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In search of quality in Namibian pre-primary education: teachers’ parents’ and pupils’ perspectives

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Provision of high-quality early childhood and pre-primary education has been supported for years since it is proven to support optimal learning and development. The current study was designed to explore the perceptions of the pre-primary teachers, parents and pupils in terms of the provision of quality pre-primary education in Namibia. Quality pre-primary education in this study was assessed based on the four quality factors; physical, guiding, process and the outcomes factors which is the main aim of the study. Moreover, the study explored the thoughts and views of the pre-school teachers and parents on quality pre-primary education and mainly the factors that can contribute to the quality of the Namibian pre-primary education. This study emphasized the quality concept in education, the contributing factors to quality pre-primary education as well as the significance of quality pre-primary education. Seven teachers were selected based on five or more years of teaching experiences in pre-primary, seven learners were selected based on their willingness to participate and the ability to articulate themselves well to take part in the interviews, and six parents were selected based on how they take part in pre-primary education. Data was collected by interviewing participants at their respective schools whereby parents and pupils were interviewed in Oshiwambo which is the local language. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. According to the findings of this study, teachers, parents and pupils are partially satisfied with the quality pre-school education as they mentioned areas that need much improvements such as the physical learning environments, availability of teaching and learning materials, parental involvement and some issues in the pre-primary curriculum. This study suggested for conducive learning environments, availability of teaching materials, parents’ input, and kindergartens for all children and strengthen teacher training to achieve the quality pre-primary education in Namibia. Additionally, this study suggested issues to study in future such as perception of parents on the pre-school play as well as a framework within which quality could be deconstructed and explicitly described in early childhood education in Namibia to improve quality education at the foundation level.

**Avainsanat-Keywords:**
early childhood education, quality in pre-primary education
Acknowledgment

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Namibian early childhood and pre-primary education implementation and review

According to the Namibian pre-primary syllabus, pre-primary education in Namibia is a phase on its own of formal basic education that covers a single year of school readiness before the official commencement of primary education (Ministry of Education, 2015). In some countries, pre-primary can be referred to as pre-school education and in this study pre-primary and pre-school are used as the same terms. In the Namibian context pre-primary is intended for learners that should have turned five years the previous year. According to the National Curriculum of Education, in October 2006, the cabinet of the Republic of Namibia took a decision that the responsibility for pre-primary education would be transferred from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare to the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2009). This means that the early childhood phase for children age 0-5 years, remains with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, while the pre-primary school for six years old children become part of basic education.

The Namibian government introduced pre-primary education pilot program in 2008, and few schools were selected as a test before it was fully implemented in 2011, by that time it was not yet a pre-requisite for entry to grade one, but now it is in the process to be extended to be a pre-requisite to grade one since most of the schools in the country are offering pre-grade. According to the Namibian pre-primary syllabus, the purpose or the main aim of pre-primary education is to lay a solid foundation for junior primary learning, establishing self-confidence and self-worth through personal and social development (Ministry of Education, 2008). In Namibia, pre-primary classrooms are in the ordinary comprehensive school contexts and are part and parcel of those schools (typically part of combined, primary or junior primary schools).

Since 2000, the Early Childhood Education (ECE), has emerged as part of the critical reform area in the international agenda such as ‘education for all’. In Namibia, pre-primary education was approved to be made part of public schools and this decision was followed by an educational reform process that was done in 2012. So far pre-primary education in Namibia is seen as part of ECE, whereby there are even career paths for pre-primary teachers, pre-primary syllabus and
teacher manuals as well as regulatory policies that guide particular aspects of the implementation of pre-primary education.

Additionally, pre-primary education has been expanded at the school level, teachers have been trained, and few classrooms have been constructed specifically for pre-primary at some schools, provision of materials at some schools such as playgrounds. All these efforts are made to enhance and enforce quality education at the foundation level although this is not the case in most rural schools and marginalized communities (Matengu, Cleghorn, & Korkeamäki, 2018). There have been rarely conducted studies on early childhood education and specifically on pre-primary education especially after the implementation of pre-primary education. Further, Matengu et al. (2018) study suggested that, there is much that needs to be done in Namibia in terms of local policies in the sense that there is a need of going beyond institutional condition in terms of educational marginalization in pre-primary context. That’s why their study focus is on policy mediation and sense-making to find out the reality in the rural African context which is educational marginalization.

According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (2013) reported that the future physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of the children is formed right during their early childhood experiences based on the bond they form with their parents, caregivers and teachers. Additionally, giving them a solid foundation in the early years will be the best investment that any society could make to ensure success in life. The report results show that in Namibia young children do not always get the best start in life due to poverty, malnutrition, diseases and lack of opportunities to play and develop the skills needed during their early years of education. Further, the report has specified that integrated early childhood development services are limited in Namibia especially in rural and marginalized communities whereby about 87% of children aged 0-4 do not attend integrated ECD programs, and 60% of children of pre-primary age do not attend pre-primary education and about 34% of children live in poverty. This is a wakeup call to the government to act accordingly and to ensure that the responsible ministries are strengthened to the capacity to implement, co-ordinate and provide quality ECD services in Namibia. Despite all these, the report has indicated that the government of the Republic of Namibia has tried to recognize the importance of integrated ECD, that cater for children’s holistic development; cognitive, social,
emotional and physical from birth to eight years old, as part of vision 2030, as ECD, does not begin at pre-primary level but right at conception.

1.2 Aims of the study

This study focuses on the pre-primary education in Namibia since it is fully implementation in 2011, assessing its quality factors from the teachers, learners and parent’s point of views. This study analyses the purpose of the National Curriculum for Basic Education, and pedagogical issues related to understanding quality in pre-schools education, whether there is a need for the curriculum to be revisited and revised to meet the needs of the modern society, based on the learning content areas that are being taught in this phase which are; Language Development, Preparatory Mathematics, Environmental Studies and so on. Additionally, this study focuses on the approaches of the pre-school teachers, the learning process of the children, the involvement of parents as well as the interaction of the learners in relation to overall goals. Overall, the aim of this thesis is to define the concept of quality, to explore how quality is experienced from different perspectives, and how it can be enhanced in pre-primary classrooms in Namibia.

During the past decades, much has been done globally to provide quality basic Education which is an obligation for the convention on the right of the child. Factors related to quality in education which UNICEF takes into account involves learners, process, environment and the outcomes. According to Espinosa (2002) indicated that pre-school programs are typically rated on two dimensions of quality-process, which involve direct experiences such as teacher-child relationships, and structural quality which involves elements such as classroom size, teacher’s qualifications and so on. Both process and structural quality are critical factors in search for quality education in pre-primary education. Therefore, this study aims to find out the quality education in terms of the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors from the pre-primary teachers, parents and learners. Finally, it aims to find out teachers’ and parents’ conception of quality pre-school education, what they consider as high quality based on their experience or what they aspire to see.

1.3 Statement of the problem

In modern society, children should be regarded as informed citizens whereby they need to develop a whole range of competencies and skills such as co-operative skills, communicative and problem-
solving skills, creativity skills as well as learning to learn so that they can make informed decisions on their own. All these skills and abilities should prepare children of today, for tomorrow’s society through early childhood and pre-primary education.

Additionally, there are some central dimensions that relate to children’s abilities such as culture, technology, parents’ input, teachers’ strong input and so on. That is why pre-primary education should be considered as a community where children learn to live with other people outside their family (Williams, Sheridan, Harju-Luukkainen, & Samuelsson, 2015).

In the Namibian education system, pre-primary education covers a single year of school readiness activities before the commencement of formal primary education. The main purpose of pre-primary education in Namibia is to lay a solid foundation for formal learning through the personal and social development and all learning must promote growth and development in each child going through that grade. Additionally, the aim is to develop learning with understanding and the skills required for them to be able to contribute to the development of the society. Furthermore, the national curriculum for basic education aims to provide a stimulating physical, emotional and social environment for early childhood and pre-primary education. It moreover aims to enhance equity on entry to primary education, especially for children with learning disadvantages although, during the time of the implementation of this policy, pre-primary was not yet a pre-requisite for entry to basic education (Ministry of Education, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2010).

However, According to Matengu et al. (2018) argue that the policies frameworks and guiding documents of early childhood and pre-primary education in Namibia are in place but there is much needed to be done in terms of implementing them, getting them right and enforcing them. Their report shows that there is a lack of communication between parents and schools and their involvements and input is minimal. Additionally, there are limited facilities that can accommodate all the learners, and especially marginalized learners have no access to education due to long distances and facilities for early childhood education are lacking in schools which is a challenge to the teachers and learners. In response to this problem, this study proposes to assess and explore the pre-primary education in Namibia in terms of quality factors from the parents who have had children in pre-primary grade, pre-primary teachers as well as children who have experienced pre-
primary education. The term ‘parent’ in this study does not only refer to biological parents of the learners, but it is also used to refer to any caregivers or guardians of the learners.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study intends to contribute to the overall early childhood education in Namibia and specifically pre-primary education in terms of quality education provision. Early childhood education in Namibia is intended for children from birth until the age eight, while pre-primary education is specifically for children who are six years old and therefore pre-primary is falling under early childhood education. Quality in this study is measured based on the four factors which are the physical, guiding, process and outcomes of pre-primary education. Specifically, this study focuses on pre-primary teachers’, parents’ and learners’ perceptions on quality pre-primary education as well as their perceptions of what quality pre-primary education entails. Many of the pre-school teachers and parents may find themselves in a situation where they do not know how to help or support their children either academically or in any other aspects. As a result, this study will contribute to the development of Namibian pre-school education system, policymakers, pre-primary teachers, parents, learners and all the stakeholders in education. Challenging the effectiveness of quality early childhood education serves as a starting point for determining and improving the whole education system as early childhood education is the foundation of all learning. Internationally, this study can benefit other countries which may find themselves in similar situations as of this study context and may want to improve their pre-primary education. Finally, this may be beneficiary to the researchers that would want to research more on quality pre-primary education locally and internationally.

1.5 Research overview

This chapter introduced this whole study, as it presented a background overview of the Namibian early childhood and pre-primary education. It further outlined the aims and the purpose of this study as well as the statement of the problem. Chapter two presented the theoretical background in terms of the educational quality which included the definitions of the quality concept of education from different authors. Quality of pre-primary education, as well as the contributing factors to quality pre-primary education, have been as well discussed in this chapter. Chapter three reviews the significance of quality pre-school education in terms of the dimensions of quality
education which are the structural, process and the outcomes. This chapter has further presented some views and results of different researchers around the globe on pre-school quality educations.

Chapter four presented the research questions and tasks of this study. Chapter five filed and defines the framework used in this qualitative case study, the philosophical foundation, research designs, participant’s information, data collection method and analysis as well as validity and trustworthiness of this study. Chapter six discussed the main findings of this study based on the teachers’, parents’ and learners' perspectives. Chapter seven discussed the findings concludes the study by giving some recommendations for future studies and it presented some limitations and it evaluates the study.
Chapter 2: Educational quality

2.1 Defining quality concept in education

The terminology quality is not a neutral word since it is a social constructed word with many meanings based on the context in which it is applied. During the past decades, educational quality has been increasingly receiving attention internationally with the aim of reforming it for better results. According to Scheerens, Luyten, and Van Ravens (2011) stated that the quality of education is more likely to be defined from different viewpoints for example from the teachers, pupils, policy makers, and parents of pupils, although there is common core of interest from all the stakeholders. Correspondingly, Acedo, Adams, and Popa (2012) explained that in practice the definition of quality depends on series of choice, level of education under reform as well as who participate in the process of policy making. This basically means that quality education cannot only be measured by one individual, but it requires collectively stakeholders with different viewpoints but for a common interest of enhancing and developing quality education.

The concept of quality is clearly linked to a certain purpose in education and there are variety of assumptions in democracy education in terms of the purpose of education. The purpose of quality education has to do with learning rather than with social control advantage. Regarding the effect of quality education, there is much evidence that contributes to quality education. However, a stressed question of how schools can be supported in their provision of quality education arises. This can only be achieved if there is a consistence involvement in provision and developing of learners learning from all the stakeholders in education. In today’s consumer orientated society, quality is seen only when there is a fulfilling service. In addition, quality has more to do with compliance with a product specification so that at the end improvement and self-determination is reached or improvement. Therefore, measures of quality in terms of education includes attendance figure, qualification of teaching staffs, staff absentee rate, pupils-teacher ratio, class size and so on (Bayne-Jardine, Hoy, & Woods, 2005).

Quality concept can similarly be seen from the perspective in which it is judged and there are different ways of judging quality education. Bayne-Jardine et al. (2005) state that quality can be graded as low and high, and it is understood as high quality of excellence when a high degree of
excellent is achieved. Additionally, they believed that quality and equality concepts in education are related and linked together, as improving quality in education should reduce the quality gap for those who may experience inequality due to race, social class, residence, religious belief and so on. Whereas Acedo et al. (2012) believed that goals and programs to promote equity, do not necessarily conflict with policies to promote quality; indeed, equity could be viewed as one requisite of quality. This literally means that for quality to be reached, equality must be addressed first, as the quality gap is widened by having low expectations.

Quality education can be viewed from the comparative judgements where by schools are compared to one another in terms of quality education provision, thus teacher training and how they progress in their career is a way of enhancing quality improvement in education. All the judgement used in judging quality in education are valuable judgement. Quality in education can be judged in terms of the outcomes if for example they match the pupils and parent's satisfaction and requirements. Therefore, quality can be defined by means of identifying longer-terms aims which help to define medium term goals and lead to the immediate short-term objectives. By defining and specifying objectives and striving to achieve them, the ultimate aims and goals are achieved (Bayne-Jardine et al., 2005).

Additionally, Acedo et al. (2012) enlightened that a high-quality education system or programs should seek equitable treatment of students and it is important for educators to determine the source or the origin of the inequality in knowledge, skills and ability. This means that educators and the whole school system should try to find factors that are contributing to inequality in learning environments and the deficiencies that create barriers in teaching and learning. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN general assembly in 1948, included the rights of all to education in the sense that elementary education was to be made free and compulsory for all learners of all nations. However, Alexander (2008) in his research monography, criticizes the ‘Education for all’ policy that pedagogy is missing in the discussion of quality education, as there are unanswered questions when it comes to specifically quality indicators. He provided some limitations of the definition of quality education provided by international bodies including UNESCO.
Quality education can moreover be defined or perceived from the viewpoint of dimensions. In practice quality education is always associated with concepts such as the output, outcome, process and output. Outputs refers to the changes that happens in student achievements, which are normally longer-term consequences of education. The process is basically the interaction that happens between the educational stakeholders. In addition, the term quality has several uses. Different researchers established that this terminology has both descriptive and normative characteristics. Quality can be one of the attributes of a certain organization or a sector for example school as an organization or education as a sector. It can be referred to as a status or relative degree of worth for example a certain school might provide a better education than other schools. Therefore, in education the terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have been used synonymously (Adams, 1993).

Quality education has been explained as an education that includes all learners and try to make sure that they are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn and supported by their families and communities. It made a provision of an environment that is healthy, safe and protective. The content that is delivered should reflect relevant curricular for acquisition of basic skills and the teachers should be trained in such a way that they understand that children are active participants and that they can construct their own learning. The teaching approach should accommodate all the learners with all different learning abilities and the outcomes would encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, definition of quality education must be open to changes and evolution based on the information, changing content and understanding of the nature of education challenge (UNICEF, 2000).

In the Namibian context quality education is defined, in the Ministry of education strategic plan (2011) as the one that “focuses on learning that strengthen the capacities of learners to act progressively on their own through the acquisition of significant and valuable knowledge, skills and attitudes” (p.5). This is reflecting and encouraging independent learning among learners as far as quality is concerned. This plan did not elaborate more on the aspects that should be considered if quality education is to be achieved apart from learning that strengthened pupils to be independent. Nevertheless, the national curriculum for basic education emphasized that stimulating early childhood environments, access for all children to pre-primary education, all contribute to the realization of quality foundation and quality education in general.
Additionally, it stated that free and structured play-leaning and an appropriate pedagogy should frame early childhood and pre-primary education (Ministry of Education, 2016).

2.2 Quality of pre-primary education

Early childhood education is regarded as one of the most crucial periods of time in human life, which is the period from birth to eight years old. It is the period where physical, cognitive, and emotional growth of the child begins. Pre-primary children are regarded to be in an early childhood stage as they are normally six years old depending on countries to countries. Therefore, according to Gregoridis (2018) views early childhood education as a broad term used to describe all type of service for children ranging in age from birth to six years old. This term is used interchangeably with early childhood education, pre-school education, early care education as well as pre-primary education. All these terminologies are used to basically describe all types of services and pre-primary educational programs that prepare children for formal primary education.

Debates have been going on for years about the concept of quality in early childhood education. Judgements of quality involve value and what may be regarded as high quality might differ from person to person. Researchers have written about different perspectives of different definition of quality from staff, pupils as well as the outsiders such as parents. These perspectives may lead to different definition of quality pre-school education. For example, Layzer and Goodson (2006) view quality from the aspects of the environment and children experiences that help nurture their developments. That is why their experiences should promote their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development if quality is to be explained from that perspective.

Many researches done in quality early childhood education have primarily focused on intellectual and social development and the well-being of the children. Some studies of early childhood education found out that quality of early childhood education is associated with cognitive, social and behavioral development and there is a difference between children who attended high quality ECE and those who attended the low quality ECE or those who did not attend at all (Taggart, 2010). While Rao and Sun (2012) asserted that having professional qualified early childhood educator is a pre-requisite for high quality programs, although many developing countries lack what is considered as high-quality education due to many factors.
Quality in ECE, has been discussed as a relative and multi-dimensional concept that depends on individuals, beliefs, settings, expectations and perceptions from different views. In support of this idea, Katz (1992), wrote something interesting about subjectivity of quality ECE based on five perspectives which are; top-down, bottom-up, outside-inside, inside and outside. He believed that quality of ECE can be evaluated in those ways. The top-down perspective is mostly identified with the settings, equipment and the program itself as seen above by parents. This perspective considers the views of the parents when it comes to the quality and quantity of space taken per child, health and hygiene procedures, qualifications and stability of ECE teachers as well as the ratio of adults to children in general. The bottom-up perspective on quality assess how the program is experienced by the participating children themselves. This approach looks at how children feel when they are with their parents at home, teachers and fellow peers at school. Pupils are too given an opportunity to assess the learning process in general, whether it is meaningful to them or not through sharing their experiences.

The outside-inside perspectives on quality education assess how the program is experienced by different families which mainly focus on parent-teacher relationships. The inside perspective assesses how the program is experienced by the staff themselves which includes colleagues' relationships, in the sense if they are supportive, co-operative, accepting, trusting and respectful. It includes the relationship between the staff and the parents as well as with the Ministry or the body that is governing the ECE. The outside perspectives are the whole society, community at large how they view the quality that is being provided by the ECE in their communities and how they are being served and their level of satisfaction (Katz, 1992).

Correspondingly, Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2007) observed that quality is not a neutral word hence it is a socially constructed concept that has specific meanings and it is produced through the discourse of quality. This concept discourse of quality has now become dominant in the field of ECE, before then the concept of quality control and quality assurance in education were dominant. That is why Rao and Sun (2012) urged that the definition of preschool quality should be culturally contextual relevant due to different economic development, availability of resources as well as cultural beliefs. The concept of quality can be viewed from different perspectives, as it does not need to be fitted entirely within one or two perspectives.
In addition, Sheridan (2001) interpreted this concept as an interactive perspective that can originates from the understanding that quality is constituted in the interplay between the individual (the child) and the environment. This basically means that children are engaged in communication and interaction with the surrounding world since day one on earth. In addition, quality does not only focus on the environment of the pre-school if it is constituted to meet its goal, but it focusses on how the child can influence and form both the environment in which they are and their own learning process.

Highlighting Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, and Taggart (2004) ideas, they viewed quality in pre-schools as related to: better intellectual and social behavioral development for children, settings that have staffs with higher qualifications as well warm interactive relationships between pupils, teachers and parents. This shows that quality makes a difference to children’s development. While Sheridan and Samuelsson (2001) viewed high quality in pre-schools when there is a possibility for children to influence their own situation, to express their thoughts and views, and that the opinions of each child are respected and valued. High quality pre-schools can enhance a child’s learning and development (Barneet & Yarosz, 2007). In addition, higher standards and added resources for quality are essential components of any effort to increase equality of access to effective pre-school education. The Namibian national policy for basic education is not only ensuring that every child has a place in a classroom, but that every child has access to high quality program (Ministry of Education, 2010).

2.3 Contributing factors to pre-school quality education

There are many factors that contribute to a high-quality pre-school education. It requires a clear and demanding vision which comes from making things happen as there is believed to be no secret to success in quality enhancement and quality education. Bayne-Jardine et al. (2005) believed that quality education is the one that includes high satisfactory teaching, full implementation of the curriculum, provision of pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, physical and emotional support and good relationship between pupils and staff. In the same vein according to the paper presented by UNICEF (2000), quality education includes learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate in schools, environment that are healthy and provide adequate resources and facilities.
Additionally, it also includes, content that is reflected in relevant curricula, appropriate materials for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, trained teachers who uses learner-centered approach, outcome that encompass knowledge, skills and attitude and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in the society.

In the context of early childhood education, Dahlberg et al. (2007) proposed some of the factors that contribute to the success quality education. These includes the application of critical and reflective thinking which may include problematization and deconstruction. This can be applied by the educators, pupils and parents too. Another one is the integration of the facilitators, or wise people, drawn from different backgrounds and experiences including their pedagogical work and philosophy. Such facilitation can help in making judgments and evaluations on what happens in the ECE environments. Another contribution factor is the realization to include and involve pupils in decision making rather than just including teachers and parents. The ability to see other equal helps adults to see and gain an understanding of the perspective of the young children which may pay a vital role and at the same time make a huge contribution to quality education.

In the same situation, Barret, Chaua-Duggan, Lowe, Nikel, and Ukpo (2006) identified some of the components of quality education in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance and sustainability. Effectiveness is referred to the degree to which the objectives of education system are being achieved in terms of internal and external effectiveness. It is more concerned with the output of education. Where else efficiency brings in the input required to meet the output or the effectiveness. Meaning the efficiency basically measures the effort we put in to achieve the educational goals. Equality is being able to identify groups that are disadvantaged in terms of access and achievements, but it is vital first to identify the root cause of disadvantage and their complex interaction. Relevance awake the central question of the purpose of education and how relevant is the education that is provided to the pupils. Sustainability awake the thoughts the future education. In the same vein, Adams (1993) defined efficiency as the relation of outputs to inputs as this concept provides a broad perspective from which to analyze an education system, so efficiency will only be effective if outputs and outcomes are correctly specified and measured. This author remarks equity in terms of opportunities, distributions and consequences.
2.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter discussed quality concept in education from different authors’ perspectives. It further discussed the quality of early childhood and pre-primary education as well as the contributing factors to quality pre-primary education. Understanding of defining quality concept in education is that quality is not a neutral word since it is a social constructed word with many meanings based on the context it is applied and discussed. Table 1 below summarizes author’s views in attempt to define quality concept in education

Table 1. Quality education concept definition by different authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (s)</th>
<th>Quality education concept definition</th>
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<td>Scheerens et al. (2011)</td>
<td>It is defined from the teachers, pupils and parents' viewpoints although there is common core interest from all these stakeholders. Quality education depends on the series of choice, level of education under reform as well as who participate in the process of policy making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acedo et al. (2012)</td>
<td>Quality is seen when there is a fulfilling service which in education includes teacher’s qualifications, class size, teacher-pupil ratio etc. Quality education is defined from the viewpoints of the dimensions which are the input, process and output. Quality education includes all learners and make an effort to make sure they are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn with the help of the families and community at large.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayne-Jardine et al. (2005)</td>
<td>In the Namibian context quality education is seen as the one that focuses on learning that strengthen the learners to acquire valuable knowledge, skills and attitudes.</td>
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Quality of pre-primary education involves value and again it differs from contexts to contexts although many authors have defined it from the perspectives of the teachers, learners as well as the parents. These perspectives once more depend on the values and beliefs that certain individuals hold. Intellectual development, social development and the well-being of the children are some of the fundamentals of quality early childhood education although some researchers have found out that children who attended early childhood education do better later in schools than those who never attended early childhood education. All in all, quality pre-school education is associated with the physical environment, social well-being of the pupils, teaching and learning materials, parental involvement, health and hygiene, teachers’ qualifications as well as the involvement of children in assessing how effective the program is.

For quality pre-school education to be effective, there should be contributing factors such as the demanding vision which should come from the effort of all the stakeholders. Fully implementation of the curriculum, high satisfaction teaching, good relationship between teachers, parents and learners are some of the factors that contribute to high quality pre-school education. Some authors have associated contributing factors with the components of quality education in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance as well as sustainability. These terminologies of course evoke quality early childhood education in one way or the other.

The next chapter discusses the significance of quality pre-school education in terms of the dimensions and the previous researches done on those dimensions around the world.
Chapter 3: Significance of quality pre-school education

3.1 Dimensions of quality education

Quality has been applied in the field of early childhood education in different ways, including research, measures, standard and guidelines on good practices. There have been the evaluation of the standards or performances of early childhood education where there are criteria’s which falls under three groups which are the; structure, process and the outcome (Dahlberg et al., 2007). This has been supported by Rao and Sun (2012) as they have advocated that quality of ECE program is assessed in terms of structural or process dimensions.

The **structural** criteria or dimension is referred to as the input criteria, where by the resources and the organizational of institutions such as the group size, level of staff training, adult to child ratio and the presence and the contents of the curriculum falls under (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Similarly, Rao and San (2012) view the structural measures as programs that includes staff-child rations, staff qualifications, teaching experiences, stability, health and safety factors as well as the whole set up of early childhod environment. All these two ideas are similarly the same.

The **process** criteria or dimension refers to what happens in the ECE classroom. This may include the activities carried out by the pupils during the process of teaching and learning, the relationship between teachers and learners, and mainly how they conduct themselves when they are interacting. Additionally, researchers have found out that this category can be extended to cover the relationship between the institutions and the parents. Therefore, process dimension measures the quality of interaction between either the staff and the pupils or parents and the staff, as well as parents and other children. The **outcome** criteria or dimension has been defined based on the results that the children bear when they have gone through the education process as well as the level of satisfaction from the parent’s side. This dimension is being defined in terms of certain aspects of child development, assumed to be desirable as well as the level of social and economic performance later in life when they become adults (Dahlberg et al., 2007).

Certain reviewers of the different approaches concluded that every approach that is used in early childhood education can be analyzed in the terms of the input, process and outcome, although some methodologies may have a bigger influence on one aspect than on the other. Therefore,
selecting an appropriate method of evaluation is one of the important issues in research. The dimensions of the pedagogical quality correspondingly focus on children opportunities for learning and development during the years in pre-primary classroom. This can be viewed from different perspectives. Sheridan (2007) suggested the four dimensions of pedagogical quality as; those of the society, the child, the teacher, and learning context. These dimensions are based on the meta-analysis approach which influence the role of the child participation in pre-school education.

The above-mentioned dimensions cannot be separated in pedagogical quality because the dimension of the society is the macro level that frame the educational system into a society context. Sheridan (2007) highlighted that it is important to include children or to have them as a dimension on its own because according to the (UN Convention, 1989), children have the right to influence their own situation and to express their thoughts and views on different aspects including education. Therefore, when it comes to high quality in pre-school education, children participation in researches should be considered highly. On the other hand, children should be made feel that they are competent to participate in decision making and to express their thoughts and views of how they basically feel when they are at that earlier level of education, and this can only be achieved if they are communicated to through probing questions and listening to them when expressing themselves.

The dimension of the society is based on the perspectives of the society that help us to understand the environment in which pre-schools are operating. The dimension of the society embraces knowledge about the changing of intentions and requirements of the public policy, the task of pre-school and how to improve the quality in educational settings to achieve overall goals. As a result, quality evaluation in this dimension provide knowledge of pedagogical quality between the individual and the society at large. The role of the pre-school education in the society is to ensure that children develop an ability to express their thoughts and views, as well as to be able to be responsible citizens and take actions regarding their education. The meaning of the pre-school education quality is at the societal level and whatever happens in the pre-class is linked to the society in which the school is functioning into (Sheridan, 2007). The dimension of the learning context is observable. Sheridan (2001) concluded that the level of quality in an educational setting depends on how human and material resources are both used and experienced from different perspectives.
Furthermore, pedagogical quality from this perspective is observed from structural aspects, pedagogical processes and children outcome. The learning context include physical materials and equipment's that are used by the children in pre-school. The dimension of the teacher as an evaluation and analysis, focuses on how teachers interact and approach pupils during the process of teaching and learning, through which pupils will constitute knowledge. This dimension further highlights the teachers' competence or embraces to consider the child interest, understanding the child perspectives as well as considering the teaching methods and strategies during the process of teaching and learning. This can be enhanced through teachers' and learners' meetings. While, the dimension of the child takes into consideration in seeing children as subjects with voices and being able to construct meanings on their own in certain situations and contexts. From this perspective as teachers', researchers urged them to try to always evaluate student work as this dimension constitute the children opportunities for learning, participation, and influence in preschool. Children need to understand the world around them through their own voices. Researches carried out shows there is a gap between children and teachers' experiences when it comes to children possibilities to participate and to influence pre-school activities (Sheridan, 2001a).

On the other hand, the input-process-outcomes contexts are used as indicators or dimensions of pedagogic quality in education. Scheerens et al. (2001) noted that education is a productive system in which inputs are transferred into outcomes, whereby according to the summary findings from school effectiveness research from Scheeren (1991) the inputs are the teachers’, pupils’ and parents’ support, the outputs are the students achievements, the process is what happens at the school as well as in the classroom level which includes leadership, good atmosphere, structured teaching, reinforcement, opportunity to learn and so on. UNICEF strongly emphasizes the desirable dimensions of quality education and recognized five dimensions of quality education which are: learners, environment, content process and the outcome, these are the same as those that have been presented by other authors. In that document paper, learners as dimension should be well taken care of, healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn with the support of the community and their families. The environment as a dimension should be healthy as well, safe and provide equal opportunity for all learners. The content to be presented to the learners should be well reflected in the curriculum and should have enough materials for the acquisition of the basic skills especially numeracy and basic skills for life. The process should be a medium through which trained teachers use innovative teaching methods and consider the input of the
learners and view them as active participants. Finally, the outcome should encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes (UNICEF, 2000).

To assess and demonstrate quality education in early childhood education there are standardized methods used and are applied in national and international studies. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECER-R) has become a common and widely method used in evaluating quality education (Sheridan, 2007). According to Dahlberg et al. (2007) two American early childhood specialist developed the ECER in the early 1980 of which was revised later to ECER-R. The scale is designed for use in a variety of forms of early childhood institution in the US, and it has been used across the world by both researchers and educational practitioners. The ECER-R as an observation schedule comprises of 43 individual items, which define different levels of quality in a typical early childhood education. The following subscales categorized those 43 individual items: Space and furnishings, personal care routines, language and reasoning, activities, interaction program structure and parents and staffs. Each item is presented on a seven-point scale (Rentzou, 2017). According to the authors of this scale, recommend that rating require observation period of two to three hours. Additionally, they recommend researchers to get training before using it. Part of the training includes a video tape and a video observing guide (Munton, Rowland, Mooney, & Lera, 1997). Although this scale has been evaluated as more reliable instrument for evaluating aspects of quality provision, it is not employed in this study as this study was conducted during the first and second week of a new academic year where most of the teachers are busy with school readiness and orientation of the new pupils and during that time teaching has not commenced in most of the schools. Observation as a tool for data collection of ECER-R was not employed in this study because time and resources were limited, and there was no training for the researcher. Furthermore, some of the activities and development of competencies reflected in ECER-R are not mirrored in the Namibia pre-school curriculum, thus it could not be engaged in the Namibian context, and therefore there is a need to develop this scale based on Namibian context. As a result, this study used another universal framework which consist of three main dimensions which are the structure, process and outcome, as they are used to test the relevance, effectiveness, acceptability, efficiency, access, equity and so on.
This framework does not specify the relationship between the different dimensions that is why the authors of this framework emphasized that it is not a theoretical model but rather it is a conceptual framework within which different definitions of quality can be deconstructed. This framework does not describe or define good quality early childhood education (Sheridan, 2009).

3.2 Previous researches on quality pre-school education around the world

There have been so many researches done across the world about quality pre-school education. Most of them focused on pedagogical quality education. Sheron and Burns (2017) suggested that achieving quality education in pre-school can be accomplished if teachers have the requisite knowledge in early childhood development, care, education and practice. Therefore, it should be a mandatory for all early childhood teachers to have qualifications. Their research was carried out in Eastern Caribbean, and one of the goals of their education sector is to increase and expand access to quality early childhood education especially to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Furthermore, their research proposed that quality early childhood education for five to seven years old, and therefore curriculum should be designed in the sense that it has developmentally appropriate strategies such as play that allows for young children active participation.

Niikko and Ugaste (2012) carried out a study in the Finnish and Estonian perspectives about pre-school quality education in these two countries. Their study revealed that pre-school teachers emphasize on ‘children’s happy childhood’, which includes children’s holistic well-being and physical safe environments as the goals of their work. Furthermore, the study shows that some teacher emphasizes the teaching of academic readiness for school and achieving of the concrete results in certain learning contents such as mother tongue and mathematics, but some teachers focus more on children positive self-image, their ability to learn and social readiness that leads them smoothly into formal schooling. Therefore, it is recommended to pre-school teachers that one of their main roles is to build a bridge between pre-school and the school itself.

The study conducted in Spain explored on various predictors of pre-school classroom quality. The study demonstrated that pedagogical quality was higher in classrooms where teachers have qualifications in ECE. However, the structural predictors such a length of the school day, program location for example those that are (on their own and those that are part of comprehensive schools)
and teacher child ratio did not significantly relate to the program quality which basically means that they do not affect the quality of pre-school education provided.

Furthermore, the study reveals that those children who showed higher academic outcomes are the one who have experienced higher quality instruction and closer teacher-child relationship. The findings further indicated that most teachers understand the benefits of pre-school education particularly they regarded socialization as one of the key areas that needs to be fostered. On the other hand, the report presented that teachers tend to focus more on fine motor skills and undermine fostering skills such those of cooperation or involved science, dramatic play or block play. Lastly the results revealed that some parents demanded so much from teachers and were over protective of their children (Sandstrom, 2012).

The guiding factors of pre-school activities are determined by the forms of co-operation between pupils, parents and pre-school teachers as well as the conception of the purpose of pre-school education. In the Finnish pre-schools, their system was well developed, and all the stakeholders were satisfied and particularly the social environment was seen to be the most important aspects at that phase. The interest that is shown by the pre-school teachers and how children experience their activities should be noted so that learning can become natural part of children life-long processes (Niikko & Havu-Nuutinen, 2009).

Vygotsky’s interest in the issues of learning and development were often discussed in the context of the development of young learners. This made it easier for the authors to analyze his ideas which includes the relationship between teaching, learning and development as well as the role of make-believe play as they are well stipulated. Contrarily some authors find it challenging to look at the main ideas of Vygotsky and to present it in the context of preschool education in terms of quality education. Preschool age in the Vygotsky’s context literally means ‘Prior to entering school’ as this term was used to describe a child up to the time her/she reaches the age of seven or eight. This is roughly to as end of early childhood as this term is mostly used in western literature to cover the entire period from birth to age eight. Furthermore, Vygotsky defines preschool age in terms of the systematic changes that takes place in the structure of child’s mental processes as well as in terms of its major developmental accomplishment that comes or emerge because of a child growing up in a social environment (Kozulin, 2003).
In terms of the quality preschool education, the Vygotskian approach examined in a more precise and coherent way.

According to this approach, the important of scaffolding each child individual uniqueness is more emphasized. Additionally, this approach supports this notion that the underlying skills that are at the center of development are taught through content, and this content is a means of instruction and learning and not its end goal. The Vygotskian approach consider the importance of play but emphasizes that it must be scaffolded to develop something that will truly foster early development. Furthermore, this approach expands the idea of school readiness as it makes learning of future skills and knowledge possible (Badrova & Leong, 2010).

From the Vygotskian perspectives on defining high quality in pre-schools, explained it that there are specific interactions that occurs between children and their social environment which determines the outcome of the acquisition. The social situation of development determines Vygotsky’s approach to the transition from pre-school to school age, including the issue of school readiness. Badrova and Leong (2005) emphasizes that the way that adults interact with children and the expectations they have from their children helps to achieve quality education as it brings changes between what children acquire in pre-schools before commencing with elementary school.

Additionally, the Vygotsky’s idea is that children need to have an awareness of the new expectations and to gain this awareness they have to participate in school social activities as they scaffold development by providing the support necessary for children to meet new challenges of schooling which of course contribute to the quality of education. The vygotskian emphasizes the importance of scaffolding each child’s individual uniqueness and developmentally based needs. They acknowledged that the underlying skills that are at the center of development are taught through content given to the learners (Badrova & Leong 2005).

3.3 Summary of the chapter

This chapter outlined the significance of quality pre-school education in terms of the dimensions which are the structural, process and the outcome. Figure 1 explains each dimension in short and what they entail as far as quality education is concerned. The input or the structural includes the support from all the stakeholders, teacher’s qualifications, teacher-learner ratio as well as the
content which is in the curriculum. The process is mainly concerned with teaching and learning, relationship and communication as well as the classroom atmosphere.

While the input is mainly on pupils' achievements in terms of skills and knowledge as well as the parent's level of satisfaction.

![Diagram showing dimensions of quality education scale]

**Figure 1. Dimensions of quality education scale**

This chapter further discussed what other researchers across the world have researched about quality pre-school education in terms of the dimension shown in figure 1. Many researchers are advocating that for quality pre-school education to be achieved, pre-school teachers should be well equipped and trained on early childhood development, care, education and practice. Additionally, the curriculum for pre-school should be developed and designed in the sense that it includes strategies such as play that allows children to be more active and in depended critical thinkers. Furthermore, the results for these researchers have shown that a high-quality preschool classroom teaches children in a holistic manner, positive self-image and mostly they focus on social readiness. Therefore, teachers act as bridges that connect pre-school to school life itself. Closer teacher-pupil relationship played a big role in achieving high quality pre-school and the focus should be on developing all the skills and no skill should be seen as unimportant. Hence, pre-school activities should be guided by the learners themselves as well as by the teachers and parents.
Chapter 4: Research questions

This research focuses on the quality in Namibian pre-primary education, how it supports children in terms of the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors. Pre-primary teachers, learners and parents will be the main participants of this study as it suggests finding answers to the following main research questions:

1. How do teachers, parents and learners view the quality of pre-primary education in terms of the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors in the Namibian context?

2. What do teachers and parents consider as high pedagogical quality pre-primary education?

The relationship between these two main research questions is presented by Figure 2 below. The first question seeks to find the viewpoints of the pre-primary teachers, parents who have had children in pre-primary grades previous years and learners who were in pre-grade the previous year. Their standpoints will be on quality factors which are the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors that they have experienced since the implementations of pre-primary education in Namibia. The second question will be answered mainly by parents and teachers based on their satisfying conception of high pedagogical quality. Additionally, this is asked through questions such as what they think will enhance quality in pre-primary education in Namibia.

Figure 2. Research questions relationship
Chapter 5: Research design and methods

In this study, the methodological approach used is a qualitative approach for several compelling reasons. In general, qualitative research is undertaken in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection and focuses mostly on the meaning of participants and describes a process that has been expressed by participants (Creswell, 1998). The main purpose of this study is to discover the meaning of quality pre-school education in Namibia from the perspectives of the pre-school teachers, learners as well as parents who have experienced it. The researcher was the key instrument in data collection. Additionally, the qualitative study allows researchers to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants (Creswell, 2003), and in this study, the researcher explored the participants’ perceptions on quality pre-primary education. The qualitative research methods used in this study include: purposive and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews which frames the case study. Content analysis was used as a method of data analysis. This study is based on a constructivist paradigm and approach. A qualitative approach is the most appropriate for this research as it seeks for the meanings of participants.

5.1 Research paradigm

The paradigm framing this study is social constructivism. Social constructivism confirms that different people construct research knowledge as individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work. Additionally, they develop meanings variety of meanings based on their experiences, and the researcher look for the complexity of views, rather than narrowing them (Creswell, 2018). In this research, pre-primary teachers, pupils and parents are used as individuals who understand and perceive pre-school education better based on their experiences. One of the research goals of social constructivism according to Creswell (2018) is to depend on as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation as what they construct is formed through interaction with others, and it can be connected to their cultural lives. With regard to this, this research depends on the participants’ views and their situations as they have much more experience with pre-primary education in the sense that teachers work with pre-school pupils in their everyday life, parents send children to school, and children are the one who experience the process of teaching and learning. Open-ended questions are used in this study as they as they allow the researcher to listen carefully to the participant’s experiences, which is one of the aspects of social
constructivism paradigm. In addition, the researcher has to understand the contexts of the participants by visiting these contexts and gather information personally, which is what the researcher did (Crotty, 1998). The participants own experiences and background shaped the interpretations of this study based on pre-primary education in Namibia.

5.2 Research design

The principal methodology for this study is the qualitative case study. This section will describe the background of the case study and the motive behind choosing a case study for this study. A case study involves the study of the case or cases (which can be a concrete entity, an individual, an organization or a small group) within a real life (Creswell, 2018). Additionally, a case study involves an in-depth study of cases that focus on either a single or complex case (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). The basic idea is that one case will be studied in detail, using whatever method in a natural setting recognizing its complexity and its context (Punch, 2009). Therefore, for this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the search for the quality education in Namibian pre-primary schools. The cases for the study are the pre-primary teachers’, learners’ who have gone under pre-primary education, and parents’ who have had children in pre-grade the previous academic years. Since case study researchers collect detailed information in a natural setting, the data collection method used is the semi-structured interview, whereby the interviewee's audio-recorded were transcribed into word documents and were coded for emergent themes (Punch, 2009).

Furthermore, Yin (2009) explains that there is no formula to when one should choose a case study for their studies, but it depends in a large part of the research questions for the study. Which means that the more the questions seek to explain some present circumstances the more the case study will be relevant. The most appropriate questions for this study were ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions as they seek to explain some present circumstances. Specifically, the researcher asked about the way pre-primary teachers teach children to produce quality early childhood education and what can be done to achieve quality results in terms of the factors/dimensions. Parents were asked about how they perceive pre-primary education and learners were asked about how they see pre-primary education, what they liked about it and why, generally their experience.
Another component of the case study that Yin (2009) identified is that the case study research design is the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis according to him is the focus that a case study analyzes that is usually tied to the research question developed by the researcher. The unit of analysis is the school (which encompasses teachers, learners and parents as stakeholders) in Namibia. Another component is the criteria for interpreting the findings (data) according to Yin (2009), this component foreshadows the data analysis steps in case study research. The case study researcher codes the data to develop themes, and as a researcher in this study, codes were used to develop themes, and meanings from the findings were extracted to determine recommendations for practice and future research.

5.3 Teachers’, pupils’ and parents’ selection method

In this study, two methods of sampling were used; purposive and snowball. The selection of seven participating schools was randomly done, and mostly it’s the schools that provide pre-primary education and within the reach of the researcher. Out of seven schools, only two are town schools and the rest are rural area schools, but the aim was not to compare rural, and town schools and one cannot conclude that there is a difference between pre-primary schools which are in town and which are in rural areas. Participants in this study were selected as follow:

5.3.1 Pre-primary teachers

Purposive sampling was used to select seven pre-primary teachers in Oshikoto and Oshana regions who have an experience of five years and more in this grade. Palys (2008) view purposive sampling as a strategy where particular settings, persons or activities are selected on purpose to provide information that is particularly relevant to your research questions or goals. In most cases, participants are selected because they are informative and experts in a certain area. For this reason, the researcher purposively chose teachers who have much experience (especially teachers with five years or more of teaching pre-grade experience) about pre-primary education especially when it comes to pedagogical issues pertaining early childhood education in Namibia. All the teachers that were interviewed were female, and this was not done on purpose and majority of them holds a diploma in the lower primary education of which pre-primary education falls under (see table 2).
Teachers correspondingly play a significance role in assessing quality education as they work and interact with children every day and they have much more experience with issues pertaining pre-primary education in practice. This is supported by Remler and Van Ryzin (2010) as they advocate that purposive sampling involves choosing participants who have a unique perspective or occupy important roles for researchers to gain in-depth information. For that reason, it was essential to select pre-primary teachers for this study.

### 5.3.2 Pre-primary learners

At each school, one learner was selected using a snowball or chain sampling method, in which pre-primary teachers were asked to refer learners that were in pre-grade the previous academic year. Learners were selected based on their willingness to participate and their abilities needed to take part in the interview. For this reason, the respondents (pre-primary teachers) were used as informants to identify learners who qualify for inclusion in the sample (Allen, Arafat, Edgley, & Guy, 1987). All the learners that teachers referred to the researcher were girls, and most of them live either with a single parent or their grandmother (see table 3 below).

### Table 3. Learners’ demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Parent/Guardian of the learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mother and father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>mother and father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was vital to select learners in this study because according to the UN convention (1989), children have the right to express their rights and thoughts and especially to influence their situations. Their contributions are vital to the development of early childhood education in Namibia and elsewhere in the world. The voice of the child on the researches of quality education is emphasized nowadays.

5.3.3 Parents

Parents were similarly selected using a snowball sampling method as learners, whereby pre-primary teachers refer the researcher to the parents who had children in pre-grade the previous years. Parents were selected based on their level of participation in pre-primary education and of course their willingness to participate in the interview. One parent was selected per school and only at one school that the teacher could not get hold of any parent. Most of the parents have had children in pre-grade for more than two years, and they were all above the age of 30. Gender did play any role in selecting parents (see table 4).

Table 4. Parents’ demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Number of years having children in pre-grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent D</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents were selected in this study because they understand better their children and they should know what their children are doing at school. They have decisions to make regarding their children’s education in general.

5.4 Data collection tool

In this study, an open-ended semi-structured, interview was used as a data collection method for all participants. Interviewing is a necessary methodological tool in qualitative research that involves open-ended questions that allow participants to respond in their own words as it encourages detailed, in-depth answers (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). There were persuasive reasons for using interviewing as a method of collecting data for this study. First, interviews seek
to find out how a particular group of people perceive ideas, from their point of view and in this case, it was the pre-school teachers, parents and pupils (Silverman, 2013). Secondly, interviews are used to find out about things that cannot be directly observed but understanding experiences (Creswell, 2009). That is why the main aim of this research is to find out the participants perceptions on quality pre-primary education.

Interview guides were designed to reveal participants conception and meanings of pre-primary education in regarding the physical, guiding, process and outcomes factors. In this research, seven pre-primary teachers, seven learners who were in pre-primary the previous year, six parents who have had children in pre-primary the previous year were interviewed (see Appendix 1 for teachers, Appendix 2 for parents and Appendix 3 for pupils). Parents and pupils were interviewed in the local language so that they could express themselves effortlessly. Some teachers were interviewed in a local language, and some felt better to be interviewed in English which is the official language in Namibia. For convenience, all interviews were held at participants respective schools as parents were informed to come to schools for their interviews. All interviews were conducted face to face as it generally shows respect, establishes rapport, allows for visual hand-outs and capture body language and voice tone (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). All the interviews were audio recorded to ensure accurate transcription and to make the data collection process as easy as possible (Silverman, 2010). For tracking the main key point’s purposes, the researcher took handwritten notes for each interview.

5.5 Piloting

A pilot study to review the interview guides of the teachers, parents and pupils and their effectiveness was conducted during the first week of December 2017. This was done to test them if they were obtaining the results that the researcher was requiring and whether the interview guides were answering the main research questions of the study. Two University of Eastern Finland students of which one of them have specialized in pre-primary and junior primary education were asked to read through all the participants’ interview guides and see if there were any ambiguities that the researcher has not noticed.
After, this review, they were asked to forward their comments they have made mainly on the length, structure and wording of the interview guide (Dawson, 2009).

5.6 Data collection process

An approval letter was granted from the University of Eastern Finland at the beginning of November 2018 to conduct this research project in Namibia (see Appendix 4). At the beginning of December 2017, the researcher wrote letters to schools that participated in this study, asking permissions so that the study designs follow the guidelines for conducting ethical research (see Appendix 5). This was done earlier before the schools close for principals to make necessary arrangements since the research was to be carried out right at the beginning of the academic year. Prior to beginning data collection which was done during the first three weeks of January 2018, the researcher wrote a letter to the Oshana director of education asking for a permission to carry out the research in selected schools in Oshana region (see Appendix 6). This application was approved before the commencement of data collection (see Appendix 7). Teachers’ and parents completed a consent form which reviewed about the purpose of the study, the amount of time that will be needed to complete the interview and their rights to withdraw from the study (see Appendix 8). Since the study involved minors, permission was granted from their parents as they signed a consent form granting permission to the researcher to interview their children (see Appendix 9). All participants were informed of study procedures and their rights as well as the measures taken for maintaining confidentiality (Creswell, 2018).

5.7 Data recording and transcribing

All the interviews were audio recorded by using the Olympus WS-801 voice recorder and were backed up by written field notes. For practical purposes, the audio recorder was used to record interviews and help in capturing the exact conversations for research. Teacher’s interviews lasted from 30-35 minutes, parents 25-30 minutes and finally for learners lasted for 15-20 minutes. The process of transcribing is one of the real assets when it comes to using interviews for qualitative data as it brings the researcher close to the data and the product is far easier to analyses (Denscombe, 2007). The transcription process began in May 2018, and it was completed in July 2018. Each transcript was reviewed while listening to the audiotapes to ensure accuracy.
5.8 Data analysis method

According to Creswell (2003) described qualitative data analysis as a process that involves making sense out of text data by going deeper into understanding the data, representing data and interpreting them. In this study, the content analysis was used to analyze the interview data as content analysis is systematically and flexible in describing the meaning of data. This was done after the text of the interviews was translated into English.

The transcripts were complete and included all the follow-up questions asked by the researchers and some additional information from the interviewee. The illustration of the coding is shown on Figure 3 below.

![Coding frame overview](image)

This research followed the step in analyzing qualitative content described by Flick (2013) whereby the teachers, parents and pupil’s interview transcripts were coded into a frame. As seen in figure 3 above, each main research question was divided into main categories, and each category collapsed into units. Research (question one) main categories are the four factors (physical, guiding, process and outcomes) while research two main category is the teachers’ and parents’
conception of the quality (see figure 3). The main categories were divided into units in such a way that each unit fits into one sub-category of the coding frame. The next step was, evaluating and modifying the coding frame and see whether the codes are fitting well into their sub-categories. The next step was an analysis based on the coding frames. The last step was presenting and interpreting the data.

5.9 Trustworthiness and ethical issues of the methodological solutions

Research ethics are principles developed to guide the researchers when conducting the research. It consists of the relationship between society and science, professional issues as well as the treatment and handling and research participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Prior to data collection in this study, the first step employed was to get permission from the University of Eastern Finland to conduct this research. Approval was as well granted from the regional office as well as from all the participant schools. During the data collection process, teachers and parents were given consent form before interviews, explaining the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits and confidentiality involved in this research. They understood all the procedures involved before the interviews, and it was their own decision to take part in this study. Since this research involved minors, consent was obtained from their parents and guardians that they have granted permission for their children to be interviewed. The consent form for the minors explained the same issues as for the parents and teachers form. There were no sensitive questions or the type of questions that could cause discomfort in all the participants’ interview guide, and the interview guide was not bias. Participant’s privacy in this research was handled with care, and no names were mentioned to protect their anonymity. All interview recordings and transcript were saved in the sense that no one else will get hold of them except the researcher. Individual names of participants in this study were not used either in the process of transcribing the recordings.

5.10 Summary of the chapter

This chapter outlined the theoretical grounding and the methodological issues framing this study and the way in which it is anchored the research design and process of analysis. The social constructivism paradigm for this study is described along with the aims and objectives of the study. The rationale for all the methodological decisions such as the participants’ selection, data collection and process, piloting and analysis are all provided. The next chapter provided the results of the study.
Chapter 6: Results of the study

This chapter presents the results based on the participant’s responses on the factors and dimensions that will contribute to quality pre-primary education.

6.1 Teachers’ parents’ and learners’ views on the quality of pre-primary education in terms of the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors in the Namibian context

In this study, five themes emerged based on the participant’s response. The first theme presented results on the participants (teachers, parent’s learners) on physical factors. The second theme presented results based on the participants (teachers, parents and learners) views on the guiding factors. The third theme presented findings on the process of learning based on the participants (teachers, parent’s learners) opinions on the process of learning. The fourth theme presented results of the participant’s views on the outcome factors. The first four themes are answering the first main research question. The last theme presented the results of the teachers and parents on their conception of quality education, and this theme is answering the main research question two.

6.1.1 Teachers’ parents’ and learners’ views on physical factors of quality pre-primary education

Participants views on physical factors are related to main research question one and figure 2 below summarises the main ideas that emerges from the data collection. Classroom environments, safety at the school and specifically in pre-grades, teaching and learning materials, classroom locations were some of the main issues discussed by participants on physical factors.

![Diagram of Physical Factors]

Figure 4. Physical factors participants’ overview
**Teachers’ views on physical factors**

The physical learning environment has to do with the quality of the structural aspect such as the location of the school, the atmosphere of the classroom environment, teaching and learning materials and most importantly how they are utilised. Pre-grades in Namibia are part of comprehensive schools and located at primary and combined schools. The data was collected from seven schools both in Oshana and Oshikoto regions. About the location of the school, teachers indicated that pupils are within the school borders and some come to school by taxis while some walk. It was only at one school where a teacher stated that some pupils walk a distance of about (5km) to school. At all the schools where data was collected, there are no special classes for the pre-primary grades as they use the same buildings as other grades and the inside design was precisely the same. Teachers presented their views on whether pre-primary classrooms should be on their own like kindergartens and not be part of the primary and combined schools as it is currently. Most of them are supporting the idea of pre-grades to be part of comprehensive schools, as they believe that pre-grade pupils learn a lot from the upper grades pupils and they copy good examples. Additionally, they expressed that it is good for pre-grade pupils to learn to socialize with other pupils at an earlier stage. They believe when children are part of others it improves their social development, and as teachers, they acquire some knowledge and skills from fellow teachers especially the junior primary teachers since they all work with children. Additionally, teachers consider pre-graders as young; they need company on their way to, and from school since some travel long distances. Their elder siblings and neighbours can at least help them get to school on time and safe. However, few teachers were of the idea that pre-classrooms should be on their own.

> “I think Pre-grades should be on their own because, during break time, elder children at school tend to grab food from the pre-graders, which provoke insecurities thoughts in pre-primary pupils and they don’t feel good about it. I think it will be a good idea for them just to be on their own” (Teacher F).

Teachers expressed that they are happy to be part and parcel of their schools as an organisation as they feel part of the schools and not in isolation. Some furthermore revealed that they never thought that pre-grades could be on their own and not be part of comprehensive schools.
The physical learning environment of most of the pre-grades is in bad shape. Most of the teachers indicated that their classrooms are not conducive for children as the floors and walls are cracked, the classes are dusty as there are not tiles or mats, the paints on the walls is falling off, and the windows are broken. In some classes, there are no ceilings, and there are bats, which smell and disturb children when they are in the classroom according to the teachers. Some teachers mentioned the temperature inside the classroom as it gets hot during summer and it gets cold during winter season since it is not regulated. There are no posters or children work hanged on the walls of the classrooms since the walls are cracked, and papers fall off especially when it is windy as the windows do not close as well. This situation is the same at most of the schools according to the teachers.

“I am not really satisfied with this physical classroom environment because it has bats in the ceilings and it really smells awful especially during the rainy season. I think this classroom does not fit to be used by the children, the floor has potholes, the windows are not closing, and I can’t paste anything on the wall since it will just fall off. Last year some of my teaching materials were stolen from this classroom during the holiday since the classroom does not lock and the outsiders can just come in the way they want” (Teacher D).

Nevertheless, two of the teachers were partially happy with their classroom's environment. They indicated that there are schools with no buildings at all and they are expected to deliver the curriculum as appropriate as possible as those with structures. To them for as long as there are buildings that they call classrooms although they are not in good shape, they feel it is better than those who do not have structures at all.

“I am satisfied with the physical classroom environment because at least all the windows are closing, the floor has tiles although the wall needs to be painted again. But in general, my physical classroom environment is satisfying which is not a case for most of the schools” (Teacher G).

“I am satisfied with my physical classroom environment although it is not that conducive. I always try to make it look good and safe for the children although it needs a proper renovation” (Teacher A).

Concerning the availability of teaching and learning materials in the classes, several teachers claimed to have general materials such as the starter kits that were provided by the government some few years back, books and stationeries. However, they lack physical development materials.
Out of all the seven schools, only two schools have indicated to have a proper playground for the children. Most of the schools do not have playgrounds as they make use the available materials or objects from the environment such as trees for example during climbing activities. They indicated that during physical development lessons, they take their pupils to the sport-fields (just on an open area) and let them play whatever they want with no facilities. The schools that have playgrounds, pre-primary teachers take their pupils there at least twice a week, and they do activities such as swinging, climbing and sliding as they have the facilities. However, those schools with proper playgrounds are not only meant for pre-primary pupils but they share them with other junior primary pupils, and this has resulted in some facilities destroyed by the upper-grade pupils. Fantasy corners are empty as there are no materials and sometimes teachers end up using their own money to buy materials. They said the process of requesting materials from the school is long and a bit challenging as the materials do not even come on time or they do not come at all. Some teacher further indicated that most of the songs that they are supposed to teach pupils as shown in the teacher’s guides need at least to be recorded somewhere and get those recording as they do not know most of those songs as they are in English and they think it is essential for them to teach those songs to the pupils. Arts materials are not available in most schools such as paints and clays.

“Most of the general basic materials are available, but there is a shortage of arts materials such as paints and clay. We lack additional materials such as storybooks, furniture and some toys because the one we had are now old and some are broken” (Teacher E).

Teachers similarly talked about furniture regarding their availability and usefulness. The furniture that they have in their classrooms are not enough, and they are forced to use the one for upper primary learners who are a little bit higher for the pre-grade pupils. Lack of bathrooms inside pre-primary classrooms was one of the issues that were mentioned by all the teachers as they feel that they need special bathrooms inside their classrooms.

“We need a toilet inside our classroom or at least outside specifically for pre-grade learners because I always let them in the bushes when nature calls of which I think is so unsanitary. The bathrooms that we have at school are not fit to be used by six years old pupils” (Teacher F).
Even though teaching and learning materials are not at their disposal, some teachers indicated that they use objects and materials from nature especially when they are dealing with the themes of animals, water and plants. The objects from the environment that teachers mentioned are: sands, stones, leaves, local fruits and some have created teaching materials such as the beam with materials from the environment. Interestingly some teachers mentioned that they send children home to bring things from the nature that relates to the topic they are discussing. They create their materials although some have indicated that they did not get enough training on how to create materials during the training they got some years back.

“We did not get enough training on how to develop teaching and learning materials on our own, but I always try. Most of the materials I have in the classroom are very old since I created them six years ago back during the training of pre-primary curriculum” (Teacher E).

Five teachers responded that lack of teaching materials affect the quality of teaching because they thought that teaching without showing pupils what you are talking about is useless. They believe that a teacher should have some visible materials that pupils can touch, taste or hear to attract their attention and for them to remember what they are learning. On the other hand, some teachers feel that the lack of teaching materials does not affect the quality of teaching.

“It cannot affect teaching because we plan in advance and we try to create and find materials for the intended lessons. If the school doesn’t have those fancy counters, try to use what is available for example stones or bottle tops as counters (Teacher C).

They believe as early childhood teachers; they need to be creative and find some ways and strategies that can help attract the attention of the pupils and get them involved in their lessons. If there are no teaching materials at school, they can improvise or make use of anything that is available, and it should not demoralise them from teaching neither be a reason for ineffective teaching.

Parents’ views on physical factors

Concerning the physical learning environment as a factor to quality pre-education parents, in general, indicated that they are satisfied with the implementation of pre-grades in schools. They mentioned aspects such as sleeping hour that the pupils are given, toys that are provided by the
teachers in the classrooms, attractive classrooms and so on. Three of the parents were not happy and concerned much with the classroom’s environment as they are old and have bats, which may transmit diseases to their children. Additionally, they talked about the classroom safety of which they believe teachers are taking good care of their children even though the classrooms are not at the proper standards. Majority of the parents are supporting the idea that pre-grades are part of comprehensive schools as children are learning something useful from the older pupils at the school.

“Pre-primary classrooms should be part of the comprehensive schools because they are part of the schools and they have a curriculum as other grades at schools. Kindergarten should not be part of the schools in my views because they are still young, and they need to be on their own until they are five years old” (Parent A).

However, some parents are of the idea that pre-primary classrooms should be on their own and not be part of comprehensive schools.

“I think pre-primary classrooms should be on their own and not be part of primary and combined schools because elder children at school tend to disturb these little ones by grabbing their food during break time and so on” (Parent D).

They expressed that pre-primary children need to be on their own as they are still young, and they need to learn to be independent without being reliable to the upper-grade pupils. They emphasized that pre-primary children need their time alone without anyone disturbing them, especially when carrying out their arts activities such as singing, dancing and so on. They expressed that their children always complain of upper grades pupil grabbing their food and bullying them during break time and so on. For all those reasons they felt that pre-graders should be on their own.

According to the parents, they feel that teaching and learning materials that are in pre-grades are supporting enough and they are developing children. However, they think that those teaching and learning materials are not enough at all and some are becoming old as they need replacement. Some parents are happy with the effort that teachers made as they indicated that some teachers are trying to make pre-primary as conducive as possible regardless of so many challenges, they face every day. They mentioned some of the teaching and learning materials that they think are crucial
and they are enhancing quality education such as the puppets that children use during role plays. Interestingly most of the parents know the functions of most of the teaching aids for example that puppets are enhancing and developing imagination in children. They mentioned of the small blackboards that children use to practice writing and to improve their fine motor muscles. Most of them expressed that they think those blackboards are needed by every learner in the classroom. Interestingly, some parents believe that having a proper class is a privilege as they mentioned that it is somehow exceptional to find a classroom which is well equipped and conducive for children as all the classrooms at schools are just in the same condition.

“I visited the pre-primary classroom last week, and I saw many teaching materials including toys for the children. The classroom was well organised, and there were even some materials hanged on the wall. I think we are lucky to have a classroom with teaching materials that are supporting children to learn” (Parent C).

General school safety is always a concern to most of the parents. At most of the school, parents positively indicated that schools are safe as school management always try to enforce order at school.

“In general, the school environment is safe for children, but upper primary children are not disciplined at all as they bully children and they grab their food by force. But in general, the school is safe” (Parent B).

However, some parents indicated that they observed that older pupils use to grab food from pre-primary learners during break time and some upper primary children are not disciplined, and they sometimes bully pre-primary children which is according to their understanding, not a good practice of which some think teachers are not doing enough to stop that bad practice.

**Learners’ views on physical factors**

From the pupils’ point of views, they perceived pre-primary classrooms as a place where they had so much fun. They could remember most of the materials that they had in their classes such toy and the dolls. Most of them expressed that they mostly liked playing with dolls and puppets although they were not enough for everyone in the classroom. They revealed that they shared most of the materials in big groups of which they did not like. For them, they did not care much about
other materials as they are not exposed for example most of them did not see the need of climbing and sliding activities as they do not have facilities that they can use to do those type of activities. All that they mentioned is what they could see and used when they were in pre-grade. Just like parents and teachers, children expressed their disappointments on the physical classroom environments. Most of them mentioned of the bats that are on the ceilings, cracked floor and dusty classrooms. Children preferences are always connected with their emotions and experiences. Most of the children expressed that they preferred being at school because that is where they learned many things, especially from their teachers. They thought that at school that is where they get opportunities to play with their friends and liked it when they had outdoor activities although they expressed that outdoor activities were limited. Generally, they indicated that they liked the school environment more than their home environments.

“I liked being in the school ground and especially in our classroom because this is where I learned many things from my teachers as well as from my friends” (Learner A).

“I prefer being at school because this is where I learn, and I like it when listening and interacting with the teacher. I play with my friends when I am at school” (Learner C).

On the other hand, few learners conversed that they preferred being at home with their families as they feel much better. They shared the same sentiments that older pupils at school bully them and grab their food, especially during break time. At all the schools were data was collected, the whole school have the same common break time for all pupils at schools. In most cases, teachers are not always with the children to monitor them as they get a break. They moreover mentioned that when they are at home that is when they get opportunities to play more with their friends and siblings. This is showing that some children get much more opportunities to play at home and some feel that they get much more play opportunities when they are at home.

“I prefer being at home as I feel good being with my family and I get an opportunity to play more with my neighbours”. At schools sometimes, they were upper primary children that use to grab my food which I didn’t like at all” (Learner B).
General classroom safety is one of the crucial aspects that early childhood teachers should put into consideration. According to the pupils, they indicated that their classrooms were safe although some children use to fight when the teachers were not in the classes.

“The classroom was safe, but there were some children that use to fight when the teacher was not inside. The space in the classroom was enough for everyone” (Learner G).

This issue was mentioned by most of the children of which the teachers and parents may not know about it because none of them said about it. They happily expressed that their teachers never allowed upper grades pupils in their classroom and they felt that it is wrong for upper primary to enter their classes. Somewhere, somehow these children have some insecurities with upper grades children at their schools.
6.1.2 Teachers’, parents’ and learners’ views on guiding factors of quality pre-primary education

Guiding factors are referred to the interaction, communication and co-operation that is enhanced between teachers, pupils and parents. The learning contents area and the roles of the curriculum are understood as the guiding factors. Pre-primary teachers, parents and learners all described the guiding factors of pre-primary education based on the aims and importance of this grade, interaction, curriculum, planning as well as the parents’ input as shown in figure 5 below.

![Diagram of guiding factors](image)

*Figure 5. Overview of guiding factors by all participants*

**Teachers’ views on the guiding factors**

It is the responsibility of every teacher to know the aims and objectives of the grade that they are teaching. According to the teachers, pre-primary education aims to develop children and prepare them for formal schooling. All the teachers know these aims, and they always connected them to the objectives stipulated on the national curriculum for basic education. They expressed that before the implementation of pre-primary education in Namibia, grade one teachers had so much responsibilities since not all children had kindergartens background. Additionally, they thought that if children have been in pre-grade, it makes a smooth transition to grade one and the grade one teacher work with ease as children are already prepared for school.
In general, they are happy with the implementation of pre-primary education as they expressed that this grade is crucial for the development of children.

“Pre-primary education aims to prepare children for future learning. For example, if a child is well prepared in pre-grade, they will learn with ease in the future” (Teacher E).

“The aim of pre-primary is to develop children while they are still young and to prepare them for formal education” (Teacher G).

Positive interaction between pupils themselves in classrooms play a vital role as some children tend to be emotional and so on. Teachers expressed that creating that positive interaction at the beginning of the year is always a challenge especially if many of the children have never attended kindergartens. They explained that if a teacher is open to the children and always try to engage children in different group activities, it helps in creating positive interaction among pupils. Most of them stressed the importance of the classroom rules, and in each classroom where the interviews were held, there were classroom rules on the walls. Teachers explained that these rules are fundamental for the children to know them at the beginning of the year, and in most cases, children are the ones who come up with these rules and not only teachers. They see that classrooms rules are the solution to discipline and children must always adhere to these rules.

“As a teacher I have tried to create more learning corners in the classrooms for example the reading corner, fantasy corner and a nature table just to make the classroom more interesting to the learners and to keep them busy all the time as I believe that when they are kept busy the destructions in the classrooms are minimal” (Teacher A).

Teachers were asked about the strategies that they use in their classrooms to promote positive communication between them and their pupils. They explained that in most cases, they use their verbal and non-verbal communication and always stress love and fairness, as they believe it promotes good connections and pleasant interactions. Additionally, most of the teachers mentioned that at the beginning of each new academic year they make sure they know all the pupils’ home background information and importantly if there is any with may require special attention due to certain circumstances as this help them to accept and treat them all equally. Generally, they believe a positive relationship between a teacher and pupils, leads to an excellent co-operation.
Most of the teachers were worried about the input of the parents in their children education. Generally, most of the teachers if not all were not happy with the roles and responsibilities of the parents as most of them do not play any other purpose apart from just sending them to school. The teachers are disappointed with the parents as they indicated that most of them do not even give basic needs to their children. They do not help with home works, and in most cases, children showed their disappointments to the teachers. They believed that parents have the wrong perception that a pre-grade teacher should take care of everything and in fact they think maybe parents have the minimal understanding of the importance of pre-grade.

“The parents in this environment do not take part as they think that everything should be in the hands of the teachers” (Teacher B).

“The parent’s role depends in the environment where the school is. Our parents do not understand the value of pre-primary education, and I think as teachers it’s our role to educate them on the importance of this grade” (Teacher C).

On the other hand, few teachers were happy with the parent’s role as they indicated that some parents use to come for book checking and always notify the teachers through phone calls if for example, the child is not coming to school or perhaps sick. They volunteer on some general school activities.

“Some of the parents take part as they help their children with homework’s. They make phone calls just to ask about how their children are doing in the classrooms. There was even a time we had shortage of chairs in our classroom, and some parents bought chairs for us” (Teacher A).

Teaching and learning in Namibian pre-primary education are evolved around six learning areas which are: language development, preparatory mathematics, environmental learning, arts, physical development and religious and moral education. Teachers considered all the learning content areas as most important because they believe they all have something to develop in a child. Some considered language to be the most important as it is the medium through which children learn. However, some teachers criticize some of the learning content areas not clear in the curriculum. Teachers expressed that for example arts development the theme of music is not clear to them as they do not know what exactly they should teach or do. They indicated that they were never trained the basics of music at all that is why they find it a bit challenging.
Similarly, with physical development, teachers expressed that they do not carry most of the activities as they do not have facilities that they are supposed to use.

“Religious and Moral education in the syllabus is not clear, and sometimes I find myself focusing on the bible stories of which is not just supposed to be like that. What you teach is not what you basically assess” (Teacher F).

“Arts education and Physical developments are not clear in the syllabus. These two subjects are complicated to me and in most cases; I do not know what to teach. I do not reach the objectives in most cases” (Teacher E).

Assessment was one of the aspects with many issues that teachers raised. They criticised it as not well explained and there are less suggested activities for learners. Some of the teachers suggested that there is a need to teach learners how to read especially in the last term. They think that by the beginning of the last term, children are ready to be taught how to read and how to do simple computing in mathematics. Teachers further criticised that some of the topics that are in the assessment sheets are not appearing in the curriculum and the teacher’s manual. More learners' workbooks are needed at most of the school as they only have one type.

“Physical development is complicated when it comes to assessment because they have mentioned some of the activities that should be covered for assessment, but you find yourself with no suggested activities in the teacher’s manual book or perhaps no competencies in the syllabus. In language development, I feel like there are skills that are repeating themselves too many times” (Teacher A).

The question on how pre-primary teachers co-operate with other junior primary teachers was positively well answered. Most of the teachers indicated that they co-operate very well especially with the grade one teachers at the beginning of each academic year. The grade one teachers use to receive a report informing them about the children they are receiving from pre-primary class. The report always includes some necessary information about the learners as well as the needs or support that they may require from teachers. They discuss pre-primary curriculum, and they try to identify gaps that they may need to pay attention to or similarities that they may have. Likewise, some teachers indicated that the grade one teachers give a report at every end of the academic year about the children they have been working with and share some ideas on how to strengthen or improve teaching strategies.
“The grade one teacher always gives me a report at the beginning of each year about the pupils she has been dealing with the previous year suggesting things that I should focus more and so on. We as well share teaching and learning materials” (Teacher F).

However, some teachers show their disappointments on the grade one teachers that some teachers are not appreciative, and they think pre-primary teachers are not working and they are supposed to teach children, for example, reading not knowing that in pre-primary children are only shown how to read pictures and not necessarily the words.

Concerning lesson planning, most of the teachers indicated that they do daily preparations, and some do weekly preparations. Those who do daily preparations think it is much easier and reliable. Some teachers noted that daily lesson preparation is flexible since they can change what they planned to teach, and further they can quickly repeat or continue the next day knowing that you have accomplished all that you have intended to teach. However, there are those who plan weekly but again they indicated that they could do weekly or daily depending on what they are teaching. There were no concerns raised about lesson planning as all teachers reported that lesson planning is not a challenge especially if the competencies are clear in the syllabus.

Parents’ views on the guiding factors

Parents were asked some questions about the guiding factors to quality pre-school education, and generally, most of them stated that pre-primary education aims are to prepare children for future learning. In general, parents know the objectives of pre-primary education as they indicated that the aim is to develop a child as a whole and they view it as a second kindergarten. Additionally, they explained that the main aims of pre-primary education are to prepare children for future learning through teaching them basic contents and to develop them in all aspects concerning their well-being.

“I know pre-grade is a grade that teaches kids to be active and I think teaching and learning is being done through playing” (Parent A).

Parents were questioned about the interaction that they observed between pre-school teachers and pupils. Most of them indicated that they normally observe a very good positive interaction. They explained that in most cases especially in whole school general meetings, parents are always
encouraged not to beat children if they did something wrong at home. They feel that teachers care much for the well-being of children and they want to see good in them. They view teachers as *loco parentis* and they always make sure that they create happy learning environments. Nevertheless, as a researcher, there was something mentioned by one parent about some teachers locking children in the classroom after they have knocked off because they did not finish their work on time. Surprisingly, this parent did not feel or thought that it was wrong in fact she applauded the teacher.

“I like the relationship that the teacher has towards learners because my child has never reported something bad. I remember there was a time my child came home late in the afternoon because apparently they were locked in the classroom by their teacher because they did not finish their work of which I think it was a good idea” (Parent E).

When asked about how often they visit pre-grade, some of the parents said that they only visit when they are told to do so or when there are a parents' meetings at school. However, few indicated that they communicate with the teachers through phone calls. Parents were further asked about the type of support they offer to their children as pre-graders. Most of them talked about everyday basic needs such as food, clothing and hygiene although many teachers criticized parents of not taking care of the children in terms of food and so on. Few parents talked about the way they help their children with academic work although some said they do.

“I always buy my child some toys to play with at home and I always check her activity book and we practice writing either her name, numbers or letter in the sand at homer” (Parent A).

Most of the parents reported that they are not well acquainted with the pre-primary curriculum, but they know that it comprises of the subjects taught. Some parents indicated that they were not told about the curriculum although they used to have parents' meetings with the pre-primary teachers. Most of them indicated that in these meetings they only discuss how as parents should prepare their children for school and how to take a good care of them. Only one parent who have indicated that they never had a parent meeting specifically for pre-grade parents, however, they had a general one for the whole school. They all showed their disappointments with their involvement in pre-grade education as minimal.
Learners' views on the guiding factors

Children themselves considered a pre-grade as a place where they played and learned at the same time. Most of them said that they have learned so many things during their academic year in pre-grade such as counting, writing, stories and so on.

“Pre-grade remains an important grade to me because I learned many things like counting, writing our names, coloring and drawing” (Learner E).

All children considered pre-grade an important class because that is where they learned how to be in the classroom environment and how to respect teachers as well as fellow learners. Children were happy with the interaction that they had with their teachers as most of them indicated that they loved their teachers so much. Most of them were happy with their teachers and did not want to leave their teachers behind. However, based on the learner's demographic information, only two of the learners that were interviewed live with both biological parents. Most of them live with their grandmothers and two live with mothers only. Those of learners who lived with their grandmothers expressed that they do not get any support from home and in most cases, they come to school on empty stomach.

This was as well supported by many teachers that majority of their learners live with their grandmothers and they are not that well taken care of compared to those who live with both parents or those who live with single parents.
6.1.3 Teachers’, parents’ and learners’ views on the process factors of quality pre-primary education

The process as a factor of quality pre-school education refers to what happens in the pre-primary grade and it includes aspects such as the pedagogical activities, leadership, and reinforcement. According to the participants, roles and responsibilities, classrooms management, methodologies, interaction, competencies and pupil’s activities were some of the issues raised as indicated by figure 6 below.

![Diagram showing process factors](image)

*Figure 6. Overview of the process factor by all the participants*

**Teachers’ views on the process factors**

Pre-primary teachers reflected that their main roles are to plan, teach and evaluate the whole process of teaching and learning. They emphasized that their role is not only to teach but also to make sure that children are safe all the time. Additionally, teachers indicated that they do not only focus on pedagogical aspects, but they as well focus on aspects that concern children’s everyday life such as how to behave and be part of society.

“My role as a pre-primary teacher is to make sure that the children are fully prepared for school in terms of writing, numeracy and reading. My role is to make sure that their first language is fully developed” (Teacher B).
General classroom management is one of the issues that most teachers struggle with especially in early childhood classrooms. Teachers indicated the type of leadership styles that they use in their classes. According to the teachers, they all give freedom to the learners and they let them be part of whatever decision they must take. Most of the teachers do let the children to come up with their own ideas and they decide on most of the things together. According to the teachers, they feel that if children are part of the decision-making in the classroom, they feel more accepted, comfortable and loved. They think that their role is just to facilitate children and most of the activities are carried out by learners themselves. They stressed the importance of learner-centered education that learners should be active participants. Teaching styles comprise of the principles and methods that are used during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom by the teachers. According to the teachers, most of them explained that teaching styles depend on the subject to be taught and the nature and interest of the learners. They do not really use a fixed style, but they vary based on what they are teaching.

“I use all the methods, for example, if its story time I use the group style. Some activities I teach them in groups and sometimes I assist them as an individual, for example, holding pencils when writing and so on” (Teacher A).

Whole classroom instruction was mentioned by most of the teachers and they explained it that it is most effective when they are introducing a new topic to the learners. Some teachers mentioned pair work for example when using toys or playing games since the materials are not always enough for everyone in the classroom. Most of the teachers are dissatisfied because they do not use ICT interactive tools in their classroom. None of the teachers uses or integrate laptops or tablets in their lessons. When asked about how they use and enhance interaction in the classroom during teaching and learning processes, many teachers indicated that learners interact in many ways for example when they have group activities to do and mainly at the sports field when they have physical development. However, some teachers indicated that at the beginning of the academic year, children always have problems with interacting with one another. Most of them do not like to work with others either sharing with others. Teachers observed that children interest of coming to school is moderate and they are motivated as low absenteeism rate was observed in all pre-primary grades. Teachers believed that high interest and motivation among children depends mostly on the parents at home as they observed that children that are not well taken care of are more likely to have low
esteem in themselves and their interest is always low. However, there are those teachers who indicated that motivation of the children lies in the hands of their teachers.

“Children that are highly motivated and show high interest depends on the teacher especially on how you treat them and how you vary your teaching methods” (Teacher E).

According to the teachers, they observed that lack of meal at school is affecting the interest of the learners. The school feeding program that is currently at schools only provide a soft porridge of which teachers think it is not enough especially to children. Teachers feel that pre-graders need a proper and special meal for them. Some of the children come to school on an empty stomach and they tend to be sleeping in the classroom and less active. However, teachers are so pleased that most of the children come to school on time and they could easily see that they really enjoy school regardless of different circumstances that might hinder their interest.

On the other note, throughout the year, pre-grade learners are expected to acquire certain competencies before proceeding to grade one. Teachers explained that children need to learn basic contents such as the general information about themselves, numeracy skills, and usage of language, creativity, physical development, their environment as well as ethics and values. Apart from the pedagogical competencies, children are being taught how to be in the society and how to be part of society as responsible citizens. They are part of the society and they are required to act and contribute to the development of the country like any other persons. Pre-primary teachers believe it is supposed to start with them since they are trained professionals.

Parents’ views about the process factor

Parents play a vital role in developing children minds at an earlier stage. Parents know their roles and responsibilities as most of them mentioned meeting teachers halfway by taking care of the children at home. They talked about basic needs such as proper shelter, food, and clothing and to make sure the children have gone to school. All parents only mentioned physical materials and not emotional or any other support they give to their children.

“My role as a parent is to take a good care of my child, revise her school work with her, and buy her some coloring books or anything that will somehow develop her mind” (Teacher B).
They remarked about children interest when they were in pre-grade, most of the parents indicated that their children liked school so much. Some parents explained that their children were always telling them about the things they have learned at school. According to the parents, they realized that when their children were in kindergartens most of them were still shy to express themselves but now, they have realized that their children are free, and they always want to express themselves.

“Yes, my child really showed interest in the sense that she always wanted to tell me stories that their teacher has told them about. She was inspired by the teacher and she also want to become a teacher” (Parent C).

Parents said something on the whole teaching process of pre-primary education and the impact it has on the development of the children. Parents indicated that all the learning content areas are important in developing the child as a whole. There are those who indicated the specific ones that need much more attention such as physical development as it develops the children physical body as well as mathematics as it plays a big role in this nowadays digital world of science and innovation. Language development was emphasized as it is the medium through which all subjects are taught. Similarly, some parents talked about the importance of enhancing social interaction in the children while they are young. According to the parents, they narrated that they think some teachers focus more on pedagogy and they tend to rule out playing. They think teachers are not really teaching through play and children play less when they are at school.

**Learners’ views about the process factor**

The processes of teaching and learning on learners were assessed by asking them about the activities they did during the pre-grade year, what they liked, decision making and the subjects that they liked most. Children talked about painting, telling stories, writing, moulding and many other activities as their favourite. They could remember well most of the activities done in pre-grade.

“We used to do a lot of activities such as colouring, moulding, playing at the playing ground and so on” (Learner D).

Remarkably most of them indicated that mostly they only played outside the classroom and they were not allowed to play inside their classrooms although they indicated that they played with toys
and dolls in the classroom. Generally, they said that play was minimal inside the classroom during teaching. According to the learners, most of them indicated that their teachers knew what they liked to do. They indicated that their teachers knew that they liked reading numbers and letters, painting and singing. However, some learners indicated that their teachers did not know what they liked most. Based on the question of who decided most of the activities they did in the classroom; all the learners indicated that teachers decided almost everything they do in the classroom. They had less decision on activities than teachers did, and this is the opposite of what teachers mentioned.

On the other hand, learners made some remarks on parental involvement. Some specified that their parents support them with their school work while some said that their parents never supported them with school-related work. Few children indicated that their guardian or parents use to provide them with basic needs such as food especially those who live with their grandmothers. They indicated that their parents made sure their school uniform was always clean, check their activities handouts, check their books and they always promise them gifts if they work hard.

“I live with both of my parents but its only mother who always ask me about school, my father do not ask me things about school” (Learner G).

Religious and Moral Education was one of the learning content areas that was mentioned by the majority of the pupils as their favourite. They said they liked the story time session and especially bible stories. Most of them could remember most of the bible stories that their teachers told them in pre-grade.

“I liked Religious and Moral Education especially when it was time for Bible stories. I learned so many bible stories like the story of Daniel and Noah” (Learner A).

Mathematics and Environmental education as learning content areas were mentioned as their favourites. They explained that they liked studying things in nature and especially the one that they are familiar with that’s why they like environmental education. Some pupils indicated that they liked physical development when they go outside at sports fields for physical exercises. They explained that they never go to the sports field for physical education every day. It was only some days when they went for physical development. This was confirmed by the teachers that they never
take their children outside every day as they explained that they do not see the need of taking their children outside every single day.

6.1.4 Teachers’, parents’ and learners’ views on the outcome of pre-primary quality education

When searching for quality education, it’s important to consider the outcome. The outcomes of the pre-primary education are assessed according to the pre-school teachers, parents and children’s experiences. Knowledge and skills that acquired, parent’s satisfaction teacher’s views on learning outcomes and pupil’s enjoyments were some of the issues mentioned by participants as shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Participants’ overview about the outcome factors

Teachers’ views about the outcome factors

According to the teachers, pre-primary graduates develop certain values and they have so many abilities to show in the society. They believe there is a difference between children that have been in pre-primary education and those who have never gone through pre-grade. Teachers believe that there are certain values that children develop as they become independent, responsible and they learn to think on their own.

“If a child has been to pre-primary grade, they learn so many things including even just the way they greet people, how to be with one another as well as how to behave accordingly” (Teacher A).
Apart from social development that is enhanced through pre-primary education, teachers believe that children develop the ability to take care of nature since they learn the things around them and the importance of conserving them. They believe there is so much that children learn in the pre-grade that can be useful in society and in the future of the country. Teachers were satisfied with the implementation of pre-grade because they believe so far, the outcome is promising although there are still so many issues that need to be fixed. Teachers are proud of the learners that they prepare to grade one and mostly the compliments that they get from the grade one teachers although some teachers have indicated some of their colleagues are not appreciative and they feel pre-primary teachers are so relaxed and do not have many works at school compared to some other teachers. Nevertheless, they said that will not demotivate them.

**Parents’ views about the outcome factors**

From the viewpoints of the parents have indicated that they are satisfied with the implementation of pre-primary education based on what they have observed on their children after completing pre-grade.

> “I have observed a good progress in my child. I can tell that she has learned something in that grade because she was always telling me about the things that she has learned in that grade” (Parent A).

Most of them if not all are happy with the skills that their children have gained in pre-grade. The outcome always comes with the suggestions.

Parents have suggested some important elements regarding the future of pre-primary education in Namibia. Most of them feel that the implementation of pre-grade was a good effort from the government, however, the parent’s input is disappointing. Thus, they are suggesting that pre-primary education should be taken seriously by all the stakeholders in education and it should not just be seen as the teacher’s responsibilities.

> “Pre-primary education is a very good grade, but I think the parent’s effort is very minimal. Both parents and teachers should take part equally in children education” (Parent A).
Another issue that parents raised is the provision of enough teaching and learning materials from the government so that children can see, sense and touch what they learn. Proper playgrounds for children was one of the main points that were raised by the parents. They feel that pre-grades will only be effective if pupils are given an opportunity to play while they are still young. The responses to the question of whether parents would recommend other parents to send their children to pre-grade was positive.

“Yes, I recommend it because if for example, you compare a child who has been in pre-grade with a child who has never been there, there will be a huge difference in terms of social, emotional and academic performance” (Parent A).

They all recommend parents to send their children first to pre-grade before grade one for a stronger foundation and to get prepared for formal schooling.

**Learner’s views on the outcome factors**

Learners reflected the outcomes of pre-grade based on their experiences. Most of them based their experiences on the activities that they enjoyed most and the one they liked. However, there were some of the issues raised by the children about what they did not like. They mentioned that they did not like it when they were doing nothing in the classroom and when the teacher was asking them too many questions that they could not answer. Some mentioned that they did not like it when other children were making noise, eating in the classroom, climbing on the chairs and tables and fighting one another. All these happened when teachers were not present in their classrooms. It seems like classroom management is one of the issues that need to be looked at.

Most of the teachers do not know what happened in their classes when they are not in and they do not know what happen in their classes when they are not present.

“I didn’t like it when others were fighting because they could hurt one another. I also didn’t like it when other kids are disturbing me especially when the teacher was teaching” (Learner E).

In addition, Learners expressed themselves about how they felt when they started pre-grade and how they feel when they started the first grade. Most of them expressed that the feeling was the same and they always felt happy. They indicated that they have realised that this year they have
started with new subjects including the second language which is English. They claimed that they started well and not afraid to come to school. One child indicated that she felt so good when she was going to the first grade because she could see progress while another one indicates that she felt bad because she wanted to stay in pre-grade. They indicated things that they have learned, and they could all remember well. They still can remember the poems and rhymes. The activities that the children miss the most in pre-grade are the physical development activities, playing with dolls, story time sessions, sleeping hour and so on. They indicated that most of the activities that they use to do in pre-grade they no longer do them. Children were asked about the memorable events that happened in their classroom that previous year.

“We had a Christmas party whereby we sang Christmas Carols and we took pictures with our teacher. We also had snacks and some drinks” (Learner E).

Most of the indicated that they still remember almost everything that they did in pre-grade. Most of them indicated Christmas party, stories while seated on the mats, and so on.

6.2 Teachers’ and parents’ consideration of the quality in pre-primary education

The second research question focuses on the teachers and parents' views on quality pre-primary education. According to the data analysis, teachers highlighted eight different categories and parents focused on the five categories. A high pedagogical quality includes many aspects such as conducive learning environment, adequate materials, and well-trained teachers as indicated by Figure 7 below. They both gave their views on the indicators of quality pre-school education and how would they describe it and why.

Figure 7. Teachers’ and parents’ conception of quality pre-grade overview
Teachers’ conception of quality education

Teachers view it from their own perspectives as pre-primary teachers. They think that for quality education to be achieved, pre-school teachers should take a step on improving themselves. Most of them described themselves as kind, caring and have passion for teaching. They mentioned the power distance between them and the learners. They feel that power distance should be low to make children feel comfortable and free when around them. Teachers mentioned that working with a small number of children help them to consider each child’s individual needs.

“I feel great to be working with a small number of children and I always make myself accommodative to them as I make jokes with them, play with them and of course I enjoy their company” (Teacher F).

Teacher’s conception of quality education entails many factors. Most of them mentioned the physical materials such as teaching materials, size of the classroom and playgrounds. Especially playgrounds were mentioned almost by all the teachers. They explained that it is crucial for children to play with all sorts of equipment as it does not only develop their physical bodies but their mind as well.

“The materials should be made available; the sizes of the classroom must be maximized and there should be at least toilet inside the classroom” (Teacher A).

Apart from the physical materials teachers reason that quality education could only be achieved if parents are taking part. They stressed that quality education cannot only be achieved by teachers alone, but parents need to play their part by involving themselves in school activities. Parents should understand the importance of this grade as teachers have observed that maybe they are not aware of the importance of pre-grade. They need to understand that this grade is equally important like all other grades at school. Apart from the parent’s awareness, pre-school teachers think that pre-grade can only be strengthened if school management takes this grade serious especially when they are requesting schools to buy them certain materials. According to the teachers, they feel that in most cases pre-grades are not that taken seriously even if there are materials to be bought for the school, pre-grade is always the one to be considered last or sometimes no consideration at all. Teachers’ impression is that they are not motivated because they do not even get any award like
other teachers at school. Therefore, they think motivation is needed from the side of the school management if the quality is to be achieved in schools.

Another point that was raised on indicators of quality education was the issues of kindergarten. Most of the teachers feel that kindergartens must be made as many as possible in the country so that children can attend kindergarten before coming to the pre-grade. Most of the kindergartens that are available are expensive and not all parents cannot afford them which forces them to send children straight to pre-grade without attending kindergartens. Early childhood education does not just start in pre-grade, but it may start as early as possible.

"I think the government should emphasize developing more affordable kindergartens. Early childhood education should start already before the age of six. In my opinion, kindergarten should be one of the indicators of quality education" (Teacher D).

Enough and equal distribution of resources in all pre-school classrooms was always mentioned in the sense that some school, especially in towns, are well equipped with resources while schools in rural areas are left with nothing which is not always the case. However, surprisingly two schools that have proper grounds are not in town neither close to towns while schools that were somehow in towns do not have playgrounds at all. Teachers teaching in rural areas think that town schools are well equipped than those in rural areas. They think that equal distribution of teaching materials can contribute to quality as all the children will benefit and not only some.

One more issue raised by teachers is the provision of a special meal for pre-graders. They expressed their disappointment on the current soft porridge that is being cooked for children in schools. They feel that children do not enjoy it at all and it does not have all the nutrients required for the growth of the children. They believe if children are well fed, they are happy children and they will learn with happy faces.

"I think a special feeding program for children is important. Most of our children do not have food at home and they do not concentrate in the classroom if they are hungry" (Teacher G).

All teachers described a high-quality pre-school as the one that includes all the aspects that can develop a child as a whole, the one that is training pupil’s responsible and independent thinkers,
the one that makes sure children are well-nourished and the one that provides a conducive learning environment and all stakeholders taking a responsibility. Parents were as well asked to give their views on what they think characterizes a high pedagogical pre-primary education just in general. They gave their views based on what they have observed in those pre-schools and based on what they think is appropriate to be done. They talked about the teaching materials to be made readily available to all the pupils.

“For a high-quality pre-school education, each child should at least, for example, should have own games, and not five pupils sharing one game” (Parent A).

Additionally, they talked about hygiene that healthy learners tend to learn well. Parents feel that hygiene education should be emphasised on learners as well as on the caretakers of the learners.

“I think one of the aspects that constitute quality education in early childhood education is hygiene. It should be part of the curriculum and parents should be made aware of it” (Parent B).

High-quality education includes parents taking part and avoiding negative comments about teachers in front of their children said the parents. Most of the parents accepted that they play a very little role in their children education. According to the parents, they think that in a high-quality pre-school, teachers take extra responsibilities and they teach what is in the curriculum.

“I think that in a pre-school teacher are highly responsible and they teach according to the curriculum. Teachers treat children as theirs” (Parent C).

Additional point that was raised concerned discipline. Parents feel that if children are highly disciplined, they are more likely to be much motivated and they think Religious and Moral education is the answer to this. They indicated that Religious and Moral education, especially biblical teaching plays a big role in disciplining children. They mentioned that if children are aware of the Bible, are more likely to be disciplined and they tend to do well in school. They believe quality education encompasses pupils and Bible study can be one of the solutions. Teacher training was one of the most crucial aspects that were mentioned. Parents reflect that pre-school teachers should be well trained to work with children and most teachers should work according to what they have been trained at high institutions.
Parents believe that if teachers are teaching according to what they have been trained, quality education can be achieved. They believe that it is not easy working with small children as it requires extra effort and dedications.
Chapter 7: Discussions and conclusion of the study

7.1 Discussion of the main results

This chapter review and discusses the findings of this study based on the aims and objectives of the study and considering relevant works of literature. The discussion is based on the themes that emerged from the main research questions.

7.1.1 Participants’ perceptions on physical factors of quality pre-primary education

The physical factor is referred to as the dimensions of the learning contexts, and it is observable in any educational settings based on how human and material resources are both used and experienced from different perspectives and in this case, it is from the teachers, pupils and parents (Sheridan, 2009). The physical factor of quality pre-school education includes the space, equipment, how materials are used and arranged and all the pedagogical processes that take place throughout the day such as the interplay between pupils and the teacher (Sheridan, 2007).

The findings of this study mainly reflect the locations of the schools, the classrooms atmosphere as well as teaching and learning materials as physical learning environment factors. The pre-primary teacher's manual directs that for children to grow into fully developed individuals, they need love and caring physical environments where they can experience positive interaction and get opportunities for developing intellectuals' capabilities (Ministry of Education, 2015). Regarding the location of pre-primary grades in the Namibian context, pre-primary classes are in normal comprehensive schools. When pre-primary classes are in normal comprehensive schools, it has its advantages and disadvantages. According to Havu-Nuutinen and Niikko (2014) specified that pre-primary classrooms being part of the comprehensive schools provide a natural way for the children to become not only familiar with the school, teacher, and fellow pupils but as well with the norms, rhythm and routine activity of the schools. Participants especially teachers for this study recognised that it provides them with an opportunity to work with other junior primary teachers and to share necessary learning and teaching materials. However, some parents and teachers are of the idea that pre-primary should be on their own to avoid bullying and all sorts of tensions that always happens between pre-school pupils and other pupils at the school.
According to Desimone, Payne, Fedoravicius, Henrich and Finn-Stevenson (2004) in their studies found out that integrating pre-school in comprehensive schools have challenges such as boundaries and integration, space shortages and salary inequities. This is not reflected in the results of this study as parents and teachers are only concerned about bullying although there was one teacher who was concerned about the long distance that children travel to and from school every day. Although the majority of the teachers and parents stated that pre-schools should be on their own, it has similarly been stated in the teachers’ manual that young children learn through experience, discovery and exploration, through social interaction with other peers and this is done mostly through play (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The physical classroom learning environment plays a significance role in early childhood education; thus, it should be well organised so that it provides stimulating and yet challenging materials and activities for children (Ministry of Education, 2015, Pre-primary teachers’ manual). This means that a physical learning environment for the child is the one that sets frames for learning and it means a lot to children. In support Sheridan (2007) indicated that children meet values, attitudes and intentions at pre-schools learning environments based on their experiences from home and society and therefore pre-schools environments should be supportive enough for children to meet those needs. Participants of this study have shared experiences with the physical classroom environments. They claimed that physical classroom for pre-grades are in bad shapes as they are old and not reflecting what is in the policies for pre-primary education. This has been supported by Wang and Wong (1997) study that most of the schools in rural areas experience many challenges, and shortages of space and resources is one and innovative strategies are needed for example leverage resources from parents and community members who are part of the school. This is a situation at most of the schools in the two regions where data was collected, and it seems nothing serious is being done to address the problem of the classrooms.

On the other hand, it has been discovered that an excellent physical classroom environment on its own does not always assure quality education but there ought to be available for teaching and learning materials to support the process. This has been revealed by Havu-Nuutinen and Niikko (2009) in their study that physical environment, as well as the availability of materials, plays a significance role in the organization, implementation and the effectiveness of pedagogy of pre-school.
Similarly, Katz (1998) as quoted in Desimone et al. (2004) explained that resources such as equipment, materials, technology, and playgrounds contribute to the quality of early childhood education.

Teachers in this study specified that they have general materials (starter kit) that were provided by the government some years back when the pre-grades were implemented in schools which includes some toys and materials that support numeracy and physical development. Nonetheless, still, they indicated that they lack materials in their classrooms especially that support language development, Arts and Religious and Moral Education as they are not fulfilled. In contrast, parents indicated that they are satisfied with the availability of teaching and learning materials in pre-classrooms and are convinced that they are supportive enough although they are not enough for all children.

Lack of playground in schools was one of the unsatisfactory issues raised by both parents, teachers and pupils. Many schools do not have playgrounds for children at all although the teacher’s guide for pre-primary education has indicated that children investigate the world through play and their physical, socio-emotional and intellectual developments depend on how much they are exposed to play (Ministry of Education, 2015). The study conducted by Vesala (2016) about the meaning of playground for primary school students revealed that the meaning of the school-grounds for primary school students is based on five crucial factors. These crucial factors include children’s experiences, the types of activities carried out at the playgrounds, their emotions as well as the possibilities for friendship. Additionally, opportunities to use loose materials (natural materials) were some of the issues that emerged from that study as it was evident that it makes outdoor places significance to the learners. Therefore, it is important for primary teachers to consider those important aspects when taking children for playgrounds as they are significance to the learners.

In this study it is evident that most of the teachers only take children for outdoor play sometimes during physical development lessons and this is evident from the pupils that they were never allowed to play in the classrooms. The psycho-dynamic theory of play advocates that there is a link between play and children’s emotions that is why it is seen as a means of expressing their feelings, reliving enjoyable experiences and gaining control over conflicts moments (Harding, Meldon-Smith, & Sheridan, 2012).
About this theory, some children expressed themselves that they prefer being at home since they get more opportunities to play with their friends unlike when they are at school. This is somehow evoking a question as to what kind of play do teachers use and how useful it is to children? It is evident that a lack of teaching and learning materials affect the quality of teaching and the results show that teaching materials are not at pre-graders disposal.

Although the availability of teaching materials remains a challenge in most of the schools, teachers are still confident as they indicated that they make use of nature-based learning by using materials from the environment. This has been supported by MacQuarrie, Nuget and Warden (2015) that “the use of nature, as setting and resources, affords flexibility in pedagogical practice and provides multiple possibilities for children’s learning and development” (p.15). In support to this idea, high pedagogical quality pre-primary education can is seen on the on the availability of teaching and learning equipment (Sheridan, 2007). According to some teachers, they agree with Sheridan statement as they mentioned that lack of teaching materials affect the quality of teaching and this is a case in most of the pre-primary classrooms. Therefore, quality education can be associated with physical environment and materials based on people perceptions, that is why at this point some teachers answered that lack of teaching materials could affect teaching and learning although the majority have stated that it does. Sheridan and Schuster (2001) similarly indicated that physical resources do not always guarantee a high level of quality but how they are made available and used by pupils as well as how they benefit the professional needs of the teacher matters the most. This was as well mentioned by some of the participants that lack of teaching materials does not always mean quality, but it depends on how the teacher and pupils make use of them. As a researcher, this statement is logic and teachers need to be made aware of it as they cannot always wait for the government to cater for all their needs at once.

7.1.2 Participant perceptions on guiding factors of quality pre-primary education

The guiding factors are part of the input which has to do with the interactions, communications and co-operation between pre-school teachers, pupils and parents. Participants were asked about the aims and significance of pre-primary, how they interact, curriculum and learning contents area issues, preparations as well as the parent's input. The data shows that according to the teachers, pre-primary education aims is to develop a child as a whole and prepare them for future learning.
This has been supported by the Ministry of Education, syllabus (2008), that the purpose of pre-primary education is to lay a solid foundation for formal learning and to establish self-confidence and self-worth through personal and social development. The National Curriculum has supported this that pre-primary classes are there to provide a stimulating learning environment that will develop a child for formal school (Ministry of Education, 2009). Similarly, Sheridan (2009) highlighted that the aim of pre-school is to lay a foundation for lifelong learning and to promote learning towards the overall goals and values of the society.

The parents correspondingly supported this as participants that the aim is to give basic contents and they perceive this grade as a second kindergarten before grade one. Smooth transition between pre-school and grade one was mentioned as the aims and importance of pre-school education. This is a good indication that teachers and parents know the aims and significance of the implementation of pre-primary although there might be a gap between what is in the policy documents and what is being done in practice at schools. Children themselves regarded pre-primary as a fun grade, and they could recall most of the events that happened in that grade.

The interaction between teachers, pupils and parents is correspondingly one of the guiding factors in pre-school education. According to the teachers, they believed that to enhance positive interaction is either by enforcing classrooms rules, being open to the pupils through verbal and non-verbal interactions fairness or knowing each child home background. Sheridan (2009) stresses that pedagogical quality does not just exist by itself in any educational settings, but the interplay between and through people plays a significant role. This basically means that an overall environment and the whole learning process is influenced by people involved and especially the relationship that they have made. Säljö (2000) as quoted in Sheridan (2009) states that “It is through interaction that children obtain ways of thinking, speaking and executing actions” (P.255). This has been pointed out by teachers that generally they believe that a positive interaction between them and pupils brings good results which strengthen trust between them. Parents are satisfied with the contacts that teachers have with the pupils based on what their children always talk about their teachers. Pupils themselves were happy with the relationships they had with their pre-primary teacher, and most of them expressed good positive atmospheres towards pre-primary education in general and this is positive as it contributes to high-quality education.
Parents input was one of the challenges mentioned by all participants. The results of the study show that several factors led to this issue of the parents not partaking in pre-primary education. Different collaborative relationships created between several stakeholders in education has been shown to improve teacher’s attitudes, motivations as well as their ways of teaching (DeSimone et al., 2004). Similarly, MacQuarrie, Nuget, and Warden (2015) see the value of establishing a connection between parents and teachers because engaging parents takes time and it needs some sets of purposes from which their relationship can emerge.

Despite the effort of teachers to establish a connection between them and parents, one disturbing issue arose from this result is that of all pupils that were interviewed only two children live with both biological parents and the rest live with their grandmothers in extended families. According to the participants, the biological parents of this children are in urban areas struggling for a living, and the full responsibilities are on the grandmother’s shoulders. As to how often do these biological parents get contacts with their children or the contributions, they make towards their children education, it is not known. This is one of the challenges that these children and pre-primary teachers face every day. This problem has affected the whole society at large, and somewhere somehow it needs to be addressed. Grandmothers cannot take care of these prominent families, and it contributes to children performance at school in one or the other way. Some studies revealed some of the reason why parents do not partake in school-related activities. One of the reasons was that parents sometimes are not offered practical, accessible ways to get to know teachers and interact with them on the issue related to school activities as it is researched that an excellent pre-school is the one that opens the room for parents' comfort to participate fully (DeSimone et al., 2004). According to the teachers, they are concerned as they do not know whether it’s because there is no valued established connection between them and teachers or they are not offered practical, accessible ways. Nevertheless, some indicated that at least they provide support to their children at home by buying them toys and some basic needs although not all of them do that.

All the learning contents area seems to be clear to the teachers although there were criticisms especially on religious and moral education, arts and physical development. These subjects were criticized from assessment, learner’s workbooks, lack of training and less suggested activities. According to the pre-primary syllabus the outcomes of arts should be seen on the pupil’s abilities to demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills through participation in creative activities. The
outcomes of physical development should be seen in learner’s abilities to participate in a variety of physical activities that promote movement and motor development. Religious and moral education outcomes should be seen on learners understanding of their own beliefs, tolerant of others and by sharing common positive values (Ministry of Education, 2008). Teachers’ manual for pre-primary education elaborated it that for example, physical development teachers should arrange indoor and outdoor physical activities with the learners. There are outdoor equipment’s suggested, but unfortunately, it was only one school that has a proper playground with all the equipment (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Another issue mentioned with the teacher manuals is the fact that this manual is only available in the English language although teachers teach in mother tongue so somehow somewhere teachers misinterpret it. This is quite demoralising them since the activities are in English language and they always have to translate them to mother tongue which is the medium of instruction. Additionally, the songs that are suggested in teacher’s manuals are not in mother tongue, but they are in the English language and there no notes provided for them for the rhythm. This is too not quite good as there might be misunderstandings.

The assessment was one of the issues raised by the teachers as not clear with some learning contents area. Evaluation in pre-primary is done continuously in an open way during normal classrooms activities. Observational techniques, practical tasks, informal questioning and discussions are the tools that are mostly used (Ministry of Education, 2008). The issues raised are for example the assessment sheet for physical education is not corresponding with the suggested activities in the teacher's manual, or sometimes there are no competencies indicated on the syllabus for what is to be assessed. Teachers sometimes find themselves not knowing what to assess or the type of activities to give to the learners for them to assess. Assessment always goes hand in hand with planning and teaching. Teachers indicated that they do daily preparation and they strongly support it as it guides and prepares the teacher on what contents to teach and how to show it. The teachers’ manual supported it that for a successful deliverance of pre-primary programmes, a good planning is the utmost importance. Additionally, the lesson plan explains how the lesson should be delivered for it to go smoothly, and this can be done daily or weekly for as long as the main components are included (Ministry of Education, 2015). Lesson planning and preparation appears to be clear to teachers as they plan either daily or weekly based on their preferences.
Corporation between pre-school teachers and other colleagues at school coincided well. Many teachers are satisfied with the corporation that they have with other teachers at school especially the junior primary teachers. This has similarly been supported by Niikko & Havu-Nuutinen (2009) that corporation amongst pre-primary teacher is significance and especially with the first and second graders. These types of collaborations have been shown to improve teacher’s attitudes in motivations as well as in their daily teaching routines. Additionally, it has been found that in most cases teachers’ view each other’s as experts and through collaborations, it builds their expertise (DeSimone et al., 2004).

The results indicated that teachers corporate especially at the beginning of the academic year when preparing for the incoming pupils as well as when sharing teaching and learning materials.

7.1.3 Participants perceptions on process factors of quality pre-primary education

Many researchers suggested that to understand the quality of early childhood education process measures fully helps but it is more difficult to regulate as it ought to reflect children actual experiences in classrooms, peer interaction and appropriate activities carried out during the process of teaching and learning (Rentzou, 2017). Process criteria refer to what happens in the institution, the actions of children, the behaviour of staff and interactions between children and adults. This category can be extended to cover relationships between the institution and parents (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Teachers know the primary roles and responsibilities during the process of teaching and learning. Planning, teaching and evaluating as part of their functions is reflected in the teacher's manual. Pre-schools teachers are assured that in pre-schools children are not only taught the content subject, but they are fitted out to be part of the society. This has been reflected in the teacher’s manuals that children learn the values and behaviors that are accepted by the society and it helps them become competent and confident people (Ministry of Education, 2015). Parents reflected that their roles are supposed to be meeting teachers half way and to provide basic needs of the children, but there seems to be a gap between them and the school as they do not play their part although they know that they are stakeholders. Badrova and Leong (2005) emphasize that strong interaction of the parents with their children and the expectations that they may have in their children helps in achieving the quality education. Parents seems to be so relaxed and not engaging themselves in children education or probably do not know the significance of taking part. The
children supported this that most of them received no support from their parents in their academic work. Both parents and teachers seem to know their roles and responsibilities the difference is only that parents are not fulfilling their roles. It was interesting to know that children understand their roles and liabilities at the age of six. They indicated that their duty is to go to school and get educated. They are willing to go to school despite so many challenges they face on a daily basis.

Classroom management is one of the concerns that teachers may always put into considerations. Teachers directed that during the process of teaching, they constantly make sure they have considered children’s input, but it was thought-provoking to hear from children themselves that their teachers decided most of the decisions in the classroom. There is a gap between teacher’s responses and children responses on this matter. The bottom-up perspectives suggested by Katz (1998) indicated that it is vital to make inferences about how children feel to be in an environment for example whether they feel welcomed and be part of whatever decision to be made for as long as it concerns them. Similarly, Sheridan (2009) expressed that the core of the pedagogical quality is in the interplay between the teacher and the child and mostly how children are involved.

This is going hand in hand with the teaching styles that are being used to accommodate all the children. Teachers confidently explained that teaching styles vary based on the content and the type of children they are working with. Once more Sheridan (2009) specified that the focus of the learning process depends on the approach, interaction as well as the teaching methodologies. Learning takes place through the senses and from the age of 5 years, children learn best when they experience or do things practically (Ministry of Education, 2015). It was unsatisfactory noting that none of the teachers uses ICT in their classroom's reasons being there are no facilities at schools and some teachers have no eager to integrate ICT in their lessons as they are reluctant. Some teachers reasoned that ICT is not in any of the pre-primary policies that’s why they are not eager to use it apart from the lack of resources. Many studies have revealed that ICT in early childhood education provides multiple learning possibilities for children. This has been supported by Kerckaert, Vanderlinde, and Van Braak (2015) that integrating ICT in early childhood education has so many benefits for as long as teachers see the possibilities for themselves before, they start integrating it in their classroom. The use of ICT as an educational tool can support contents and individual learning needs when used correctly.
Enhancing positive interaction in pupils is one of the most essential aspects in pre-primary classrooms. The way how children turn out to depends in no small extent on the teacher’s attitudes and views of children, how they believe children learn and how they interact with one another (Sheridan, 2009). Teachers emphasized that building a positive interaction among pupils is very important and they use many ways, for example, grouping them when doing activities.

Teachers have realized that at the beginning of the academic year, pre-primary children do not really like interacting with one another and it is the responsibility of the teacher to help them socialize. Interaction is part of the socio-emotion development domain that involves the changes in an individuals’ relationship with other people. A child who is socially and emotionally ready for school is confident, friendly and able good relationship. Therefore, pre-primary is one of the critical settings for developing social skills in children (Ministry of Education, 2015). Through children responses, they have not shown any negativity or problem with interacting with one another during the process of teaching and learning.

Many factors influence learner’s interest to participate in school activities, and in this study, children showed that they have high interest in school. Teachers recognized that children are highly motivated and most of them have the interest in going to school as low absenteeism was observed. This was consistently similar to the parents’ responses. Parents noted that children liked being at school. This was observed through the stories that children always narrated when at home, and the way they expressed themselves. However, teachers were so disappointed by the fact that some children come to school on an empty stomach and they tend to sleep all the time in classrooms. Teachers expressed their disappointments as it is believed that poor or lack of dietary choices of children does not only affect their immediate health, but it as well hinders their learning processes (Sherry, 2008). This has consistently been presented by UNICEF (2000) that quality education includes learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate in schools. Teachers are concerned about the feeding program that is currently provided in schools for all children that it is not helping anything as they only provide a soft porridge. Although the parents are supposed to take care of their children regarding proper meals, it is evident that they are unable to provide for their children. Furthermore, it has been observed that most of these children are staying with their grandmothers in extended families and this is a national issue.
Teachers suggested a special meal to be provided by the government specifically for early childhood pupils if the quality is to be achieved. Through the process of teaching and learning, learners are expected to achieve the necessary competencies of all the learning contents area. Teachers explained that in most cases it is observable to see whether children have reached the skills or not. Similarly, parents are supporting all the contents areas, and they see them as equally important for as long as children are reaching the competencies.

It was interesting to notice that children could remember the activities that they carried out in pre-grade. They mentioned writing, stories telling, outdoor playing and so on. They are so interested in learning and playing although free playing and outdoor playing was limited due to resources. Parents mentioned this. Some parents think language development is much more critical and this has similarly indicated in Sheridan (2009) research that language development and fostering social skills play a significant role in education. Interestingly parents noted that they think some teachers focus more on the pedagogy of which they are too strict and serious with the children, and they tend to rule out playing, and this is equally not overlapping with what teachers are saying. Parents and teachers have a different understanding of play that is why they all have different views, but parents' ideas are profoundly much considered as what they are saying can happen, and it can be true.

This is the same as in Sheridan (2007) research that was done in some pre-schools that there was an attitude of harsh control and the demand for obedient. In this type of pre-school, there is a little space for children’s initiatives and the quality was evaluated as low. According to the teacher's manual play forms an essential part of the children living and they investigate the world through play. There are so many different plays indicated such as fantasy play, role play and through interacting with one another. Play comes naturally in a child’s life (Ministry of Education, 2015). The manual is trying to explain that play does not only happen at the playground, but it can even occur inside the classroom of which parents and children do not expect it to be that way. Correspondingly, Harding, Meldon-Smith, and Sheridan (2012) thought that children at the age of five and six in their play show increasing enjoyment not only on elaborate imaginative activities but in the same way need complex indoor and outdoor games as they begin to participate in teams and they have preferences, and therefore teachers may give them choices to choose the games that they want and be systematic. That’s why children have indicated that they do not play perhaps they
need options to select the game they wish as noted in that study. Both parents and teachers need to familiarize themselves with this information especially on the type of play in early childhood education and the significance of it as this is a concern to both.

7.1.4 Participants’ perceptions on the outcome factors of quality pre-primary education

The outcomes of pre-primary education were evaluated according to the participant’s experiences with pre-primary education so far. As per Katz (1993) stated that, the effectiveness of the programs depends primarily on the way it is experienced by the participating personnel and this case the teachers, parents and pupils are the ones who evaluated its effectiveness based on their experiences. In general teachers, parents and pupils are happy with the implementations of pre-primary education in Namibia regardless of the shortcoming they encounter. It is so pleasing to hear that pre-primary teachers understand that pre-graders graduates are competent in terms of cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development. Pre-schools quality continue to have an effect on cognitive and social outcomes at the age 11 (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2011). Additionally, teachers evaluated that children that have undergone pre-primary education develop specific values. This is moreover supported by the syllabus that they make a smooth transition to grade one, and they become valued members of the community as they develop high self-esteem (Ministry of Education, 2008). Additionally, the national curriculum is supporting the same idea that pre-primary education with appropriate pedagogy makes better progress in formal education and achieve better than those who have not (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Parents’ satisfaction with the implementation of pre-school education is connected to the performances and behaviors that they observed in their children on a daily basis. Reading, writing, and numeracy were some of the most observed skills that they have seen in their children. From the perspectives of the society, the values, attitudes and the intentions for learning in children are the ones that they mostly see that pre-schools should provide. Therefore, the quality of pre-school should similarly be influenced by the society (Sheridan, 2009). Although parents are happy with the implementation of pre-school, they still feel that they need to play their part especially on taking care of the children with basic needs and all kind of support. Their meaningful participation serves to promote mutual understanding, support and learning from each other.
Additionally, contacts with the school help parents to acquire the objective view of the merits and shortcomings of their children so that they can get right family education accordingly (Ebbeck, & Gao, 1996).

Additional outcome that parents mentioned is the provision of teaching and learning materials especially manipulative materials for the children and a proper playground for them. It seems like parents understand the importance of play in young children. Their emphasis is more on the play, and it was interesting to note that they even allow children to play at home of which it was not certainly part of Oshiwambo culture where data was collected. Children too supported this that they can play at home, but they feel that at the school play was minimal and they only play during the physical development period. The importance of play at young age has been researched by so many scholars in the world. Sheridan and Schuster (2001) noted that to achieve high quality play in pre-school education, there should be a provision of teaching and learning materials, time and availability of space, pictures and stories. Additionally, teachers’ attempts to enrich and stimulate play should be emphasized as it provides a positive interaction during children’s play and therefore it must be considered. The outcomes of pre-school results from the perspectives of the parents reveal that parents valued the implementation of pre-school and they recommend other parents to take their children to pre-school before going to grade one. Both parents and teachers shared this view that learners should undergo pre-school first before commencing formal education as they become familiar with the people, routines, and environment making them be confident when they begin with the formal education (DeSimone et al., 2004).

Quality of pre-school education primarily depends on the way it is experienced by the pupils who are the primary stakeholders (Katz, 1993). Children expressed themselves based on their experiences with pre-grade, their level of interest, and the events and activities that they could remember. They revealed that they have really enjoyed their pre-grade and mostly they liked their teachers so much. This is going hand in hand with the rationale of pre-school that teaching, and learning should be framed in the fact that it accommodates all children and they should feel welcomed all the time. Additionally, children expressed that they liked painting and teachers were so disappointed that most of the children loved expressing themselves through arts, but the resources such as paints and painting brushes were not available. Art education is vital in early childhood education as it provides a solid foundation for preparatory writing and language.
exercises (Ministry of Education, 2015). Teachers felt that the policy is clear, and it has all that it takes to provide quality education, but the implementation is too slow as there are no resources and it pisses them off.

Children mentioned what they did not like, and most of them said that they did not like it when they had nothing to do in the classrooms. This is indicating that either teachers do not prepare enough activities for children or they prepare too little that children finish in a short period, and they become bored. The activities for pre-school should be exciting rather than frivolous or boring and they should be meaningful, engaging, absorbing instead than mindless and trivial (Katz, 1993).

There were differences between learner responses and teacher’s responses as teachers indicated that in most cases, they had planned activities for children and children are sometimes saying they became bored through the process. This needs to be cleared, and it must be taken into consideration if the quality is to be achieved. Social interaction among pupils cleared indicated that it was minimal. Children pointed out some negative issues that they have experienced bullying, fighting and all sorts of disturbances and teachers and parents never mentioned this as they have an impression that the learning environment was safe for the children. According to Niikko and Havu-Nuutinen (2014) in their case study results, it was evident that bullying was as well experienced mostly in outdoor activities and parents were similarly not aware of that their children are being bullied in pre-school. Bullying comes in many ways, and it evokes so many questions that may need to be addressed by the teachers, pupils and parents. Teachers and parents in this study did not mention anything about bullying which is indicating that they may not know that children are being bullied at school.

It was interesting to hear about children’s feelings about how they begin pre-school comparing to how they started grade one and the differences they see between these two grades. Most of them felt that the beginnings are the same and this is because pre-schools are part of comprehensive schools in Namibia, and they were still at the same schools they attended their pre-grade. This was some of the benefits of pre-schools being part of comprehensive schools that was mentioned by the teachers and parents that it makes it easier for children to transit to grade one. Children could remember most of the activities that they have carried out in pre-school, and mostly they miss playing with dolls, sleeping hours, story time sessions of which they indicated that they don’t do those activities in grade one. This is showing that in general children have enjoyed pre-grade
although some inadequacies need to be addressed by all the stakeholders through the process. This is somehow responding to the aims and objectives of the implementation of pre-primary education in Namibia.

7.1.5 Teachers’ and parents’ consideration of the quality in pre-primary education

Definitions of quality and how it can be measured are important issues within early childhood education. Teachers and parents answered this question by giving their views on what they considered to be high-quality pre-school education. There has been a growing concern with the issues of quality in early childhood as achieving quality is considered by different pieces of literature as an ongoing process (Rentzou, 2017). According to the teachers, they believe there are so many factors that contribute to a high-quality pre-school education as it is a collection of all stakeholders. They think self-assessment from teachers themselves is important. Working with children requires passion, dedication and love for children. Power distance between pupils and teachers is one of the factors that are considered to achieve a high-quality education. This has been supported by Sheridan (2009) that children’s good start should begin right in pre-school and teachers should consider children as competent, unique, and should be met and treated with respect. Most of the Namibian pre-grades have a small number of pupils that is why many teachers felt that working with a small number of children helps to give individual learning support plan which helps to guide and evaluate the unique learning process for all learners (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The indicators of quality pre-school education were mentioned from different dimensions; of the pupils, teachers learning contexts and from the dimension of the society. The emphasis was mostly on the physical learning materials, physical classroom environments, playgrounds and parents' inputs. Sylva et al. (2011) stated that measures of quality pre-school education focus on a broad range of quality dimensions which includes space and furnishing, personal care routines, program structure, interaction and parents and staff's interactions. Most of the teachers mentioned some of these dimensions. The most concern issue mentioned by the teachers was the parental involvements that they need an effective strategy that will attract parents to be part of the children learning processes. Lack of motivation from the school's management was another issue that was raised by the teachers as they feel that to achieve a high pedagogical quality pre-school, pre-school
teachers should be motivated in the form of awards like any other teachers at school. The research that was carried out Desimone et al. (2004) shows that support from the school management is fundamental to a successful early childhood program.

Additionally, school's management should have a strong background of the importance of early childhood education; thus, early childhood education should be treated equal and highly valued as other teachers. This is not just an issue of the school management, but most of the parents in the communities do not value the importance of pre-school teachers. They have different perceptions of pre-school teachers in terms of their salary, qualifications and so on. Pre-primary teachers are of the idea that pre-school education will only be a success if kindergartens are to be made compulsory and affordable to everyone. Most of the pupils that are admitted to pre-grade come directly from home with no any background of kindergarten or daycare. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of and how helpful kindergarten can be to pre-school programs. Several studies done on the importance of kindergarten are supporting them although it has been found out that sometimes kindergarten can be intimidating to some pupils and parents. Desimone et al. (2004) reported that kindergarten eased the transition in several ways as children increase familiarity with the school, and parents increase comfort with the knowledge about school, and in this way, it too fosters parent involvement in school at an earlier stage. Some studies have indicated that a child can be well off without kindergarten training which means a child may attend kindergarten and still may have the same values as the one who did not participate in. But this has not been supported by many authors, thus in the Namibian context kindergarten may be of significance important not only to the pupils but the parents and caregivers as well.

Equal distributions of resources, a well-nourished meal for children at school were some of the factors that teachers think will contribute to a high-quality education as it was already mentioned earlier. The parents mentioned most of the indicators such as teaching materials, their input, good hygiene and healthy have been already said by the teachers. What is surprising is the fact that most of them mentioned about the provision of meals at school for learners because they think what they are providing to their children is not enough and the teachers and pupils themselves supported this. Another thought-provoking issue is that parents feel that teachers must take ownership of their classrooms and it is their responsibilities to take care of the children when they are at school, and the focus should be teaching what is in the curriculum. They want religious and moral
education to be strengthened so that children can be disciplined in the sense that it focuses on Bible study. Teacher training was mentioned of which teachers did not mention and teacher should teach based on what they were trained of as this is clearly shown on the demographic information of teachers that some did not study to be pre and junior primary teachers.

7.2 Summary and conclusion of the study

This study evaluated the quality of pre-primary education in Namibia, focusing on the four factors, which are the physical, guiding, process and outcome factors. The terminology quality according to researchers is not a neutral word since it is a socially constructed word with many meanings based on the context in which it is applied. Measures of quality education include many aspects such as the qualification, physical classroom environment, parental involvement and the interest of the learners. One individual cannot measure quality education, but it requires stakeholders collectively with different viewpoints but for a common benefit of enhancing and developing quality education. Thus, in this study, pre-primary teachers’, pupils’ and parents’ have been used as this study participants.

This study aims to explore the four factors of quality education as suggested as one of the theories used to evaluate quality education. Dahlberg (2008) explained this theory as having four factors, which are the physical, guiding, process and outcomes. Physical and guiding factors are structural aspects which are too referred to as the input that includes, resources, qualifications and the interaction. The process criteria refer to what happens in the classroom, which may consist of the pupil’s activities, the relationship between teachers and pupils and generally the cooperation of all the stakeholders. While the outcome is based on the children experiences as well as the skills and knowledge that children have attained in the process of teaching and learning. All these factors in this study were evaluated based on all the participants’ experiences and perceptions. The second aims of this study were to explore the parents’ and teachers’ conception of quality education based on their experiences and mainly what they consider will develop quality education in pre-grade.

The previous researches done on quality pre-school education around the world focused on the dimensions as the evaluation tool, and some have used the ECER-R. These researches results are somehow the same as the results of this study although it cannot be precisely the same because of different contexts.
It has been found that achieving quality pre-school teachers should have the requisite knowledge of pre-school in terms of care, theory and practice. Another main issue highlighted in these previous studies is that the curriculum may be designed in the sense that it has appropriate developmental strategies such as the play that allow children for active participation. Parental involvement is similarly highlighted in the studies that the form of the corporation between all the stakeholders should determine pre-school activities.

There have not been so many studies conducted in Namibia in terms of pre-primary education since its implementation, especially on evaluating its effectiveness. However, in this study, so many issues emerged based on previous researches conducted in the world and there is a gap that needs to be filled if the quality is to be achieved in Namibia. The results of this study indicated the usefulness of the factors used to evaluate quality pre-education and most importantly the relationship between pre-primary quality and the opportunity for children to learn. When the four factors for assessing quality, pre-primary education was used in this study a broader, and a more in-depth picture of quality education emerged as it shows how quality is constructed from different participants.

The results of this study did not stand-alone based on individual participants but constitute and shape up. Most of the aspects that participants mentioned are the same and this shows that somehow, somewhere there is an action that needs to be taken in terms of quality pre-primary education in Namibia. Generally, in terms of physical factors, this study shows that classrooms physical environments are not up to standard and are not fit to be used by children. Both participants of this study agree with this issue. The teaching and learning materials are not at pupil’s disposal, and many teachers are struggling to improvise their own, as lack of training is one of the contributing factors. The schools where pre-grades are located are within children reach and going to school is not a barrier to children. The school environments are safe for children and parents confirmed this as they never received safety alert reports from schools. However, classroom safety is somehow a concern as children confirmed that there are always fights in the classrooms when teachers are not present, and teachers neither by parents do not know this.

When searching for quality, guiding factors play a significant role as this includes the aims and significance of pre-grade, interaction, curriculum issues, preparation and parents' input. This study
indicated that both participants are aware of the aims and significance of pre-grade as stipulated in the national curriculum of education. There is a gap between what is in the national curriculum and other guiding policies and what is implemented in practice at schools as many factors contributed to this. The interaction overlapped well as there is functional interaction between pupils and teachers, teachers and other colleagues as well as between parents and teachers although parents' input is minimal.

There were some issues raised in the curriculum regarding pupil’s activities, the assessment that needs to be addressed and especially the fact that the evaluation is not corresponding with syllabus and vice versa. The process factor is mainly what happens in the classes during the process of teaching and learning. In this study, factors such as teacher’s roles in the classrooms, methodologies, competencies, pupil’s interest and their activities are evaluated. Planning, teaching and evaluating were some of the tasks that teachers could reflect, and throughout the process of teaching and learning. All what the participants said is reflected on the national policies of education although the implementation is a problem for most of the school. In general, pupils are happy with pre-grade as they expressed their enjoyment and interest that evoked throughout the year. The outcome factors are reflected on the skills, values and attitudes that children have acquired throughout. Parents level of satisfaction indicate the outcome, and in this study, parents are satisfied with the implementation of pre-grade, but they are disappointed with some aspects such as the classrooms physical environments, inadequate materials and the fact that some teachers were not trained to teach pre-graders.

As parents, teachers and pupils are likewise happy with the implementation of pre-grade although still there are shortcomings that need to be addressed as far as quality is concerned. Both teachers and parents could easily reflect on what they considered as quality pre-education as they mentioned important aspects that researchers of quality early childhood education have reflected in their studies. This study participants reflected aspects such as strengthening early childhood education, parental involvement, well-trained teachers, health and hygiene, conducive learning environments. If quality pre-education is to be achieved, both parties need to play their roles and most importantly, what is reflected in the policies should be reflected in practice. This study has suggested more aspects that need to be considered by policy makers, teachers, parents and pupils.
themselves as part of recommendations. In general, there is a gap between the policy guides and the implementation that needs to be filled if quality pre-education is to be achieved in Namibia.

7.2.1 Recommendations as a result of this study

Pre-primary education in Namibia since its implementations in 2008, faces many challenges and much expectations in the areas of accomplishments, physical learning environments, teaching and learning materials, parental involvement planning and evaluation and so on. Schools in general faces challenges that hinders pupil's education and these challenges need intervention either from the government, private sectors, parents, teachers and all the stakeholders in education.

The findings of this study identify five main recommendations that can be utilized by the schools, teachers, parents and the ministry of basic education to address and improve the challenges that are critical to the successful implementations of pre-primary education in Namibia. 1) Conducive learning environments and teaching and learning materials 2) parental involvement 3) curriculum and learning contents issues 4) kindergarten to be strengthened 5) teacher training.

7.1.1 Recommendation 1: Conducive learning environments and teaching and learning materials

Participants for this study revealed that physical classrooms environments are not conducive for teaching and learning especially children. Most of the pre-primary classrooms are not in good condition as they have cracked floor, falling ceilings, broken windows and some do not have buildings at all although at all the schools where data was collected, they have buildings. Teachers and parents are suggesting for the government to build new classes for children with proper facilities such as toilets inside. They are appealing to the school principals to allocate classrooms that are in good shapes to be used by pre-primary children. As many researchers have pointed out that a physical classroom environment plays a vital role in developing the child and it arouses their interest in coming to school. In addition to this, participants for this study are appealing to the government to provide teaching and learning materials to the schools as there is a lack. There is a need for playgrounds in schools specifically for pre-primary children as play plays a vital role in developing children’s mind, social as well as their physical bodies.
7.1.2 Recommendation 2: Parental involvement

The roles of parent’s play a vital role in children education and their roles should start right at the beginning. The results of this study show that parents' input is very minimal although they know the significance of pre-primary education. This gap needs to be filled by taking their roles and responsibilities. Issues like lack of nutrition in children need to be addressed not only by the government but by the parent’s themselves. There is a need for strategies that can be implemented by teachers to attract parent’s attention in taking part in children education.

They need to be made aware of their roles and responsibilities as well as the teachers and school roles in their children education.

7.1.3 Recommendation 3: Curriculum and learning contents issues

In this study, there were some issues raised concerning the curriculum and especially with the learning content area. The first thing that the study recommends for the pre-primary teachers' manual to be translated in all the local languages taught in schools as the current one which is in English is only benefiting the English medium schools which are very few in Namibia. There is a need for more activities for this subject; arts, religious and moral education and physical developments. Most of the teachers are criticizing this subject as not clear and the assessment is not corresponding with the competencies in the syllabus. Pre-school songs that are suggested in the teacher's manuals need to be recorded to make it easier for the teachers. There is a need for ICT to be integrated into the curriculum and teacher need training as it benefits and encourages teaching.

7.1.4 Recommendation 4: Kindergartens to be strengthened

The current status in Namibia about kindergarten is that they are not part of basic education and are not free as pre-grades. Most of these kindergartens are very expensive, and in most cases, parents cannot afford them, or parents do not see the need for sending them to kindergartens. Some of the children that come to pre-grade are directly from home and their first experience in classrooms situations it’s when they are in pre-grade. Teachers and parents are strongly recommending parents to send their children to kindergartens before coming to grade one as it
enables their social as well as their cognitive skills. Additionally, kindergarten should be made affordable so that parents can be encouraged to send their children there.

7.1.5 Recommendation 5: Teacher training

According to the demographic information for the teachers that took part in this study, it shows that most of the teachers were not trained for pre-primary and junior primary education, but they did something else.

According to the teachers, internal arrangements at schools were made so that they could be transferred to this grade either by themselves or by the school's management merely because they were getting old and pre-grade is taken as a retirement classroom for teachers at some schools. Parents have suggested that teachers should teach according to their area of specialization. This study clearly reveals that teachers are similarly proposing teacher training to be strengthened especially at high institution as they mentioned that Arts and music education is dragging behind as they lack knowledge and skills to teach these aspects. Additionally, they need more skills and pedagogy on how to plan and teach these subjects as they are most significant area in early childhood education and this will only make sense if teachers get proper training at high institutions or through in-service trainings.

7.2.2 Recommendations for future studies

This research attempted to evaluate and increase understanding regarding the current status quo of pre-primary education in Namibia from different stakeholders. In general, in Namibia, there were no studies carried out specifically in pre-primary education, and there is much that needs to be done. The qualitative case study methodology used in this study offered a detailed result based on the experiences of the pre-primary teachers, parents who have experience with pre-primary and as well children who were in pre-school the previous year. This study only provided a tip of an iceberg of the status of pre-school education in Namibia in terms of the physical environments, guiding, processes and the outcomes factors. First, a quantitative study for this research could be much effective if we can develop a framework within which quality could be deconstructed and described. This could be a tool to evaluate and identify the values, beliefs and interest that underlie those definitions of quality (Sheridan, 2009). Other studies that have been done in other countries
concerning quality in pre-schools are using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) to investigate the process quality of pre-primary education. This tool can as well be useful in the Namibian context for as long it is designed with a different level of quality in typical Namibian situation as a developing country. As a researcher, this could give a clear and coherent picture of Namibian pre-school education.

Secondly, it would be thoughtful if a comparative study would be used between rural and urban schools so that issues like parental involvement, teaching and learning resources and so on could be evaluated if they are perceived and understood the same in different settings. This would be prudent as different contexts would be addressed based on the findings. Third, observation as a tool for data collection method could be an additional tool that could be utilized so that researchers can observe teachers and learners during the process of teaching and learning. Issues such as classroom interaction, roles of the teachers and pupils could easily be observed, and a researcher can be a complete participant or a complete observer. The questionnaire can be designed to reveal the conceptions and experiences of pre-primary teachers and parents in two or three consecutive times in a year for example at the begging and even at the end of the year.

7.2.3 Validity and limitations of the study

In qualitative research, validity is seen as the strength of research as it determines the accuracy of the study findings (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, qualitative research should be plausible, credible, trustworthy and defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In qualitative research, internal and external strategies are used to validate studies. In this study, descriptive validity was used in the sense that the researcher reported what happened and what was said by the pre-school teachers, learners and pupils. To confirm validity in this study, the researcher has used external validity whereby participant’s feedback method was used partially. Four teachers that were interviewed were asked to check the accuracy of their transcript, and this was done so that the researcher could make sure that what was transcribed is what was said by the participants. The researcher could not get hold of any parent neither the children to check if what was transcribed is what was said. In fact, language could be a barrier since not all of them can read English. Another method that was used is the pattern matching, whereby the researcher finds if there was a pattern with what was said by different participants. A comparison was made in most of the issues raised
by participants in most cases there was a pattern. A peer review was used to check if what was said by participants is what was transcribed. This peer is competent in both Oshiwambo that was used during interviews by some participants and English languages that was used for transcribing.

There exist limitations in this study. The first one is that these findings were collected in a short time, as time was limited. It was at the beginning of a new academic year, and the teachers were busy with admission and registering new pupils. It might be a different result if these results were collected right at the end of the academic year for good reflection purposes mostly from the pupils. The second limitation is with the translation process, that the interview questions were translated from English language to Oshindonga for the sake of the participants as they do not speak English well. The interviews were transcribed and coded to English language of which some interpretations bias should have been happened. This was all done by the researcher although the questions from English to Oshindonga was done by a fellow student who understood both Oshindonga and English languages and researcher went through them.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-primary teachers’ interview guide

A. Introduction and demographic information
   1. Tell me about yourself.
   2. How long have you been a pre-school teacher?
   3. What is your teaching background?
   4. What is your background with pre-primary classroom?
   5. What is your teaching qualification?

B. Physical factors of pre-grade
   1. How many pupils did you have in your class last year?
   2. How do they come to school? How far are their homes from school?
   3. Do all the pupils speak the same language? Is the language of instruction the one used at home?
   4. How is the availability of materials in pre-grade?
   5. Is there a playground at your school? If yes, how often do your pupils go there?
   6. What kind of materials and resources do you have at your school? Do you as well use material from the nature? What kind and how often?
   7. Does lack of teaching materials affect pedagogy? How?
   8. How satisfied are you with the physical classroom environment in general? Why?
   9. What are the indicators of quality pre-primary education and why?
  10. What are your views the fact that our pre-primary classrooms are in normal comprehensive schools? Does it have some benefits or challenges?

C. Guiding factors of pre-grade
   1. How do you enhance the positive interaction between pupils in the classroom?
   2. What kind of leadership style/pedagogy do you use in your class? Democratic, authoritarian? Why?
   3. What promote interaction, communication and co-operation between you and your learners?
   4. How is the input of the parents in children learning process? How often do you get into contact with them?
   5. Which learning contents do you think are most relevant and why? Are there any that you think are not relevant? Motivate your answer.
   6. How do you plan your lessons? Daily, weekly or perhaps for the whole term? Why?
   7. How do you co-operate between you and other junior primary teachers? How satisfied are you? Are there some suggestions?
   8. In general, what are the strength and challenges do you have as a pre-school teacher?

D. Processes of pre-education
   1. What is your role as a pre-primary teacher?
   2. How would you evaluate pre-primary education in general? Is it pleasant?
   3. What kind of methodologies do you use and how do the pupils learn?
   4. What type of interaction do you use in your class and why?
   5. How would you evaluate our curriculum? Any good remarks or perhaps any suggestion you have,
   6. Are there competencies in the curriculum achievable?
   7. How is the interest of the learners? How are they motivated?
   8. What values do the pupils develop and what opportunity do they have in the society?

E. Outcome of pre-primary education
   1. What is the most significant aim of pre-primary?
   2. What are the children expected to learn during the year?
   3. How will you tell that your pupils have constituted knowledge? How do you assess them?
   4. How satisfied are you with the Namibian pre-primary education system?
   5. How would you describe a high-quality pre-school in general?
Appendix 2: Parents’ interview guide

A. Introduction and demographic information
1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What is your relationship with your child who was in pre-grade last year?
3. How many years have you had a child in pre-primary classroom?
4. What do you know about pre-primary education?
5. What do you think is the main aim of pre-primary education?
6. Where did you receive information about pre-grade?

B. Physical factors of pre-grade
1. What are your views of the whole settings of pre-primary classrooms? How satisfied are you?
2. How did your child come to school last year? How far is home from school?
3. How is the safety of the pre-primary classroom? In addition, what are your views on the fact that pre-primary classrooms are in the comprehensive schools?
4. In your views, are the materials that the children use at school supporting enough? What kind of materials do you give them when at home?
5. How satisfied are you with the whole school environment? Do you think it is safe for the children to stay?

C. Guiding factors of pre-grade
1. What do you think about the teacher and learner’s interaction at school?
2. How often do you visit the school? What is your relationship between you and the teacher like?
3. How would you describe a teacher-parent interaction?
4. How do you offer support to your child at home?
5. What is so good about the pre-primary teacher in general?

D. Process factors of pre-grade
1. What is your role as a parent having a child in pre-primary classroom?
2. Does your child show interest when she was in pre? How and in what way?
3. Do you think the whole teaching process in pre-primary has an impact on the child development? Which developmental/content area?
4. What do you perhaps know about the pre-primary curriculum?
5. Are there meetings of pre-primary teachers and parents? What do you discuss in those meetings?

E. Outcome factors of pre-grade
1. How satisfied are you with the pre-primary education in general?
2. Has pre-primary fulfilled all the needs of your child?
3. Do you think your child has gained some knowledge and understanding in pre-primary class? What kind of knowledge?
4. How would you describe a high-quality pre-primary education?
5. What suggestions and views do you have as a parent, towards the Namibian pre-primary education in general?
6. Would you recommend parents to send their children to pre-primary? Why?
Appendix 3: Pupils’ interview guide

A. Introduction and demographic information
1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. In which grade were you last year?
4. In which grade are you this year?
5. What was your teacher’s name last year and who is your teacher this year?
6. What do you want to become when you grow up?

The learners are not going to be asked many questions as teachers and parents, but they will just be asked general questions about their experience in pre-primary classroom.

1. Why was it important for you to go to pre-grade?
2. What did you like about pre-primary classroom? What did you not like? Why?
3. Who mostly decide what to do? Was it the teacher or learners?
4. Did the teacher know about what you liked to do in the class?
5. Between home and school, where do you like the most and why?
6. How did your parent support you? Does she know what you do at school? Does she help you with some of the activities when at home?
7. What kind of activities did you do in pre-primary classroom? Which one did you prefer the most?
8. Which subject did you like the most and why?
9. How often did you play in the classroom and what kind of play and with what resources?
10. How was the classroom? Was it safe? Was the space enough for all of you?
11. What did you learn in pre-primary?
12. What are you missing the most in pre-grade?
13. What was the most interesting/memorable event or case you have had last year in your classroom? Why that?
To Whom It May Concern

Namibian teachers, who are participating in Master's Degree Programme in Primary Education as a part of their studies, are conducting dissertation research. These studies consist of three different parts: a) planning seminar, b) working seminar and c) research report. To be able to complete the dissertation, they have to conduct empirical data collection, which is recommended to be carried out in Namibia. As a supervisor of their master's thesis, I ask for Your kind support for their data collection under all necessary ethical requirements.

In Joensuu, 15th November, 2017

[Signature]

Sari Havu-Nuutinen
Professor
Academic head of the Master's Degree Programme in Primary Education
Supervisor of Thesis
Appendix 5: Permission letter to the participant schools

04 December 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: School permission to conduct a research at your school.

Warmest greetings!

My name is Wisillyzeonlika Mlunga, a primary education Master student at the University of Eastern Finland Joensuu campus. The purpose of this letter is to ask a permission to conduct my research among the pre-primary teacher’s (s), learners who are currently in grade one as well as parent' who have had children in pre-primary grade. The reason why I chose these participants because my research is titled “In search of quality in Namibian pre-schools: teachers, learners and parents' perceptions” specifically in Oshikoto and Oshana regions. The University of Eastern Finland has approved this study, and I have attached that approval letter as well.

The data collection process is scheduled to take place next year January 2018, right at the beginning of the year, it will be arranged at a time convenient to the teachers, learners, and parents schedule. I promise to come and arrange all the required necessities next year. Participants in this research will be voluntarily and they may refuse without any consequences. I will as well get the permission from the parents whose pupils will be selected to participate in this study plus all the ethical issues that a researcher must consider. The information that will be gathered through this research will be kept confidential and anonymous. It is my hope that the information that will be gathered will benefit our education system, especially the early childhood and Pre-Primary, which is the foundation phase of all future learning. There are no risks in participating in this research.

If you agree as the school principal, kindly sign below acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study at your school and you can return the letter or simply just reply to my e-mail and I will find the letter next year. Further information regarding this study can be obtained from the researcher Wisillyzeonlika Mlunga, at the following e-mail address: wisslyzeonlika@gmail.com or cell phone number +354 41 4944054.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance with this research.

Sincerely.

Wisillyzeonlika Mlunga

Master of Education

UEF

Approved by: (printed name, signature and title)

...................................................... Date........................................
Appendix 6: Application letter to the Oshana Director of Education

Enq: Wisilzyeonlika Mlunga and Anna Krista Ankonga
Email: annakra@uef.fi
Contact No: 0816420969/0818244298
10 January 2018

To: The Director of Education
   Mrs. H. Amukana
   Oshana Region

Dear Mrs. Amukana

RE: APPLICATION FOR TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN OSHAN REGION SCHOOLS

Anna Krista Ankonga and Wisilzyeonlika Mlunga are students, doing Masters' Degree Program in Primary education at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and currently carrying a qualitative research studies which are titled: 1. ‘Teachers’ perceptions on their training that is in English while teaching through the medium of Mother tongue: A case study for pre and junior primary teachers in Oshana and Oshikoto’, 2. ‘In search of quality in Namibian pre-primary schools: Teachers, parents and pupils perceptions’.

We would like to ask permission from your good office to interview teachers, learners and parents that suit our studies in Oshana region. Data collection process is scheduled to take place from the 15th to 26th January 2018 at the following respective schools: Olukolo Primary school, Oluno Primary school and Shinime Primary School.

We wish to assure you that the information that will be collected will remain confidential and will be treated in a professional manner. There are no foreseeable risks to the participants. Attached is the approval letter from the University of Eastern Finland.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thanking you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Yours Faithfully

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Anna Krista Ankonga and Wisilzyeonlika Mlunga
(Student at UEF) (Student at UEF)
Appendix 7: Approval letter from the Oshana Director of Education

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
Aspiring to excellence in Education for All

Tel: 065 229800
Fax: 065 229833
Enquiries: Gerhard S. Ndafenongo
E-mail: ndafenongo@uef.fi
Ref no: 11/1/1

906 Sam Nuyoma Road
Private Bag 5518
Oshakati, Namibia

MS ANNA-KRISTA ANKONGA AND MS WISILLYZEOMLIKA MLUNGA
UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND
CELL: 0816420969/0818244298
Email: annakra@uef.fi

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT THREE SCHOOLS IN OSHANA REGION

1. I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 10th January 2018 and therefore it bears reference;

2. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to conduct the study entitled: 1. Teachers’ perceptions on their training that is in English while teaching through mother tongue: A case study for Pre & Junior Primary teachers in Oshikoto and Oshana Regions, and 2. In search of quality Namibia Pre-primary schools in Namibia. You are hereby requested to represent this letter of approval to the principals of selected schools namely: Olukolo, Oluo and Shinime Shivula Primary Schools to ensure that the research is authorised, authentic and procedures are adhered to.

3. This permission is subject to the following strict conditions; (i) There should be minimal or no interruption on normal teaching and learning, during a class or scheduled afternoon session, (ii) Ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity should be respected and retained throughout this activity i.e. voluntary participation, and consent from participants, and (iii) the permission is valid only for the academic year 2018.

4. Both parties should understand that this permission could be revoked without explanation at any time.

5. Furthermore, we humbly request you to share with us your research findings with the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture, Oshana Region. You may contact Mr GS Ndafenongo, the Deputy Director: Programs and Quality Assurance (PQA) for the provision of summary of your research findings.

6. I wish you the best in conducting your study.

Yours Sincerely,

HILENI M. AMUKANA
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

All correspondence should be addressed to the Director of Education, Arts & Culture
Appendix 8: Teachers’ and parents’ consent form

Consent form for participating in a research

Department of school of applied science and teacher education

Philosophical faculty

University of Eastern Finland

Research topic: *In search of quality in Namibian pre-primary education: Teachers, parents and pupil’s perceptions.*

Dear participant

Hereby, you are humbly invited to participate in my research that in conducted with the authorization from my Professor Sari-Hauv Nuutinen an academic head of the Master’s degree program in Primary Education, Philosophical faculty at the University of Eastern Finland.

The purpose of this study is to explore the quality of pre-primary education in Namibia from the views of the pre-primary teachers, parents (who had children in pre-primary grade during the 2017 academic year) as well as learners (who were in pre-primary grade during the 2017 academic year).

The results of this study will be beneficial to the whole Namibian education system, specifically the policy maker as it will give them the current status quo of our Namibian pre-primary education.

Protection, confidentiality and voluntarily participation

The information that will be gathered through this study will be handled with confidentiality. No names of participants will be revealed and there are no risks in participating in this study. It is a voluntarily participation, and participants have right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Your participation

This study is a qualitative study, and the interview will be used as a tool for gathering information. The voice recorder will be used just to make it easier for a researcher when analyzing the results and no other reasons.

Consent

I have read this consent form and I have understood what it is all about. THEREFORE, I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO AGREE TO THIS INTERVIEW TO BE RECORDED.

Participant signature ....................................... Date:

Thank you for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

Wisilkyzonderika Mlunga

Researcher participating in Master Degree Program

University of Eastern Finland
Appendix 9: Pupils’ consent form

Parental permission for participation of a child in Research study
University of Eastern Finland

Title of the study: In search of quality education in Namibian pre-primary education: Teachers, parents and pupils perceptions

Dear parent,

Your child who was in pre-primary during the 2017 academic year is hereby invited to participate in the research study conducted by Wisilizeonlika Mlunga from the University of Eastern Finland. The purpose of this research is to explore the quality of pre-primary education from the viewpoints of the above-mentioned participants in which your child is included.

Your child’s participation will involve an audio-recorded interview about how she/he has experienced his/her 2017 academic year as a pre-primary learner. The amount of time required for child’s participation will be about 15 minutes and the venue will be at the school. Further necessities will be arranged with the teacher. There are no known risks or discomfort associated with this research. Similarly, there are no known benefits to your child that would result from this participation but generally, this study will benefit pre-primary teachers, parents, pupils, policy makers and the whole education system at large.

The audio-recorded interview will be handled with care and with high confidentiality as this will only be used myself as a researcher. No names will be used, as I will do everything to protect her privacy. I assure you that your child’s identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Your child participation in this study is voluntarily and you may refuse to allow your child participate or withdraw anytime from this study with no consequences. Your child will not be penalised in any way should you decide not to allow your child to participate or to withdraw from this study.

If you may have any questions or concerns regarding this letter or regarding the whole study, please feel free to contact me anytime at this number 0818244298. Read the statement below, sign if you have granted this permission and forward the letter to school OR ignore this letter if no permission granted.

Consent

I have read this parental permission form and have been given opportunities to ask questions regarding my child participation in this study. Therefore, I give my permission for my child to participate in this study.

Parent name and signature ............................................ Date.........................
Child name in full ..........................................................

Thank you.