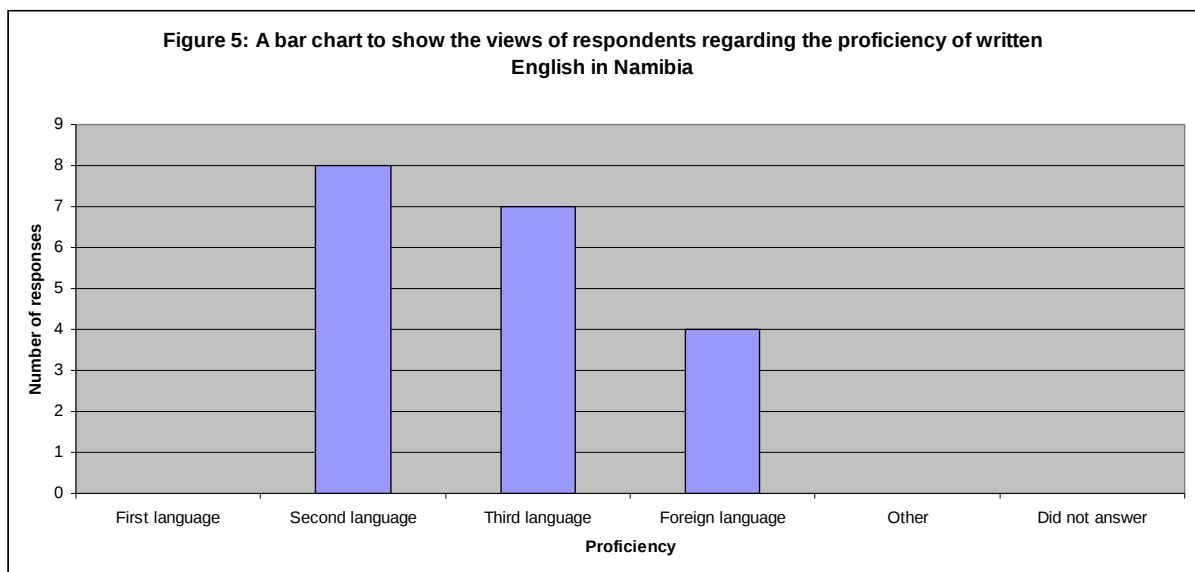
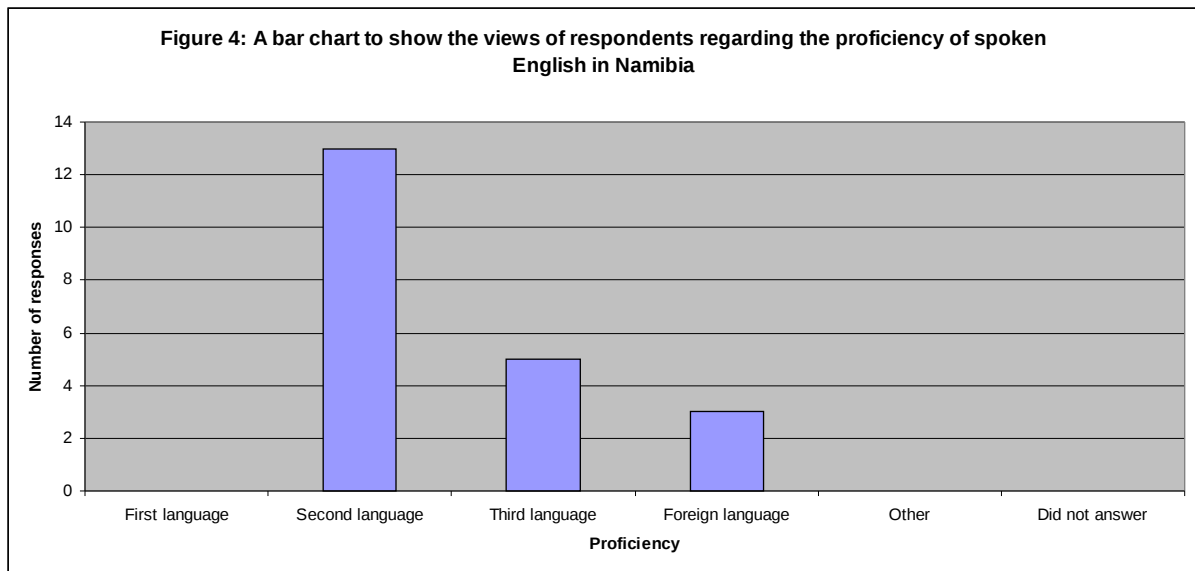
As I discussed in the introduction, some LPP arguments in Namibia have suggested that due to the language policy focusing upon a communicative approach, rather than one of grammar, the proficiency of spoken English is higher than that of written English. Thus, my questionnaire asked the participants’ opinions regarding this. The results are shown in Figure Three.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
Proficiency of spoken English	First language	0
	Second language	13
	Third language	5
	Foreign language	3
	Other	0
	Did not answer	0
Proficiency of written English	First language	0
	Second language	8
	Third language	7
	Foreign language	4
	Other	0
	Did not answer	0

¹⁷ This lack of response is discussed later in my conclusions and recommendations.

Figure Three: A table to show views regarding the proficiency of spoken and written English in Namibia

The results show that those surveyed universally agreed that English is not a first language for Namibian learners, both in speech and in writing. However, the results additionally show that those surveyed felt that although, in their opinion, English is a second language in speech, it is not necessarily this in writing. Figures Four and Five show this more clearly.



The bar charts show that although a number of respondents agree that spoken and written English are both second languages for Namibian students, an almost equal number of people (seven) felt that written English is a third language for Namibian learners and thus, the proficiency of written English is lower than that of spoken English. This is supported by the fact that only seven of the nineteen respondents (thirty seven percent) agreed that the proficiency of written English is the same as spoken English.

Furthermore, one respondent believed that spoken English is both a second, third and foreign language for Namibian students, whilst arguing that as a written language, it remains a foreign language. Consequentially, this perhaps shows that the spoken proficiency of English remains one which is largely varied and that the written proficiency has not been adequately developed in schools.

4.4 Respondent’s awareness of the Namibian Language Policy

In my introduction, I stated that two of the aims of my study are “to identify whether a sound language policy exists in Namibia” and to ask what the understanding of schools and subject experts is with relation to the policy.

My questionnaire therefore asked the participants whether they were aware that a language policy exists for schools and, if so, whether they had read it and knew its main aims and objectives. The results are shown below.

Answer	Number of responses
Not aware that one exists	2
Aware of the policy but have not read it	6
Aware of the policy and have read some of it	5
Aware of the policy and know its main aims and objectives	5
Aware of the policy and have read it thoroughly	0
Did not answer	1

Figure Six: A table to show the awareness of questionnaire respondents of the language policy for schools

At first glance, results appear to evenly spread. Of concern however are the two respondents that are unaware that a language policy exists for schools. The policy sets in place the recommendations of the government, policy writers and other stakeholders, yet if individuals are not aware of its existence, one can ask if these recommendations are being implemented within schools. It can be thought that more work must therefore be done in order to inform those who work within education of the policy and its main aims. Such a view is supported by the below pie chart.

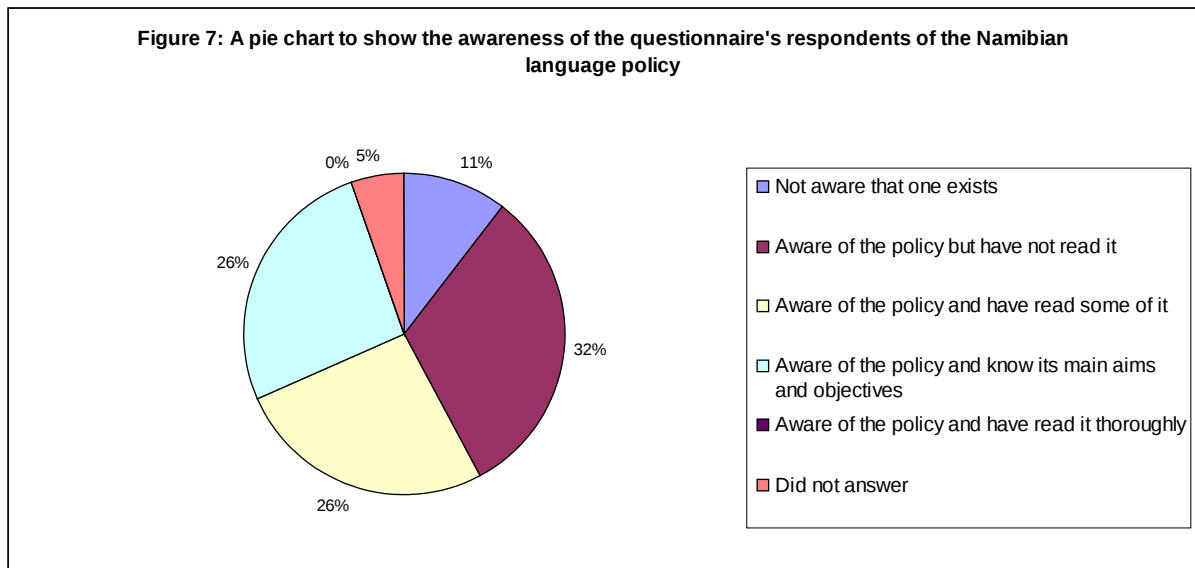


Figure Seven shows that forty three percent of the respondents either were not aware of the language policy or had not read it. Only twenty six percent were aware of the document and its main aims and objectives.

4.5 Respondent’s views regarding English as the compulsory medium of instruction from Grade Four

The current recommendation of the Namibian language policy is that English must be the compulsory medium of instruction in schools from Grade Four. My questionnaire

asked the respondents whether English should be introduced at an earlier age, in order to increase both their spoken and written competencies in the long term. The results are shown in Figure Eight.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
Make English a compulsory medium of instruction as soon as a child starts school	8
Make English a compulsory medium of instruction at Grade 2 or 3	4
Current recommendation (Grade 4)	5
Make English a compulsory medium of instruction at Grade 5 or 6	0
Make English a compulsory medium of instruction at Grade 7 or higher	2
Did not answer	0

Figure 8: A table to show the views of questionnaire respondents regarding English as the compulsory medium of instruction in schools

The table shows that eight of the respondents (forty two percent) believed that English must be a compulsory medium of instruction as soon as a child starts school.

Moreover, twelve of the nineteen surveyed (sixty three percent) felt that the current recommendation is not soon enough. Only two felt that this should be later, whilst five felt the current recommendation was correct. Therefore, this suggests that the policy writers may need to reevaluate the policy to examine whether introducing English as a compulsory medium of instruction earlier would thus familiarise learners with an often unfamiliar language earlier, perhaps making their transition to secondary education and studying ESL easier.

4.6 Respondent’s views regarding what must now be taught in English

The questionnaire asked those surveyed whether English lessons must now focus on spoken English, written English, vocabulary building or all three. Here, the answer was almost unanimous. All but one of the nineteen respondents answered that all three are equally important. One participant, a principal commented that in particular, the focus must be upon written English, which one other respondent agreed upon. Given that the answer was almost unanimous, it may have been more beneficial to ask the participants which area was perhaps being most ignored in the teaching of English, as this may have produced more varied results.

4.7 Respondent’s views regarding LPP objectives and policy recommendations

The third section of the questionnaire asked participants to use a sliding scale¹⁸ to rank their answers. However, some respondents scored some of the answers equally and so the results are shown in terms of the total number of points each answer received.

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Number of Points</u>
Equality of all languages	43
Cost of policy implementation	34
Language and cultural identity	53
Maintaining mother tongue language	66
English for further education and wider communication	74
Did not answer the question	1

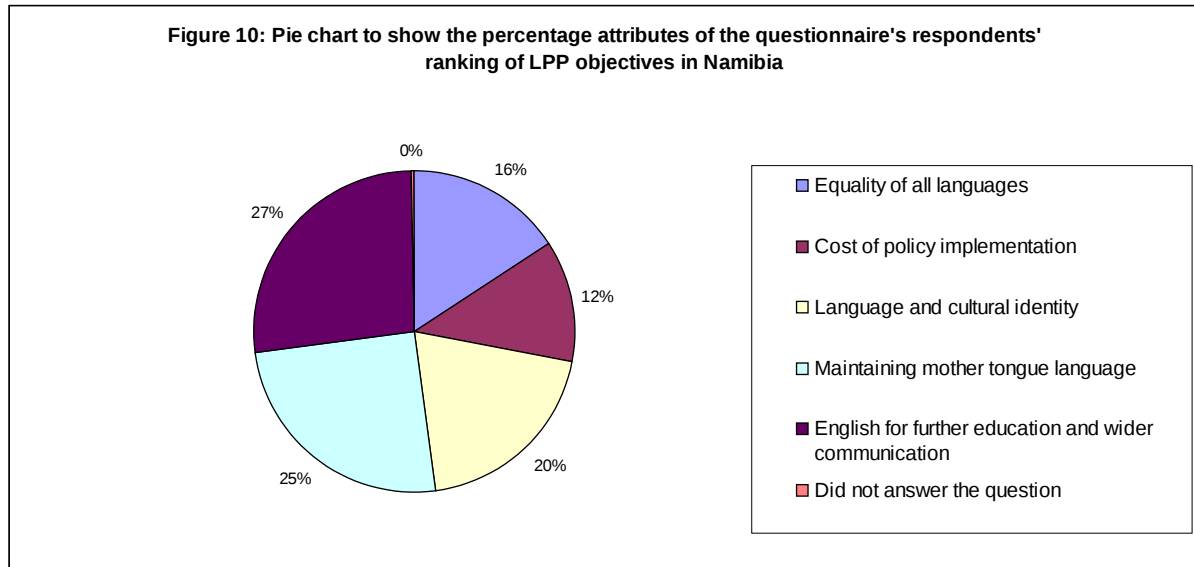
Figure 9: Table to show the views of questionnaire respondents regarding the objectives of LPP in Namibia

The table shows that the most important objective in LPP for the respondents was to ensure that English allows students to communicate at an advanced level and allows learners the best possible opportunity to progress to tertiary education. Yet at the same time, as the table shows, this must not be at the expense of endangering the indigenous languages of Namibia. Therefore, the results suggest that LPP in Namibia must consequentially be a balancing act between ensuring that the language of

¹⁸ i.e. 5 being the most important answer to a respondent and 1 the lowest.

English, with its universal status and ensuring that learners are given the opportunity to speak and write in their mother tongue, even if the mother tongue is not equal to the language, as the low result for the equality of languages shows.

If one looks at the percentages of these results however, it becomes clear that each factor is nevertheless important, as the pie chart below shows.



The pie chart shows that although it is clear to establish the rank order of the most important objectives in LPP, the percentages of two of the five (English for further education and wider communication and maintaining the mother tongue language) are quite equal, with the percentage for language and cultural identity also high. Therefore, although the questionnaire established the rank order, it is clear that the objectives, with the exception of cost perhaps, are all deemed to be of high importance.

The fact that cost of the implementation was deemed to be of the least importance perhaps shows that those in education may feel that it is more important to ensure that the policy meets the four other key objectives, even if the cost of such a policy is high. At the same time however, Namibia has limited financial resources. Hence, what may be the best decision for LPP may not be the affordable choice. Therefore, it is

imperative that the approaches which the government takes to LPP are of value for money and are not necessarily the cheapest.

The results of the policy recommendations ranking produced similar results, as the table below shows.

Factor	Number of points
Better materials and teacher training in mother tongue	63
Mother tongue offered as first language subjects	54
More focus on English teaching at an earlier age	66
More languages offered	41
English studies compulsory from Grade one	55
Did not answer	0

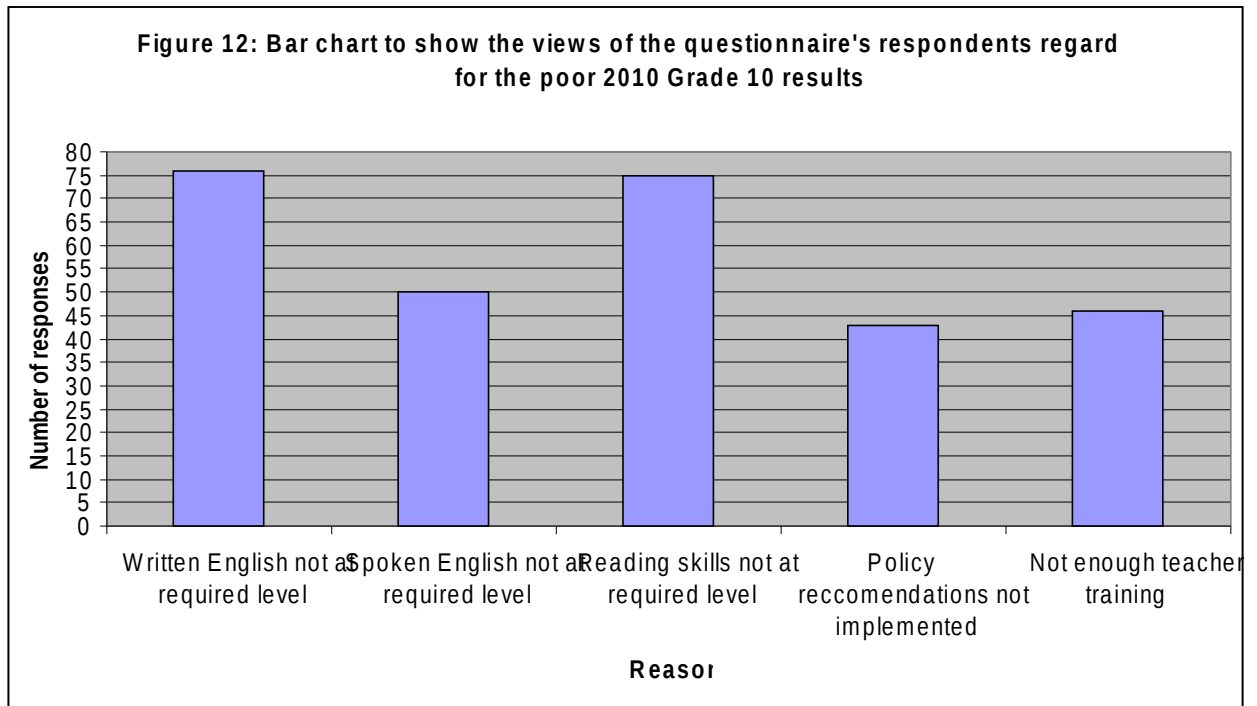
Figure 11: Table to show the views of respondents regarding the policy recommendations in Namibia

Similarly to Figure Nine, the results show that there is a great importance placed upon the English language, particularly from an early age, whilst maintaining the mother tongue languages. Again, a number of participants scored some factors equally.

In particular, it appears that there is a need for greater teacher training and resources in order to develop both teaching and learning. It is interesting to note that although the policy has suggested that more languages are offered, perhaps to increase multilingualism at an early age, this was the least important factor to the respondents. This may suggest that there is a feeling amongst those working in education that there are already enough languages offered – or simply that learners must master their own language before they become competent with others.

Another aim of my research is “to investigate the implementation of the policy and its success/failure” and whether the policy is partly responsible for the 2010 Grade Ten results. My questionnaire consequentially asked those surveyed to rank a number of reasons for the results of last year. Here, more than any other question, the

respondents ranked many of the answers equally. In turn, this produced very close results again, as Figure Twelve shows.



The bar chart shows that written English (seventy six points) and the comprehension of written English (seventy five points) were the main concerns for respondents.

Whilst spoken English was the third highest concern, spoken English, policy implementation and teacher training were regarded to be of relatively equal concern.

Consequentially, whilst it would appear that we can suggest two main reasons for the Grade Ten results of last year, all five factors should be considered as contributory.

4.8 Respondent’s views regarding who is most responsible for LPP in Namibia and the current challenges in LPP

As I discussed earlier, there are a number of stakeholders who are involved in, and responsible for, LPP in Namibia. At the same time however, much criticism of the failings of LPP in the country has been directed at the government, and so the questionnaire asked the respondents to rank the order of responsibility in LPP. The results of this question are shown in Figure Thirteen.

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Number of points</u>
Teachers	79
Principals	62
Ministry	64
Policy Writers	55
Others	28
Did not answer question	1

Figure 13: Table the show the views of questionnaire respondents regarding who is most responsible for LPP in Namibia

Only three of the nineteen respondents ranked some of their answers equally and this therefore suggests that although the rank orders varied, there is a common belief that certain stakeholders are more responsible for LPP in Namibia than others.

The lack of a clear definition in the questionnaire of who ‘others’ includes perhaps explains the low result for this category. Only three of the seventeen who answered this question scored more than one point for ‘others’, yet one respondent viewed this as the most important, commenting “especially parents and learners”.

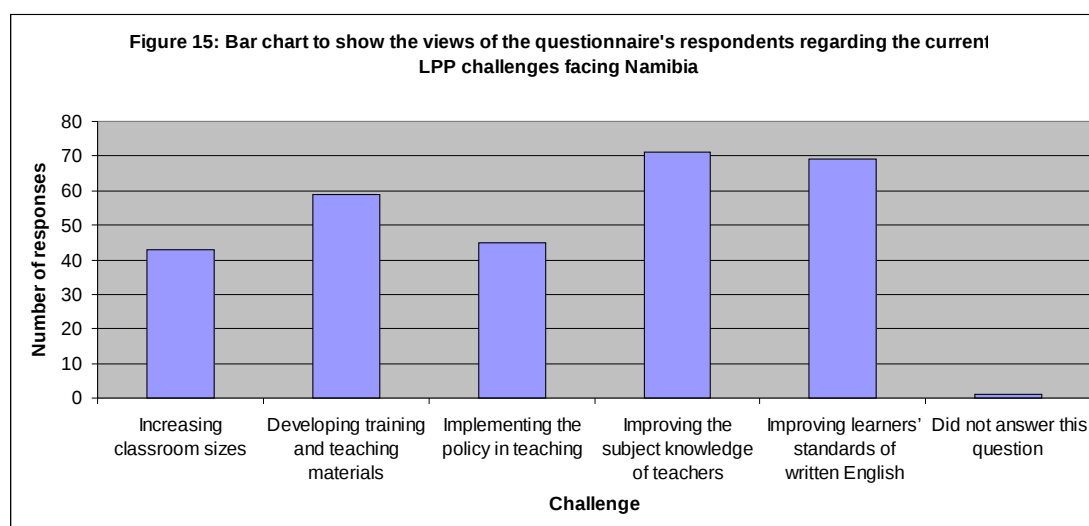
The table shows that teachers were considered to be most responsible for LPP in Namibia, with a total points score of seventy nine. Furthermore, both the Ministry of Education and principals scored highly (almost equally) and one can suggest that the

results show that there must be a greater support for teachers from their principals and the Government.

So where do the challenges in LPP lie? Again, the participants were asked to use a ranking system and the results of this question are shown in Figures Fourteen and Fifteen.

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Number of points</u>
Increasing classroom sizes	43
Developing training and teaching materials	59
Implementing the policy in teaching	45
Improving the subject knowledge of teachers	71
Improving learners' standards of written English	69
Did not answer this question	1

Figure 14: Table to show the views of respondents regarding the current LPP challenges facing Namibia



The table and bar chart show that improving the subject knowledge of teachers was considered to be the biggest LPP challenge in Namibia, which supports the findings of the SACMEQ II report, as discussed earlier. Improving the written standards of

English in learners scored almost as many points and one could suggest from these results that in order to improve the standards of written English, teachers must improve their own knowledge of language aspects such as lexis, sentence construction and grammar.

However, it should be noted that two of the respondents that answered the question believed that improving the written standards of English in students lowest. In these cases, both respondents felt that the greater challenges facing Namibia are ensuring that teaching implements the language policy and developing better training and teaching materials. Thus, although implementing the policy was seen as a lesser challenge, this nevertheless shows that to some people, the standards of education may not improve until there is greater assistance to support both teachers and learners, and schools and teachers fully implement the policy in the classroom.

4.9 Grade Ten examinations results – An introduction

Having analysed the results of my questionnaires, I now wish to investigate whether the ESL examinations results of Grade Ten learners have been declining over time and the performance of learners in the Khomas region.

The examination results under review are from the years 2007 to 2010, although the rankings of Khomas schools for 2006 are shown in the 2007 results. Therefore, to begin with, I shall examine the rankings of Khomas schools in 2007 when compared to the previous year.

4.10 Comparison of Khomas school rankings: 2006 and 2007

Schools in the Khomas region are shown in the examination results by the symbol ‘E’ next to the respective school’s name. A comparison of the rank order of schools by academic performance in ESL at Grade ten level is shown in Figure Sixteen.

A ‘+’ means that the rank of the school improved, a ‘-’ means that the rank was lower than in 2006 and ‘N/A’ means that there were no results in 2006, as the school had not been opened, or no results were available.

School	2007 Rank	Improvement/Decline from 2006
Windhoek HS	2	+ 12
Jan Mohr SS	5	- 3
Delta SS	6	+ 1
Academia SS	8	+ 11
Windhoek Tech. HS	13	- 5
Highlands Christian Private	16	N/A
Khomas HS	28	- 6
St Joseph’s RC	30	+ 11
Hochland HS	32	- 4
Concordia College	34	+ 11
Combretum Trust School	41	- 20
David Bezuidenhout SS	45	- 10
Eldorado SS	49	+ 23
Eduhelp Remedial School	53	- 40
Hage Geingob SS	58	- 4
Jan Jonker Afrikaner SS	59	+ 5
Cosmos HS	61	+ 9
Ella Du Plessis SSS	62	+ 42
Centaurus HS	72	- 29
Khomas Tura Project School	87	N/A
A Shipena SS	104	+ 24
Immanuel Shifidi SS	114	- 48

Groot Aub JSS	128	- 43
Pionier Boys	193	- 36
Goreangab JSS	199	- 13
Augustineum SS	238	- 34
Tanben College	240	+ 34
Jakob Marengo T. Col.	297	- 144
Eros Girls SS	389	- 173
Total number of schools (nationally):		534
Average improvement/decline of Khomas region schools:		-16

Figure 16: Table to show the performance of secondary schools in the Khomas region of Namibia, compared to 2006

The table shows that of the twenty nine schools in the Khomas area, only two fell outside of the top half of the national results (Jakob Marengo and Eros Girls Secondary School). At first glance therefore, one may believe that the results here are encouraging. However, the bar chart shows a different perspective of these results.

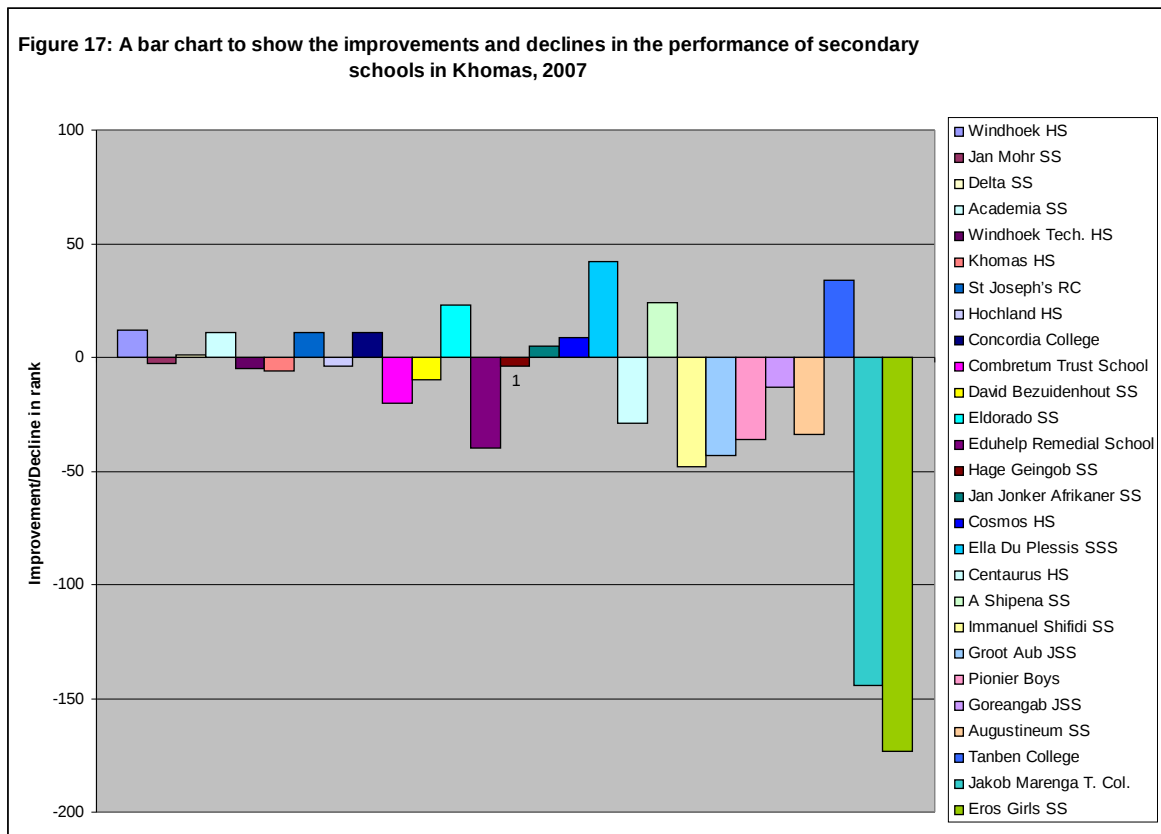


Figure Seventeen shows that although some schools (such as Ella Du Plessis and Tanben College) experienced notable improvements in their ESL results for Grade Ten, seventeen of the twenty seven schools with results available for 2006 had poorer results. Furthermore, the majority of the schools where the results improved experienced only relatively small improvements – although this may be because their 2006 rank was also high.

Jakob Marengo and Eros Girls Secondary School however both fell more than one hundred places in the rankings and thus these two schools severely distort the average improvement or decline of schools in the Khomas region.

Seven schools fell more than thirty places in the rankings and Centaurus, considered to be amongst the best secondary schools in Namibia, experienced a notable decline in its ESL results for Grade Ten.

Some positive improvements are equally noticeable however, particularly Tanben College. In addition, Windhoek High School's results were excellent and the school achieved the second best ESL results at Grade ten in the country. The best results in Namibia were those of Duneside, a private high school. The school's average mark of 80.9% was only slightly higher than Windhoek High School's (79.5%).

Equally, it should be noted that the proportion of students also influences some results. For example, all of the students at Delta Secondary School (ranked six) achieved grades between A to C, with fifty nine of the sixty seven pupils achieving a B or higher. By contrast, three students at Jan Mohr Secondary School achieved a D or lower, and a higher percentage achieved a C here than at Delta (19.5% compared to 11.9%). However, a total of one hundred and eighty five Grade ten students sat the ESL exam at Jan Mohr, compared to sixty seven at Delta.

Nevertheless, the decline in results of a number of schools suggests that this was a year in which the ESL results of Grade Ten learners in Khomas needed to be considered and improvements made in order for the area's performance to improve.

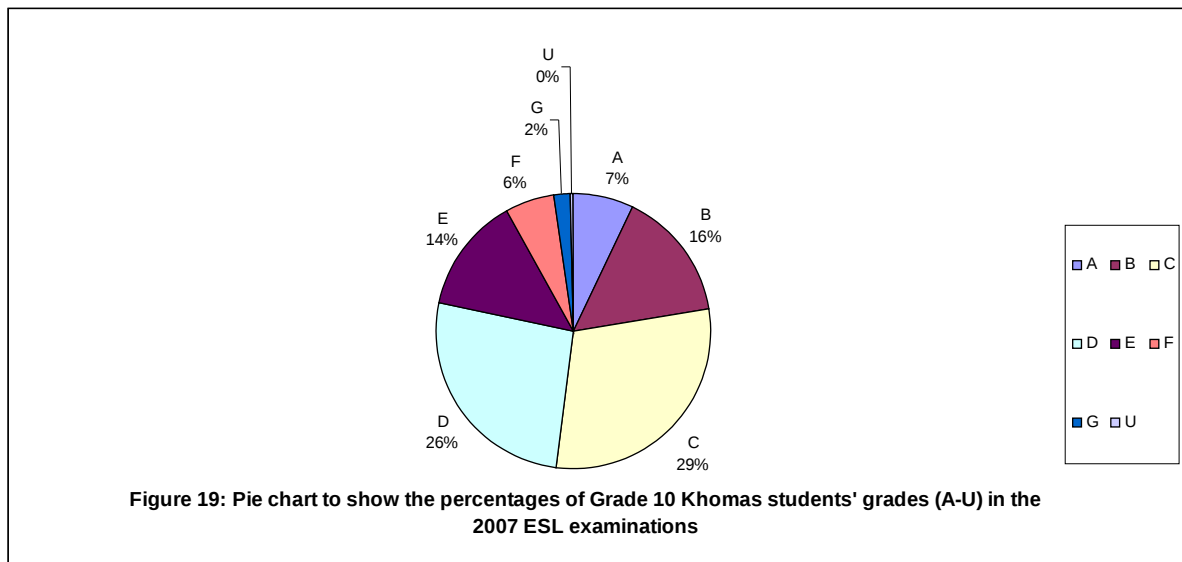
4.11 Distribution of grades in the subject of ESL at Grade ten level in the Khomas area, 2007

Figure Eighteen shows the total number of students in the Khomas region who were awarded a grade between A to U in the 2007 Grade ten ESL examinations.

Grade	Number of students
A	275
B	601
C	1139
D	1016
E	530
F	223
G	73
U	13
Total number of Khomas students	3956

Figure 18: Table to show the total number of students in the Khomas region who were awarded a grade (A – U) in the 2007 Grade ten ESL examinations

The above table shows that the most common grade awarded was a C, although the number awarded a D is also close to this figure. In total, 2015 of the 3956 pupils attained a Grade C or higher. Figure Nineteen shows this information in percentages.



The above pie chart shows that just over a quarter of Grade Ten students in the Khomas area writing the 2007 ESL examinations attained a grade D, and similarly a grade C. Almost the same percentage of students attained a grade E as those who

attained a grade B. In total, fifty two percent of students attained at least a grade C. Almost twenty percent achieved a grade E or lower, with almost ten percent attaining a grade F or failed entirely.

Whilst some of these results are concerning, the Khomas region nevertheless performed well when compared with the national averages. On average, just under two percent achieved a grade A. Five percent achieved a grade B, and so Khomas attained more than tripled the national average of this grade. Just fewer than fourteen percent of students nationally achieved a grade C – here, the Khomas area achieved twice this.

Twenty three percent were awarded a grade D, compared to twenty six in Khomas. Twenty six percent of Grade Ten students nationally were awarded a grade E, much higher than in Khomas. Twenty one percent a grade F (again, this was much lower in Khomas – six percent), eight percent a grade G and just under two percent a grade U. The poorest results were found in Northern Namibia, particularly in the remote areas close to Etosha.

4.12 Comparison of Khomas school rankings: 2007 and 2008

2007 was a year of both positive and concerning results, as the below table shows.

<u>School</u>	<u>2008 rank</u>	<u>Improvement/decline from 2007</u>
Windhoek Gymnasium	1	New school
Delta SS	5	+ 1
Jan Mohr SS	6	- 1
Windhoek Tech. HS	8	+ 5
Windhoek HS	13	- 11
Combretum Trust School	19	+ 22
Hochland HS	20	+ 12

St Joseph's RCS	21	+ 9
Academia SS	22	- 14
Welwitchia School (Int) ¹⁹	35	+ 17
Eldorado SS	38	+ 11
David Beuzuidenhout SS	40	+ 5
Centaurus HS	44	+ 28
Khomas HS	45	- 17
Concordia College	53	- 19
Tanben College	71	+ 169
Cosmos HS	81	- 20
Groot Aub JSS	84	+ 44
Hage Geingob SS	85	- 27
Jan Jonker Afrikaner SS	87	- 28
Immanuel Shifidi SS	89	+ 24
Ella Du Plessis SSS	100	- 38
Khomas Tura Project School	114	- 27
Highline SS	135	N/A
Jakob Marengo T. Col	150	+ 147
A Shipena SS	183	- 79
Augustineum SS	205	+ 33
Goreangab JSS	300	- 107
Eros Girls	385	+ 4
Pionier Boys	527	- 333
Total number of schools (nationally):	550	
Average improvement/decline of Khomas region schools:	- 7	

Figure 20: Table to show the performance of secondary schools in the Khomas region of Namibia, compared to 2007

¹⁹ An International school. Although the ranking is given for 2007, the results were not available for that year.

Figure Twenty shows that Windhoek Gymnasium, a new school for this year, achieved the highest ESL Grade Ten results nationally, although Windhoek High School, ranked second in 2007 fell to eighth in the rankings. However, half of the twenty eight schools were ranked within the top fifty schools in the country – one more than in 2007 (due to the Windhoek Gymnasium being opened). Thus, this hints at some consistency in the results, supported by the fact that the average decline in ranking was lower than in 2007 (seven compared to sixteen).

On the other hand, three schools were within the bottom half of the national results and Pionier Boys, down more than three hundred in the national rankings (therefore largely distorting the improvements in rankings), achieved particularly concerning results. Almost a third of the fifty pupils that sat the 2008 Grade Ten ESL examination at this school achieved a grade E.

Of the twenty six schools where the ranking for 2007 was available, half of the schools' results improved, whilst the other half's declined. Therefore, a more useful indicator of whether improvements are visible in the results can be seen in the grades of learners, which Figure Twenty One shows.

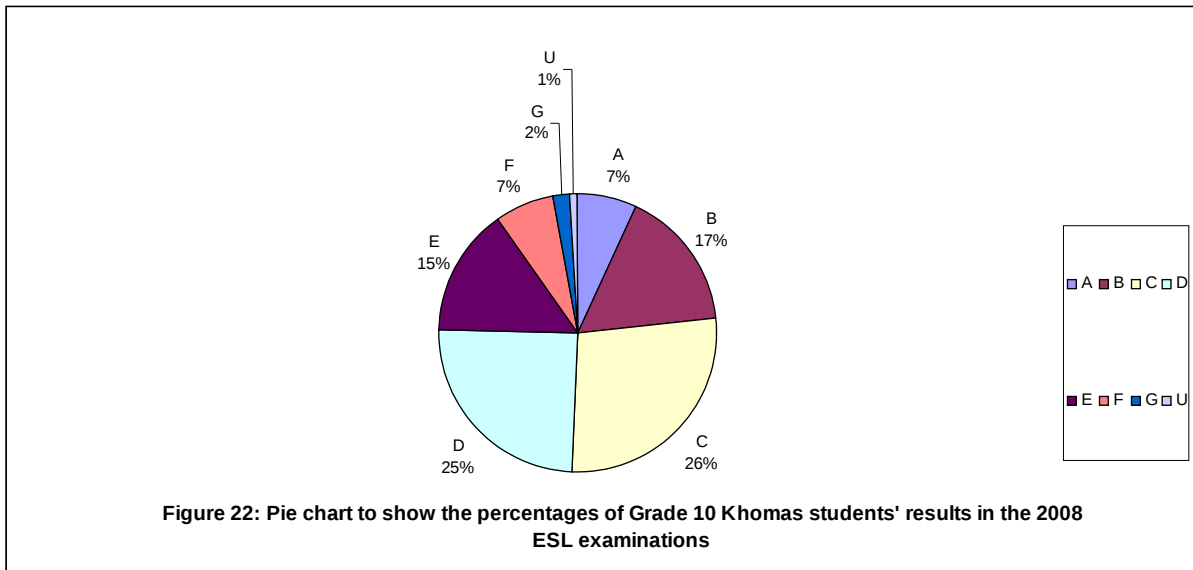
4.13 Distribution of grades in the subject of ESL at Grade ten level in the Khomas area, 2008

Grade	Number of students
A	295
B	716
C	1175
D	1064
E	647
F	301
G	91
U	30
Total number of Khomas students	4427

Figure 21: Table to show the total number of students in the Khomas region who were awarded a grade (A – U) in the 2008 Grade ten ESL examinations

When we compare Figure Twenty One with Figure Eighteen, we can see that despite almost five hundred more students sitting ESL at Grade Ten level than in 2007, the number of A and C grades rose only slightly when compared to the previous year. However, there were additionally one hundred and fifteen more B grades than in 2007. The largest increase was in grade E.

In total, 2186 of the 4427 students attained a grade between A and C. The percentages of each grade are shown in Figure Twenty Two.



The pie chart shows that seven percent of Grade ten learners in Khomas achieved a grade A in 2007, as was the case the previous year. Seventeen percent were awarded a grade B, up one percent from 2006. Twenty six percent achieved a grade C, down three percent from 2006, whilst grades D to U remained almost identical to 2006.

It was a similar picture on a national level. The exact same percentage of students attained a grade A (1.7%) as in 2007, just over five percent achieved a grade B (again, Khomas more than tripled this). Khomas averaged almost twice the average number of C grades nationally (fourteen percent), although D grades were slightly higher in Khomas than they were nationally (twenty five percent of Khomas grades were D, compared to twenty two percent nationally). E grades were much higher nationally than in Khomas, but remained almost identical at a country-wide level to those of 2007, at twenty seven percent. F grades were also almost identical to those of 2007, although G and U grades declined slightly.

Therefore, although the results remained consistent when compared to the previous year, they were also not significantly higher.

4.14 Comparison of Khomas school rankings: 2008 and 2009

<u>School</u>	<u>2009 Rank</u>	<u>Improvement/decline from 2008</u>
Windhoek Gymnasium	1	0
Delta SS	3	+ 2
Jan Mohr SS	7	- 1
Windhoek Techn. HS	13	- 5
Windhoek HS	14	- 1
Academia SS	19	+ 3
Combretum Trust School	20	- 1
Concordia College	21	+ 32
Highlands Christian Private	23	N/A
St Joseph's RCS	26	- 5
Hochland HS	31	- 11
Tanben College	33	+ 38
Khomas High School	36	+ 9
David Bezuidenhout SS	37	+ 2
Welwitcha School (Int)	45	- 10
Eldorado SS	61	- 23
Eros Girls	73	+ 312
Centaurus HS	78	- 34
Jan Jonker Afrikaner SS	82	+ 5
Hage Geingob SS	86	- 1
Immanuel Shifidi SS	99	- 10
Ella Du Plessis SSS	105	- 5
Khomas Tura Project School	107	+ 7
A Shipena SS	115	+ 69
Acacia HS	137	N/A
Highline SS	139	-4
CJ Brandt HS	149	N/A
Cosmos HS	153	- 72
Groot Aub JSS	156	- 72

Augustineum SS	162	+ 43
Rocky Crest HS	171	N/A
Goreangab JSS	221	+ 79
Jakob Marengo T. Col.	262	- 113
Pionier Boys	317	+ 210
Total number of schools (nationally):		570
Average improvement/decline of Khomas region schools:		+ 15

Figure 23: Table to show the performance of secondary schools in the Khomas region of Namibia, compared to 2008

Despite an increased number of schools in both the region and the country, only one school, Pionier Boys, is ranked below the top half of the results. Furthermore, the school significantly improved its ranking (along with Eros girls) of 2008.

At the same time, only thirteen pupils at Eros Girls sat the examination, compared with hundreds in a number of other schools (David Bezuidenhout SS, for example, had three hundred and four pupils sitting the exam). Moreover, many of the rural schools which were ranked amongst the lowest in the country often had no more than thirty students writing the ESL exam at Grade Ten level. Consequentially, although the ranking system does consider the average marks of students at each school, the wide-ranging numbers of pupils at each school must be considered as a contributing factor in the rankings.

Of the thirty schools ranked in 2008, only thirteen improved their ranking, yet for the first time, the average rank of schools in Khomas improved (although Pionier Boys and Eros Girls can be thought to be a significant contributor in this). On the other hand, most declines in rankings were relatively small (with the exceptions of Jakob

Marengo, Groot Aub JSS and Cosmos High School), similarly to 2008. Moreover, with an increased number of schools, it can be thought that maintaining ones ranking becomes more difficult, and so the declines must be put in context. Vice versa, the improvements that some schools make are perhaps thus more commendable.

Windhoek Gymnasium again reported the highest average results in ESL at Grade Ten level and Delta Secondary School's results continued to improve (the school was ranked third in the country for Grade ten ESL results). On the other hand, Windhoek High School, ranked second in 2007, continued to decline in the rankings and was ranked fourteenth this year.

4.15 Distribution of grades in the subject of ESL at Grade ten level in the Khomas area, 2009

The number of Grade Ten learners continued to rise due to new schools being opened. With this rise in learners came a rise in the number of pupils attaining grades A to C, as the table below shows.

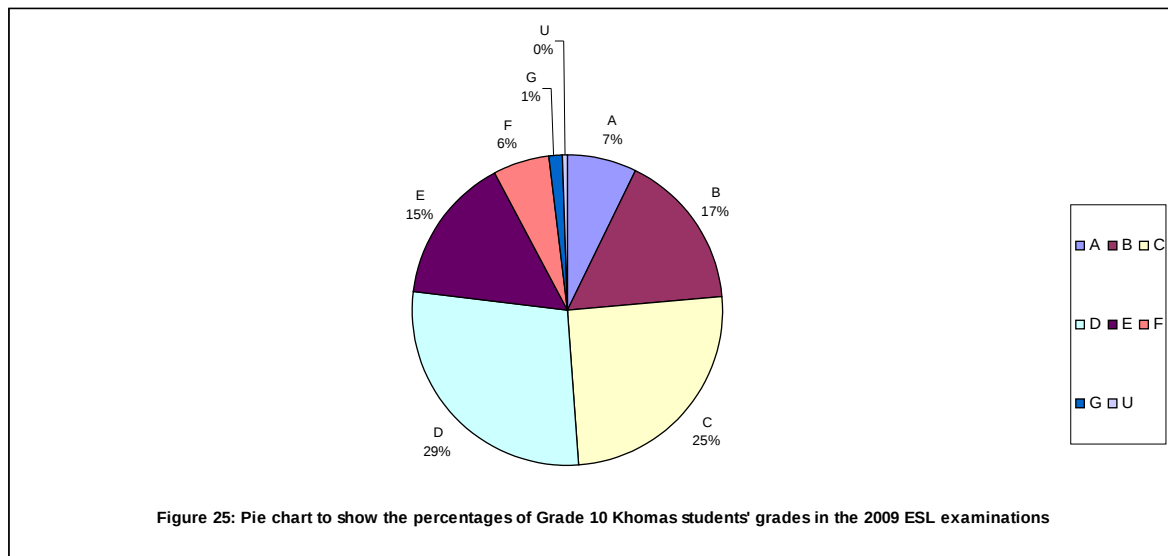
Grade	Number of students
A	337
B	788
C	1194
D	1333
E	733
F	281
G	65
U	23
Total number of Khomas students	4895

Figure 24: Table to show the total number of students in the Khomas region who were awarded a grade (A – U) in the 2009 Grade ten ESL examinations

When we compare Figure Twenty Four with Figure Twenty One, we can see that there were forty two more A grades, seventy two more B grades and nineteen more C grades awarded to Grade ten learners writing ESL at Grade Ten than in 2008.

The largest rise was in D grades, with two hundred and sixty nine more students being awarded this grade than in the previous year. Grades E to G rose only slightly, with seven fewer pupils being graded U than in 2008.

However, the percentage of students attaining each grade was almost identical, as the pie chart below shows.



When we compare Figure Twenty Five with Figure Twenty Two, we can see that the percentages of students achieving grades A to C remains almost unchanged (half the students in the Khomas region in 2008 attained grades A to C and this figure declined by only a percent in 2009). The only significant difference here is a rise in D grades, from twenty five percent in 2008 to twenty nine percent in 2009.

On a national level, the results were similar. There was a slight rise in A grades from 1.7 percent to two percent, as well as a rise in B grades from five per cent in 2008 to

six percent in 2009. C grades remained consistent with previous years at fourteen percent, whilst D grades rose by two percent, up from twenty two percent in 2008. The highest rise nationally was in E grades, which rose four percent to thirty one percent of all grades awarded.

4.16 Comparison of Khomas school rankings: 2009 and 2010

Despite the concerns which were raised nationally at the overall Grade Ten results, there were a number of improvements in the ESL results in 2010, as the table below shows. Conversely, there is additionally evidence of declines which must be considered at a wider level.

<u>School</u>	<u>2010 Rank</u>	<u>Improvement/decline from 2009</u>
Windhoek Gymnasium	2	- 1
Jan Mohr SS	6	+ 1
Delta SS	7	- 4
Highlands Christian Private	12	+ 11
Hochland HS	15	+ 16
Windhoek HS	17	- 3
Eros Girls	20	+ 53
Windhoek Tech. HS	23	- 10
David Bezuidenhout SS	26	+ 12
Academia SS	28	- 9
Khomas HS	34	+ 2
Eldorado SS	38	+ 23
Groot Aub JSS	48	+ 107
St Joseph's RCS	49	- 23
Centaurus HS	52	+ 26
Combretum Trust School	54	- 34
Jan Jonker Afrikaner SS	55	+ 27
Concordia College	62	- 41
Welwitchia School (Int)	65	- 20

Rocky Crest HS	66	+ 92
Hage Geingob SS	67	+ 19
Immanuel Shifidi SS	77	+ 22
A Shipena SS	82	+ 33
Cosmos HS	90	+ 63
Acacia HS	120	+ 17
Tanben College	121	- 88
Goreangab JSS	124	+ 97
Jakob Marengo T. Col	127	+ 135
Khomas Tura Project School	156	- 48
Ella Du Plessis SSS	188	- 83
Highline SS	196	- 57
CJ Brandt HS	200	- 51
Pionier Boys	202	+ 115
Augustineum SS	237	- 74
Total number of schools (nationally):		584
Average improvement/decline of Khomas region schools:		+ 10

Figure 26: Table to show the performance of secondary schools in the Khomas region of Namibia, compared to 2009

The table shows that for the first time, each school in the Khomas region was ranked in the top half of the national ESL examinations results for Grade Ten. Furthermore, schools on average continued to improve their ranking by ten positions. In particular, Pionier Boys improved significantly, and was ranked three hundred and twenty five places higher than in 2008. Although Jakob Marengo also improved its ranking by more than one hundred positions, this is offset somewhat by comparatively poor results in 2009.

Although Windhoek Gymnasium lost its position as the highest ranked school nationally for Grade Ten ESL results, the average mark of its students was slightly higher than that of Saint Boniface College (83.2%, compared with 82.9% for Saint

Boniface), although there were four more students at Saint Boniface. Similarly, one must consider this in the case of Tanben College. The school was ranked thirty third in 2009 but declined from thirty three to one hundred and two one. However, only thirty seven students sat the Grade Ten ESL examination at this school in 2010.

A number of Windhoek and suburban Windhoek schools also showed notable signs of improvement, particularly the two Katatura schools of Hage Geingob and A Shipena. Eros Girls equally showed encouraging improvement, and was now ranked twentieth nationally. One should note however that this is a very small school and only six Grade Ten learners wrote the ESL paper at this school.

Whilst nineteen of the thirty four schools were ranked higher than in 2009, all but one school's results (Pionier Boys) were poorer than in 2009 from Khomas Tura Project School downwards. This is concerning as the declines were more than fifty positions (or, in Khomas Tura Project School's case, close to this). Therefore, whilst there is evidence here that there was much improvement in the Grade Ten ESL results for Khomas, questions must be asked as to why the declines here were so large.

4.17 Distribution of grades in the subject of ESL at Grade ten level in the Khomas area, 2010

Despite there being four hundred and sixty two fewer Grade ten learners in Khomas than in 2009, there were one hundred and twenty nine fewer A grades than the previous year and fifty eight fewer B grades. C grades rose by twenty three. Grades D to F declined in number, whilst grade G rose only by one. There were ten fewer U grades than in 2009. The table below shows these results in more detail.

Grade	Number of students
A	208

B	730
C	1271
D	1312
E	597
F	224
G	66
U	13
Total number of Khomas students	4433

Figure 27: Table to show the total number of students in the Khomas region who were awarded a grade (A – U) in the 2010 Grade ten ESL examinations

Furthermore, when we look at the percentages of grades, there is little evidence to support the concerns that Grade Ten results declined when compared to 2009, as Figure Twenty Eight shows.

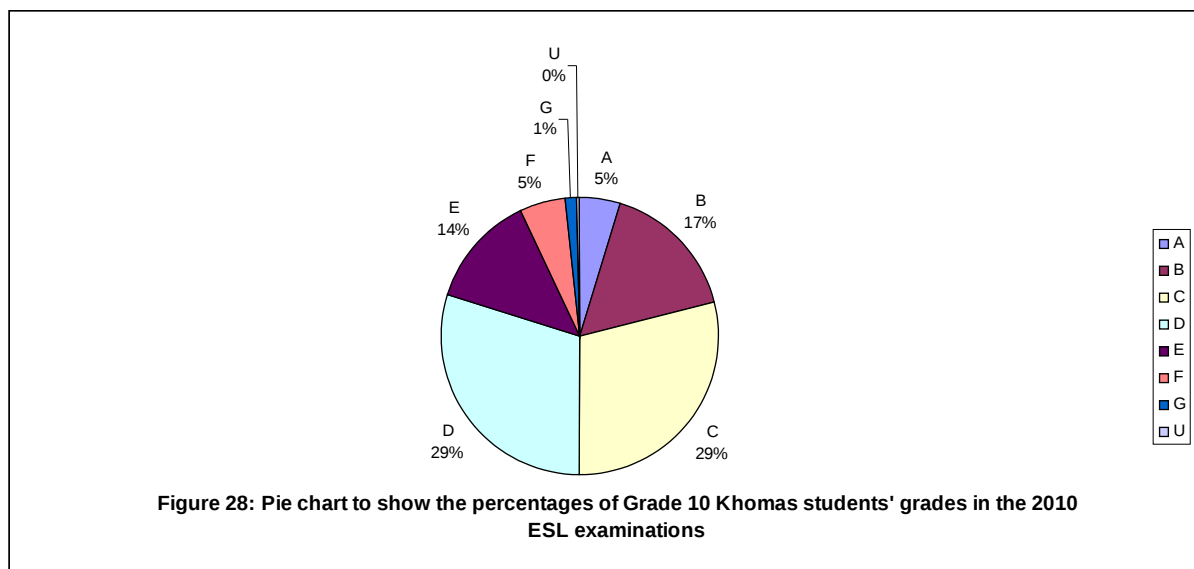


Figure 28: Pie chart to show the percentages of Grade 10 Khomas students' grades in the 2010 ESL examinations

When we compare Figure Twenty Eight with Figure Twenty Five, we can see that A grades declined by two percent. The percentage of B grades remained the same as in 2009, although C grades rose by four per cent to twenty nine percent. Grades D to F remained almost identical to those of 2009.

Moreover, the percentage of pupils in the Khomas region attaining grades A to C rose from 47.37% in 2009 to 49.83% in 2010. Consider the results of the table below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage of Khomas students attaining grades A to C</u>
2007	50.93%
2008	49.38%
2009	47.37%
2010	49.83%

Figure 29: Table to show the percentage of Grade 10 Khomas students attaining grades A to C in ESL from 2007 to 2010

4.18 Where do the challenges lie?

After two successive years of declines, and a two percent decline in 2009, the results at grades A to C were close to those of 2007. Almost half of all Khomas Grade Ten learners writing ESL last year achieved at least a C grade. Was the concern therefore at a more national level? Namibia's percentages of each grade were almost identical to that of 2009 and thus, the national averages remained consistent from the years 2007 to 2010.

On the other hand, the rural areas of Namibia are continually reporting much lower results than those in the Khomas region. If one looks at the results from 2007 to 2010, those with the lowest average marks were commonly found in the Ohangwena and

Omusati regions in the north of Namibia, close to Etosha. As I discussed earlier, some action has been taken at a national level in an attempt to address this situation.

The declining percentages of Khomas learners achieving grades A to C between 2008 and 2009 are of some concern, although the below clustered bar chart offers some encouragement.

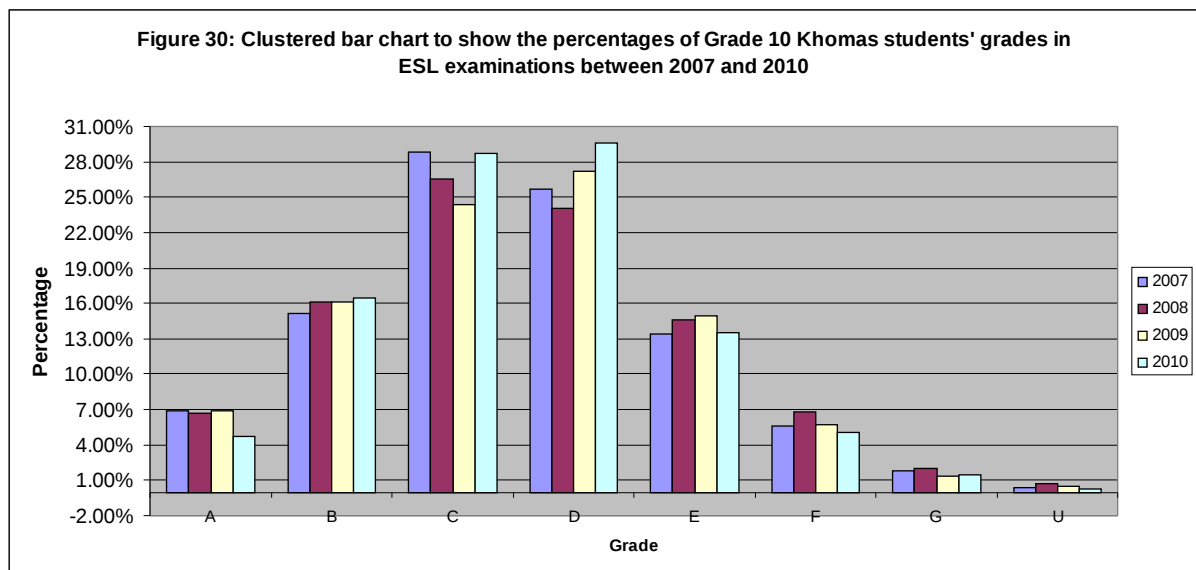


Figure Thirty shows that despite a decline in A grades, all other grades in 2010 remained at a similar level to those of 2007, where the highest percentage of students attained grades A to C. C grades have been rather inconsistent however and despite a slight decline in D grades in 2008, these have been rising since 2009. Furthermore, E grades rose between 2008 and 2008, although these were at a similar percentage to those of 2007 last year. F grades have remained consistent, whilst G and U grades have steadily declined in number.

4.19 Summary

Nineteen of the forty five questionnaires were returned, the majority of which were from four of the six schools, with the others originating from IPPR, the Polytechnic of

Namibia and UNAM. A large proportion of the respondents were female, holding at least a Bachelors degree (although a number hold qualifications higher than these, such as a Masters degree) and have worked in education for at least a decade.

It was unanimously agreed that English in Namibia is not a first language for students, both in speech and writing. However, there were disagreements regarding the proficiency of written English and this suggests that to a number of respondents, written English is not at the same level as that of spoken English.

Whilst all but two of the nineteen respondents were at least aware that a language policy exists in Namibia, eight of the nineteen were either unaware of its existence or had not read the policy at all and are thus unaware of its implications and recommendations in teaching.

Twelve of the nineteen respondents (sixty three percent) felt that the policy should introduce English at a much earlier age than the current recommendation of Grade Four, which was additionally reflected in the scores of LPP objectives.

In particular, the results of the questionnaire show that there is a demand for increased teacher support and training, as well as more materials for both teachers and learners.

Ultimately, teachers were deemed to have the highest responsibility in ensuring that their pupils achieve their full potential, however they must have support from both the Ministry of Education and principals in order to maximise their own subject knowledge and improve their learner's standards of written English, were are of particular concern to those surveyed.

The results of the Grade Ten ESL examinations offered both signs of encouragement and areas of concern. The results of 2007 were the highest of the four years, yet the performance of many schools in the Khomas area was actually poorer than in 2007.

Over the years 2008 and 2009, the average national mark declined, and with it the percentage of students achieving grades A to C. Khomas however has performed consistently well and many of the Grade Ten ESL results for schools in the area were amongst the highest nationally. On the other hand, a number of schools have experienced a decline in their performance in ESL at Grade Ten level over the four years.

At the same time however, the results from 2010 show that this was the most successful year since 2007 and therefore perhaps the concerns lie more with the northern schools, whose average marks have been consistently amongst the lowest in the country.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions which are drawn are from the results of the questionnaire and examinations results. As the questionnaire's respondents were mainly employed within secondary and tertiary education, it is therefore difficult to draw full conclusions. This is because the aim of the study was to utilise the views of the Ministry of Education to support or argue against the views of, and points raised by, teachers. Therefore, only one side of the arguments has been presented and one must consider this in the context of the findings of my research. Nevertheless, there were some significant findings in my study.

In my introduction, I stated that the research problem under investigation was that the Grade Ten examinations results were lower than those of 2009 and that this was because "the Namibian educational English Language Policy is not being implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the Namibian Government". Whilst a larger research project would need to be conducted in order to identify both the subjects in which the results declined and the schools with results of concern, my research findings show that the ESL results for Grade Ten were comparatively higher than those of 2009 (both for Khomas and the country as a whole).

Therefore, the reason for such declines is one that is complex and difficult to establish. As the results of the questionnaire show, we cannot say that 'bad' teaching is simply due to a lack of awareness of the educational language policy. Rather, the decline in Grade Ten results is due to a wide combination of socio-economic factors, some of which were identified in the responses to the questionnaire.

At the same time, the findings of this study show that more resources for both students and teachers and greater teacher training are essential. As the American author Alvin Toffler warned, “The illiterate of the future will not be the person who cannot read. It will be the person who does not know how to learn.” In other words, studying literature will expose both Namibia’s teachers and learners to a wider variety of texts. Studying great literature, including classical literature, will lead to a greater appreciation of a diverse range of creative, imaginative writing. In turn, this will develop their creative and critical thinking. Therefore, I would recommend that literature should be a part of the English language syllabus from Grade One onwards.

The concerns regarding reading were echoed in the questionnaire’s results and were further supported by many similar comments in Section Four. In particular, many respondents raised concerns that textbooks were either outdated, inappropriate for the level of teaching or simply that classrooms (which are becoming increasingly overcrowded) do not have enough books for each student. Thus, as my findings show, much work still needs to be done in raising the proficiency of learners’ written English. Exposing more children to creative writing, and appreciating why this writing is considered to be creative and skilled, will lead not only to a greater appreciation of reading, but the ability of students to write well in English.

Moreover, the performance of certain schools in the Khomas area in English has been concerning. Results have been consistent on the whole, yet some schools (particularly Windhoek High School, whose rank has declined since its high average mark in Grade Ten English in 2007) have continually experienced declining results.

Ultimately, there appears to be a gap in the findings of this research. There are no questionnaires from some relevant stakeholders, yet the views of subject experts and

policy writers who shape the language policy are critical to gain a greater understanding of where the challenges lie and the reasons for these.

5.2 Recommendations

The spoken proficiency of English in Namibia amongst children and young adults is such that it is increasingly being considered as a second or third language, as the questionnaire results show. Thus, the communicative approach to teaching recommended by the language policy is one which has clearly had a positive effect: more people than ever before are able to communicate in English and therefore the global marketplace. Yet this approach has been used for more than twenty years. Now is the time to reevaluate the language policy of Namibia. Results have been declining and therefore action must be taken to resolve this. The policy discussions have brought some useful suggestions, however further discussions are required if the country is to move forward. The Ministry of Education recently has erected banners saying that it is “counting on our people for development” – yet, as many respondents maintained in section four of the questionnaire, it is the responsibility of everyone – parents, the learners themselves, schools, the Government and policy writers – to collectively strive for improvement and to strive to solve what has become one of the main challenges in Namibia.

Raising the written proficiency of English will not be an easy task. That said, the common request of “more books, at an earlier age” and, as one respondent commented, “we MUST develop a love in learners for reading” is one which I would recommend. Doing so will expose children to an unfamiliar written language and in turn raise awareness of aspects such as grammar, an approach which appears to be lacking at present.

Similarly, one could argue that adding a tertiary level Bachelor of Education, as a postgraduate degree following a student studying a Bachelor of English would prepare students for the classroom environment by being well read in a variety of disciplines in English (such as grammar and stylistics) in addition to their knowledge of teaching.

An *All Africa* article from February (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201102080612.html>) states that NANTU blamed “teacher absenteeism and neglect, lack of commitment and the lack of a unified relief system in the Ministry of Education” for the high failure rate of last year. If these factors are contributory, principals and the Ministry must ask themselves serious questions, as teachers must have the interests of their students at heart if their learners are to achieve their full potential.

An increased number of well-read, well-qualified teachers would equally benefit both schools and learners, which could be supported by an increased number of Government bursaries for those considering teaching as a career. Offering existing teachers financial support to afford the tuition fees for Further Education (particularly Masters and Doctorate degrees) will in turn raise the subject knowledge, skills and experience of Namibia’s teaching staff.

The English results for Namibia’s northern Grade Ten learners are somewhat understandable, given that the area is more remote than Khomas. At the same time however, the area must not be neglected and the Government’s recent drive to recruit more teachers in this area is one that should be applauded. That said, this must not lead to an imbalance of teaching experience across the country, and should rather lead to a diverse range of teachers nationally.

In addition to a focus upon the rural areas of Namibia, I recommend that the Ministry of Education conducts research and reviews each year of the national results of its

students. In particular, significant increases or declines in results must be further investigated to establish the reasons for these. Doing so will greatly assist in the reevaluation of the language policy and will provide a useful platform for discussions with schools as to how they can improve their performances in English.

Given the high rate of unemployment in Namibia, as discussed earlier, English must be introduced at an earlier age, both in writing and speech. Whilst I would recommend that mother tongue languages are still the main medium of instruction for at least one grade, with more English lessons being taught (particularly written English), I contest the claim by Bernstein (cited by Wardhaugh, 2006: 336) that “a particular kind of social structure leads to a particular kind of linguistic behaviour and this behaviour in turn reproduces the original social structure”. Students at schools such as A. Shipena and Hage Geingob in Katatura are achieving high grades (including As) for instance, despite their lower socio-economic class. English should not be at the expense of the mother tongue, yet must, and does, open greater job prospects to children.

Indeed, President Hifikepunye Pohamba, discussing the Grade Ten and Grade Twelve examinations results last year, commented that although the results were a slight improvement of those of recent years, “We must, therefore, reposition our education system to fulfill” education’s role as a catalyst for economic development in Namibia (<http://www.observer.com.na/archives/582-grades-10-and-12-results-disappointing-says-pohamba>).

Ultimately, Namibia’s challenge is a large one, but is not impossible. With a collective unity and the desire of every stakeholder to achieve the best for learners, the Grade Ten results can, and will, improve.

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