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Implementing inclusive education in Namibian primary schools: from policies to practice

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Title Implementing inclusive education in Namibian primary schools: from policies to practice			
Major subject Education	Type of thesis Master's thesis	Year 2015	Number of pages 112 + appendices (6)
Abstract <p>This study set out to explore the issues of inclusive education in primary education in Namibia. The specific research questions were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How does Namibia address the issue of inclusive education in its educational policies and practices?2. What are the main successes and challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies? <p>The research is a qualitative study and the data consists of the analysis of current Namibian policy documents related to inclusive education and interviews of seven Namibian experts in the field of education. The data was analysed by applying content analysis approach. The theoretical framework consists of theories of inclusion and inclusive education as well as the concepts and aims of Education for All global approach.</p> <p>The findings show that Namibia has made relevant progress in universal access to education with the percentage of 99,6% in 2012. This is particularly significant taking into account the legacy of Apartheid, which ended after Namibia gained independence only twenty-five years ago. Another area of success is gender equality, which interviewees reported to have been achieved with the exception of two regions. At the moment it seems that more attention needs to be paid to boys, as girls seem to do better in school and stay in school longer than boys.</p> <p>Quality of education is a source of much concern in Namibia. The diversity of languages and ethnic groups as well as life circumstances makes it challenging to organize inclusive relevant education for all. The language of instruction is a debated topic and forms a different challenge in urban and rural areas. There is also a shortage of qualified teachers and relevant, culture-sensitive teaching materials in all the local languages. In principle education is free of charge but some other expenses cause difficulties for children from poor backgrounds. HIV has had dramatic effects on society increasing the number of orphans and children who are responsible for their younger siblings, which has an effect on school performance. Community involvement was emphasized as a condition to increase inclusion.</p> <p>Namibian educational policies demonstrate commitment to educational development with a special concern regarding inclusive education. However, there are gaps between policy and its implementation. Interviews emphasized that efficient policy guidance and monitoring is needed to identify the bottlenecks in implementation and to plan concrete actions to develop inclusive education further.</p>			
Keywords	Namibia, Inclusive education, Namibian educational policies, EFA, inclusion, exclusion, access to education, equity, equality, quality		

Happiness is only real when shared.

Christopher McCandless

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Abbreviations

ADB	African Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
EFA	Education For All
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIEWS	Global Information on Early Warning System
GNP	Gross National Product
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSA	National Statistic Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SFP	School Feeding Program
OPO	Ovambolands People's Organization
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

SFP	School Feeding Program
SWAPO	South West African People Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
WCEFA	World Conference on Education For All

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1. Introduction

This master's thesis analyses inclusive education at primary school level in Namibia, aiming to present the successes and challenges encountered in the implementation of an inclusive system. One of the most widely accepted agreements concerning inclusive education is that there is no consensus about what exactly is meant by inclusive education (Erten & Savage 2012, p. 221; Nutbrown, 2013, p. 8). While there is no universal precise definition, according to Miles and Singal (2010, p. 11), inclusive education plays a crucial role in promoting democratic values and principles, based on equality and social justice. Inclusive education commits to freedom, peace, collaboration, understanding, respect, tolerance, and its central idea is that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, have the right to fully participate in mainstream educational settings.

Inclusive education, with a special mention to the Education for All strategy, co-ordinated by UNESCO, is the theoretical framework of this research and the context of the study is Namibia. Namibia has introduced a number of educational policies concerning inclusive education, as part of a holistic development plan to create an inclusive society. One of these policies is the Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Program 2005-2020 (2004). Namibia's colonial past was based on inequalities and segregation, reaching its apex with the Apartheid system. Currently, twenty-five years since the implementation of a democratic system, Namibia has made systematic efforts to overcome those inherited inequalities.

As stated before, this research concerns inclusive education. Education has the potential to enable people to live with dignity, develop their capacities to the fullest, allow them to participate in society and to improve the quality of their lives (UNESCO 1990, p. 3). On the other hand, it is important to be aware that education itself means little. Noam Chomsky commented in an interview, that technology could be compared with a hammer. A hammer can be used to build a house, but also to crush somebody's skull. As hammer can do either, it is up to us how we wield it. I present the same comparison when discussing education. Education is not good or bad in itself; it depends on how governments, policy-makers, teachers, learners and society in general use it. There are multiple examples in which education is a medium for manipulation, indoctrination or oppression; for instance, the role

of schools was a contributing factor in the indoctrination of hatred, which culminated in the Rwandan genocide, where approximately one million people were murdered during a 100-day period in 1994 (Harber, 2002, p. 273). Another example regarding the negative impact of education occurs in Zimbabwe and Uganda where girls often accept gender violence (Leach, 2003, p. 386)

Namibia is a country of contrasts, filled with successes and challenges. Regarding the successes: from 1999 to 2012, Namibia has made significant progress towards universal access to primary education (UNESCO, 2015, p. 78) and gender disparity has been drastically reduced during the same period (UNESCO, 2015, p. 157). Literacy rate, is well above the average in the African context, with Namibia achieving a total youth and adult literacy rate of 90% by 2015 (UNESCO, 2015, p. 146). The Namibian government invests more than 20% of the national budget to education (SACMEQ, 2010, p.11). Namibia, according to the gross national product, is one of the countries with the highest expenditures into education in the world (UNESCO, 2015, p. 244). Namibia is thus, demonstrating its commitment to a more educated society. According to the African Development Bank, Namibia also ranks sixth out of fifty-two African countries regarding good governance and is ranked as the seventh least corrupted countries in Africa (ADB, 2014, p. 1), Namibia has a strong economy, reaching the status of an upper middle-income country in 2008 (ADB, 2014, p. 10). Namibia has also had political stability since its independence in 1990, and is among the most peaceful nations in Africa (Marope, 2005, p. 17).

Namibia also faces numerous challenges. For instance, according to the United Nations Development Program Namibia is the most unequal country in the world (UNDP, 2014, p. 170), and a significant proportion of its inhabitants are poor or severely poor (UNDP, 2013, p. 160). HIV/AIDS has an incidence of 19.9% (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2008, p. 8) and it ranks third in the world regarding incidence of tuberculosis (MoHSS, 2008, 27).

When I attended the National Conference on Quality of Education in Rundu in October 2014, I met a professor from Tanzania and he told me something inspiring. He said that he was so enthusiastic to come to Namibia because he felt that the country is moving forward, it has a desire to change, to improve the education system and to improve the living standards of its people. He said that Tanzania had the same spirit after independence in 1963, but now, 55

years later, the winds of change had extinguished. My hope is that those winds continue blowing in Namibia.

1.2 Research justification

I have decided to conduct my research on inclusive education, as I am concerned regarding the processes of inclusion and exclusion in society. Inclusion and exclusion are not natural and immutable phenomena but they are socially constructed. Therefore, I believe we have to question our actions to overcome the barriers of inclusion and let everyone fully participate in society. Inclusion is not about the integration of people with different characteristics into the mainstream setting and then, expecting them to adapt to the mainstream culture. Inclusion is about respect, appreciating and promoting diversity, stating that we are not the same, but we are all equal. The concept of inclusion is also presented in the European Union motto 'united in diversity'. I believe schools have a crucial role in promoting inclusion, not only at school level but also in society.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of education in Namibia in order to include children who might be currently excluded. It is important to be aware that many of the challenges this country is facing are also part of the reality in many other countries. Not only in so-called 'developing countries' but also in so-called 'developed countries'. While the process of exclusion of certain groups may be common in different contexts, the strategy to overcome exclusion should be context related analysing the nature of this phenomenon in this particular environment. Therefore, I address the process of exclusion and inclusion within the Namibian context.

I have been involved in education for nine years. I have a degree as a primary school teacher, I was a teacher's assistant in Seinäjoki and after that I worked as a primary school teacher in Spain. The experience in Spain highly influenced my thesis topic. My school was a primary school somewhat segregated from the others, as there were fewer learners per class than in a regular school and most of the children belonged to the Roma community. I was really surprised to see this kind of segregation in a society that was supposed to be inclusive. In this research, I present a broader approach to inclusive education in a national context, analysing educational policies and comparing them with the reality at school level in Namibia.

1.3 Purpose and focus of the research

Twenty-five years after Independence, Namibia has published numerous educational policies aiming to improve access, equity and quality in education. The government sees education as a cornerstone to overcoming inequality, oppression and segregation; characteristics of the pre-independent Namibia. Namibia, according to its development plan, entitled Vision 2030, aims to become a knowledge-based society, in which the education system has a crucial role to play (NPC, 2013, p. 30).

This study set out to explore the issues of inclusive education in primary education in Namibia, using both theories of inclusion and guidelines from the global approach of Education for All (EFA). The scope of this research is to address inclusive education within the Namibian context. Based on this, my research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Namibia address the issue of inclusive education in its educational policies and practices?
2. What are the main successes and challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies?

This study focuses on six current Namibian educational policy documents that bear some relation to inclusive education and then conducting a comparison between the rhetoric and actual implementation of those policies. In order to gain an understanding of what actually happens at school level, I have interviewed seven educational experts in Namibia, from different institutions: two school teachers, two professors from the University of Namibia and three educational experts from international organisations working in the country.

Research data is analysed using qualitative content analysis. Hsieh & Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define content analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. In this study, I also use data from the UNESCO Global Monitoring Reports and the international education summits in Jomtiem, Dakar and Salamanca. These documents analyse the evolution of the EFA goals and provide possible solution concerning the inclusion in education of children that are currently excluded.

As stated, this research addresses inclusive education in Namibia; however, focusing solely on a single part of the reality, without addressing the context, entails a serious risk of misunderstanding regarding the meanings of events. It is important to be aware that context drives the way we understand our surroundings (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 102). Therefore, it is fundamental to have a holistic overview of Namibia in order to draw a map, which guides the research from the past to the present, as well as from the different fields in the present, to an understanding of education in Namibia in order to finally focus on issues of inclusive education in the country. If context is not taken into account the researcher runs a serious risk of misunderstanding the meaning of events (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 102). With this in mind, I expose a rather comprehensive picture of Namibia in chapters two and three to an audience that might not be familiar with its background.

1.4 Limitations of the research

The main limitation of my research is that I do not live in Namibia. I had a limited knowledge of the country a year before I started planning my research. Thanks to the North-South-South Program that among other activities, opens up opportunities for student exchanges between higher institutions in Finland and some countries in the South I had the opportunity to spend five months in Namibia as an exchange student. In order to overcome my lack of knowledge and to get a deeper understanding of my research topic, I have examined a vast amount of literature aiming to become familiar with the interesting and complex reality of this country; I have interviewed seven experts on education and I have conducted three study trips while in Namibia to different education related institutions such as regular, special and mobile schools, the University of Namibia and the national office of international organisations. I have tried to interpret the educational documents and the interviews truthfully in the Namibian context. However, I am fully aware that my cultural background might have influenced my interpretations however exact and truthful I have attempted to be.

To avoid misinterpretation I have to be clear, explicit and honest about my biases, values and personal interests in my research. A special bias in my research comes from my background. My conceptions of inclusion, equity or a just society, or what would be the best ways to transform it, can differ from the ones in my research context. I acknowledge my bias and the difficulty of interpreting all the cultural meanings in my research. On the other hand

I have tried to conduct honest research, using not only the evidences that support my worldview, but also other perspectives that contradict my own vision. Above all, I have to be very attentive to the voices of my interviewees and I have tried to interpret them carefully and truthfully.

I am also aware of the limitations conducting a research with a wide focus, as it is inclusive education in a national context. There are also many differences in Namibia depending on the region, or even within the same regions. And the issues of inclusive education also vary enormously depending on what group of children we look at. The study results vary depending on whether we focus on children with disabilities, children living in poverty or children belonging to a minority ethnic group. Also within the same groups, for instance San children there would be different successes and challenges depending on whether they are living in their homeland or in urban areas. I am aware and I acknowledge the wide focus of my research as it analyses the implementation of national policies that relate to inclusive education of all groups of children in Namibia. However, I wanted to focus on the whole situation and it is to be noted that inclusion is a holistic approach where different aspects are difficult to separate.

1.5 Thesis structure

I have divided the thesis into nine chapters. In the first chapter I introduce the topic of my research and I present the research questions I sought to answer throughout the study. Chapters two and three provide a general understanding of the Namibian context and how its colonial past has influenced and shaped the country. In addition I describe the current situation in Namibia, in terms of education, economy and socio-political features. In chapter four, I expose inclusive education as the theoretical framework of the research, describing different understandings of inclusion. In chapter five, I introduce the Education For All (EFA) as a global approach to inclusive education. Thus, I discuss the benefits of implementing EFA, as well as the challenges and criticisms of this global movement. In chapter six, I provide a brief description of the five Namibian policies relating to inclusive education that will be analysed in the findings. In chapter seven, I introduce the methodology and research design. In chapter eight I present the results of my analysis and interpretations based on the Namibian policies, the interviews and the EFA documents; and finally, in

chapter 9, I discuss the main results and I make a holistic conclusion regarding the research process.

2. The Namibian context

2.1 Geography

Namibia lies in the South Western part of Africa, with the Tropic of Capricorn dividing the country almost in half. It has borders with five countries and the Atlantic Ocean. In the South, Namibia's neighbour is South Africa, in the west, Botswana and in the north, Angola. In the north-east there is the Caprivi Strip that gives access to the Zambezi River. Zambia is on the north side of the Strip with Zimbabwe to the south of it. On the western side, Namibia has more than 2,000 kilometres of coast facing the Atlantic Ocean. Even though Namibia has such an extensive coast there is only one deep-water port. Map of Namibia attached in figure 1.



Fig. 1. Map of Namibia. Retrieved May 3, 2015, from Britannica Online for Kids:
<http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/art-64946>

Namibia covers an area of 832,629 square kilometres. This is, for instance, two and a half times the size of Finland, but its population remains small and sparse. One of the main reasons for the reduced population is a consequence of the harsh dry climate. Namibia is the driest country in Africa, and also the driest country south of the equator (SACMEQ, 2010, p. 3). It has two large deserts; the Kalahari Desert in the east, which also covers extensive areas in Botswana, Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The other desert is the Namib Desert in the west, which stretches along the entire Atlantic coast with an area equivalent to the size of the Czech Republic. The Namib Desert may be the oldest and driest desert in the world. In contrast, the northern area is much wetter, making living conditions easier, resulting in 60% of the Namibian population living in this area (SACMEQ, 2010, p. 3).

The climate in Namibia is highly unpredictable. Extreme droughts are followed by uncontrolled floods covering extensive areas. These radical cycles seriously affect agriculture, cattle and people's living conditions. For example, a flood devastated the country in 2009, especially in the northern regions, while, in 2013, there was a severe drought, causing a tremendous negative impact on food security in rural areas (GRN, 2013, p. 7). The country's dryness, which culminates in periodical droughts, is mainly responsible for 37% of the Namibian population suffering from food insecurity (GIEWS, 2013, p.1).

2.2 Demography

Since 1921 the population of Namibia has grown steadily, rising from 250,000 inhabitants to 2.1 million in 2012 (GRN, 2012b, p. 25). Nevertheless, Namibia is the second least populated country in the world with 2.6 inhabitants per square kilometre, only surpassed by Mongolia. Namibia consists of 14 administrative regions, with the most populated region being Khomas with 340,000 inhabitants. Windhoek, the capital city, is situated in this region. The least populated region is Omahake, covering a larger area than Austria, but while Austria has over 8 million inhabitants, Omahake has 78,000. 50% of the population in Namibia is under 21 years old and 7% are above sixty years old (GRN, p. 2012). These figures can be linked with a low life expectancy, as life expectancy was drastically cut, as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, reducing life expectancy from sixty-two years in 1991, to forty-nine years in 2001 (GRN, 2010, p. iii). Currently, life expectancy has started to rise again.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2015) eleven ethnic groups form the population of Namibia, ranging from nomads to city dwellers. Approximately 88% of the population in Namibia is black¹, 6% are white and 6 % are coloured, or mixed. Among the blacks, people are mainly from 9 different ethnic groups. The largest group is the Owambo accounting for 50% of the blacks; the second largest group, lagging far behind with 9%, are the Kavangos. The other groups in the order of population rate are the Damara, Herero, Nama, Caprivian, San, Tswana and Zemba.

Not all ethnic groups have the same status in the Namibian society. While some groups have benefited from the current society's structure, other groups have been left somewhat behind. As my research is an attempt to address the issue of inclusive education, I give particular attention to the three ethnic groups in Namibia, which most literary resources consider excluded from the mainstream society: the San, the Himba and the Zemba.

According to Suzman (2001, p. 1) the San is the most marginalised group in the country, accounting for less than 2% of the total population. San usually live in the arid areas in the north-eastern part of the country and are predominantly nomads living as food hunters and gatherers. The San are not a homogenous group; on the contrary, San are divided into more than ten different subgroups, with different mother tongues (UNICEF, 2002, p. 27). Regardless of this diversity, all San people are highly influenced by social stigmatisation and stereotypes. They share some common factors widely spread around this ethnic group, such as no land possession, extreme poverty and lack of education. San children are considered as the most excluded learners in school (UNICEF, 2002, p. 27). These factors have not changed in recent years with the implementation of poverty alleviation policies (Suzman, 2001; vii), indeed, for many of San people, the situation is worse now than it was before independence (Suzman, 2001, p. 27).

The Himba and Zemba usually live in the north western part of the country. The Himba group belongs ethnically to the Herero tribe, but it has culturally evolved in a different direction, while the Zemba forms its own ethnic group. Himba and Zemba have semi-nomadic lifestyles moving around with their cattle in search of pastures and water. Himba and Zemba perform poorly in the current mainstream education system, mainly due to their

¹ I am aware that using the term black and the term white referring to people is a sensitive issue; therefore I only use these terms when they are used in the source I have taken the information from.

resistance to modern forms of education, which do not respect, or include their cultures and traditions (UNICEF, 2002, p. 31).

2.3 Languages

As I will explain in the findings, the issue of language of instruction is one of the most problematic matters in primary education in Namibia. Due to the huge language diversity in such a small population, the delivering of education, which should be based on equality, equity and quality, remains a challenge in Namibia.

Namibia has thirteen national languages. Among them, English has been the official language since Independence in 1990. The issue of language remains a concern, partly because of the great language diversity, and partly because of political manipulation throughout Namibian history (Frourie, 1997, p. 30).

Although English is the official language, it is the mother tongue of only 7% of the population (Frourie, 1997, p. 29). Hage Geingob, current president of Namibia since November 2014, explained in 1981 what were the reasons for the commitment to introduce English as the official language, once the country became independent. Geingob (as cited in Frydman, 2011, p. 183) stated that the main aim was to steer the people away from lingo-tribal differences and create conditions for national unity through the use of a common language. From the same Geigob's speech, Chamberlain, Diallo and John, (as cited in Murray 2007, p. 70) gathered these words:

“We live in a world where distances have shrunk, and the global village is a reality. For Namibia, therefore, we had to choose a language that would remove isolation imposed by the colonisers (...) Language in Namibia was taught to the majority with only one objective: to give them instructions at the work place. Isolation imposed on us, by denying most Namibians education in a global language, seems to have been durable. On Independence, therefore, we had to choose a language that would open up the world to us. English was the obvious choice”.

2.4 Religion

Namibia, according to the Article 1 of its Constitution, is a secular State (GRN, 1990, p. 6). The Article 21, Section 1, Clause C (GRN, 1990, p. 15) states that all persons shall have the right to practise any religion and to manifest such practice. According to the Report on International Religious Freedom (United States Department of State, 2013, p. 1) 90% of the citizens in Namibia identify themselves as Christians. Among the Christians, there are two main groups: Lutherans and Roman Catholics. Other Christian groups presented in the country, smaller in number, belong to the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Apart from Christians there are also others religious groups, such as the Zionist, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith. The Himba and San groups have their own traditional religious practices.

2.5 Brief History of Namibia

In order to understand the current situation in Namibia regarding education, one needs a holistic approach to the Namibian context, not only regarding the present but also regarding the past. In this section I will give a brief review to Namibian history since the era of colonisation. I mostly focus on Melber's latest publication, 'Understanding Namibia' (2014), due to his comprehensive knowledge concerning the current situation in the country. As for the history since the Germans' arrival until independence, I mainly focus on the work of Marion Wallace (2011); according to Melber (2014, p.1) Wallace's book 'A History of Namibia from the beginning to 1990' is the most comprehensive historical overview of Namibia prior to independence.

In its past, Namibia has been under German and South African Rule. Namibia, which is regarded as the last African colony, has not only been facing the harsh climate condition but it has also suffered from barbarian colonisation since the arrival of the Germans in 1884. Namibia suffered the first genocide of the 20th century. This was the first time Germany used concentration camps; later on, Hitler would use them on the Jews in Europe. In 1917, under the rule of South Africa, the living conditions in Namibia for the natives were no better. The main aim of the South African government was to expropriate Namibia's natural resources, while continuing with the former segregated policies. Twenty-five years after Independence

in 1990, people, while things are changing, are still facing struggles and challenges that need to be faced.

2.5.1 German colonisation (1884-1915)

The German colonisation of Namibia, then called German South West Africa, lasted for thirty years (1884-1915), with strict racial segregation characterising this period (Melber, 2014, p. 8). German troops took the lands from natives resulting in a war, which lasted from 1904 until 1908 (Jauch, Edwards & Cupido 2011, p.184). According to Wallace (2011, p. 181) this war went much further in cruelty and extermination than any conflict in Europe at the time. When General Von Trotha, Commander of the colonial forces arrived to Namibia in 1904, he declared that:

“Inside German territory every Herero tribesman, armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. No women and children will be allowed in the territory. I believe that the Herero must be destroyed as a nation” (Bley; as cited in Katjavivi, 1990, P. 9-10).

Due to the remarkable armament inequalities between the colonisers and the colonised, German troops committed a devastating genocide in which the few Herero and Nama survivors were sent to concentration camps (Katjavivi, 1990, p. 10). In the concentration camps thousands of them died, and those that survived were deprived of almost all their land and cattle (Wallace, 2011, p. 155). As a horrific anecdote, according to Kruger, some of the heads of the dead in the concentration camps, were boiled and skinned by other prisoners and the skulls were sent to anthropologists in Germany to demonstrate that Africans were genetically inferior to Europeans (as cited in Wallace, 2011, p. 180). While there is no consensus among researchers about the exact number of deaths in this genocide, even using the most cautious estimations, fifty per cent of the Herero and thirty per cent of the Nama were exterminated, but the true proportion is probably much higher (Wallace, 2011, p. 177-178).

The German colonisation while it seems to be a distant memory, was much responsible for the social inequalities and racial segregation prevalent up until Namibia gained independence, and it still somehow persists in the present (Wallace, 2011, P. 155; Jauch,

Edwards & Cupido 2011, p.184) In 1917, as a result of the First World War, German South West Africa ceased being a German colony and it was ceded to the British crown under the mandate of South Africa (Harber, 1993, p. 415). It was renamed as South West Africa.

2.5.2 South African rule

The League of Nations, precursor to the United Nations, ceded the administration of Namibia, then called South West Africa, to South Africa in 1921 (Wallace, 2011, p. 205). Since the beginning of the mandate, implementations of racial segregation policies were practiced, which culminated in the Apartheid policy (1948-1990). According to the United Nations Institute of Namibia (as cited in Jauch, Edwards & Cupido 2011, p. 185) although native Namibians made up 90% of the total population, they received only 5% of the colonial state's budget. The South African administration followed the same principles as the Germans, in extracting as much wealth as possible from the colony (Wallace, 2011, p.205). According to the World Bank (1991, p. 9) two thirds of the population lived in absolute poverty at the time.

After 19 years of conflict (1971-1990), due to the international involvement in the political arena from SWAPO (South West African People Organisation), the United Nations, and countries from the Soviet Block and the United States, Namibia could finally gain its independence in March 1990, putting an end to the long struggle for liberation. Martti Ahtisaari, the former Finnish President was awarded the Peace Nobel Prize in 2008 (Nobel Laureates, 2008), as a reward of his crucial role in Namibian independence struggle, along with other peaceful conflict resolutions elsewhere.

2.6 Present situation

2.6.1 Politics and economy

At independence in 1990, Namibia inherited a highly fragmented, stratified and divided society. Namibia has been going through a great process of transformation since its Independence twenty-five years ago. According to Marope (2005, p. 17) peace, good governance, political stability, and the recognition of knowledge as the key driver for social development, are the main features of the current Namibia. Moreover, according to the

Namibian National Planning Commission (NPC, 2013, p. 13), Namibia has improved in the provision of basic social services and in the development of infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity supplies. Domestic and international trade, industry and the tourism sector are better off than ever before (NPC, 2013, p. 13).

According to the African Development Bank (ADB, 2014, p. 10) Namibia is ranked as an upper-middle-income country. Marope (2005, p. xiii) states that there are some social indicators where Namibia is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, the country has a high literacy rate, school enrolment and access to safe water. Also it has prospects for substantial potential growth in areas such as mining, fisheries, farming and tourism. The ADB (2014, p. 1) reports that Namibia is in sixth position, out of fifty-two African countries, concerning good governance and is the seventh least corrupted country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though Namibia is better off than ever before, the government usually represents the interests of only a minority of the population (Wallace, 2011, p. 315). Currently, according to Jauch, Edwards and Cupido (2011, p. 181) the country is still highly fragmented.

The Namibian struggle for liberation, led by SWAPO (South West African People Organisation) ended when the country finally declared its independence in March 1990. From that point in time, elections have been carried out every four years, with a clear victory for SWAPO in every election. In the latest elections celebrated in November 2014, SWAPO obtained victory with over 85% of the total votes.

The government broke from the past in abolishing racial discrimination policies, where blacks were entitled to fewer rights than the whites, receiving only an education characterised for its low standards and being wage labour oriented. The government has published a number of policies aimed at reducing inequality and eradicating poverty, but apparently there is a failure to match rhetoric with practice (Wallace, 2011, p.313). While the country has achieved a rights-oriented political dispensation, addressing the deficiencies of the entire Namibian population, implementing those policies are still a significant challenge (Sims & Koep, 2012, p. 5).

There are also many critical voices claiming that the current situation in the country, twenty-five years after independence, is still far from the desired situation. The leading role of

SWAPO, the group that achieved the independence of Namibia does not necessarily mean that they were also able to establish a fully democratic system after independence. As Melber claims (2014, p.11) the too often assumed equation that the liberation movement from the illegal occupation of Namibia would imply the automatic installation of a democratic system seems misleading.

Although Namibia is far more inclusive than before independence, the State, according to Wallace (2011, p. 313) represents the interest of only a part of the population. Melber (2014, p. 181) along similar lines argues that the state seeks a better life mainly for those who are close to the new political elite, using their access to the country's natural wealth for private self-enrichment (Melber, 2014, p. 150). All these factors are threatening the quality of Namibia's democracy and it seems the situation will not radically change in the near future (Sims & Koep, 2012, p. 5; Melber , 2014, p. 181).

Namibia reached upper middle-income status in 2008 (NPC, 2010, p. 26), mainly as a result of its natural resources. Namibia is the world's fourth largest producer of uranium (Melber, 2014, p. 124), and the fifth largest producer of diamonds (Marope, 2005, p. 10). The country has reasonable prospects for accelerating growth, mainly due to its geographical location, landscape, farming, gas, and the development of manufacturing and the service industry (Marope, 2005, p. 17).

In 2004 the Namibian government launched Vision 2030 (GRN, 2004), an ambitious plan aiming to transform Namibia into a knowledge-based society by 2030. Vision 2030 claims that Namibia should join the ranks of high-income countries. It is a national development strategy that embraces the idea of a future Namibia reducing poverty and inequalities, building a high quality education and healthcare system, and achieving full employment (GRN, 2004, pp. 7-8). Although Vision 2030 is an ambitious dream for the country, Amukugo, Likando & Mushaandja (2010, p. 109) state that there is a firm commitment by the government to improve the quality of life of the people in Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world.

2.6.2 Present challenges

Poverty is said to be a main concern in Namibia. It is important to acknowledge that there is no universal definition of poverty, and it can mean different things for different groups. UNDP, for instance, has developed the Human Poverty Index to measure poverty taking into account concepts such as life expectancy, literacy rate, access to safe water and child malnutrition as defining criteria. Using this index, UNDP (2013, p. 160) estimates that 38% of the Namibian population live below the poverty line, and 14,7% of these people are severely poor. According to the Namibian National Statistics Agency, most of the people within the poor category are primarily women, subsistence farmers and pensioners located in rural areas (NSA, 2012, p. 5). These statistics translated to the living conditions mean, that there are for example more Namibians using candles for lighting, than those who use electricity and more than 50% of Namibians rely on wood as their main source of energy for cooking (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008, p. 27). Children are the most vulnerable group and they are at a higher risk than the rest of the population; for instance, poverty has a considerable negative impact on children's health, cognitive and social emotional development, resulting in the cognitive gap between poor and non-poor children widening over time. (NPC, 2010, pp. 29-31).

While poverty is widespread all over the country it seems paradoxical that one fifth of the population has a share of 77.5% of the country's total income (CBS, 2008, p. 34). The wealth from natural resources that turns Namibia into an upper middle-income country, does not say much about the distribution of wealth among its population. The large proportion of poor households in an upper middle-income country makes Namibia the country with the highest level of income inequality in the world (UNDP, 2014, p. 170; UNDP, 2013, p. 154; NPC, 2010, p. 26).

The apartheid system was explicitly an unequal system, wherein the white minority had the right to exploit natural resources, while the blacks remained as cheap wage labours (Jauch, Edwards & Cupido, 2011, p. 188). Supposedly the main aim of the liberation movement, which culminated in Namibian Independence, was to establish a more equal society; however, wealth distribution still remains a challenge for the government. Statistics gathered since Independence show that the luxury lifestyle enjoyed by a white elite minority, contrasts with the poverty of the majority Namibians (Melber, 2014, p.145). Inequalities may have

shifted from the apartheid ideology based on race and ethnicity to being now based on social class (Melber, 2014, p. 149). On the other hand, Suzman (2001, p.3) argues that the ethnic hierarchy still remains because there is a strong relation between ethnic identity and socio-economic status. Moreover, there is little evidence revealing a new trend in reducing poverty and inequality, on the contrary, it seems that Namibia's rich get richer while the poor get poorer (Melber, 2014, p. 153).

According to the former president of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba, HIV and AIDS are the gravest development challenge in the country (GRN, 2010, p. iii). HIV/AIDS drastically reduced life expectancy from 62 years in 1991 to 49 years in 2001 (GRN, 2001, p. 70). Thanks to advances in treating the disease, life expectancy increased to 62.1 in 2010 (ADB, 2014, p. 9). The HIV/AIDS epidemic is the most devastating issue in post-colonial Namibia, where the rate of occurrence is one of the highest in the world. The first case was reported in 1986 and twenty-five years later 22% of the Namibian adults were estimated to be HIV positive (NPC, 2008, p. 33). While the number has dropped in 2007 to 19.9 % it is still an extremely serious problem (MoHSS, 2008, p. 8). In addition to high HIV prevalence, Namibia had the third highest tuberculosis rate in the world in 2006, only surpassed by Swaziland and Lesotho (MoHSS, 2008, 27). Some reasons for Namibia having such alarming numbers of people infected by tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, are due to limited access to the healthcare particularly in Namibia's sparsely populated areas (Hancox & Mukonda 2012, p. 141).

3. The educational context in Namibia

The second chapter aimed to give a holistic overview of the Namibian context in order to gain a deeper understanding regarding the current situation of the country; this chapter focuses on education in Namibia, from the colonial era until the present. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise inclusive education in primary schools within the Namibian educational system. I present successes and challenges in the Namibian primary education system. In the findings I will concentrate on specific area of inclusive education, but before focusing on just this field, it is important to have a clear understanding of the whole educational context.

3.1 Education before independence

At the beginning of the 20th century only white people had the right to education in Namibia, as educating blacks was considered to create undesirable ideas, such as democracy and equality (Salia-Bao; as cited in Harber, 1993, p. 416). This marginalised status given to blacks was addressed by missionaries who saw schools as the best way to promote Christianity and help the natives to diminish their ‘savage’ nature by spreading the western culture in schools (Harber, 1993, p. 417). According to Harber (1993, p.417) the main objectives of educating blacks, apart from becoming Namibian Christians, were to ‘tame’ Africans to become servants and to question their own history and culture, with a special emphasis on obedience, order and punctuality (Harber, 1993, p. 417). Ellis (as cited in Harber, 1993, p.147) has reported these words from a missionary who declared: “for its development [...] the country does not need ‘educated negroes’ but competent, intelligent workers”. Because of the underlying goal of ‘taming the savages’, there has been widespread criticism in Africa towards education provided by missionaries (Katjavivi, 1990, p. 27).

The first state school for blacks was opened in 1935, twenty-six years later than the first state school for whites. During the South African colonisation of Namibia from 1917 until 1940, the government built only two schools for blacks. Both schools were located in the central region, thus leaving without schooling northern areas where the majority of the blacks were living (Katjavivi, 1990, p.27). Even for those attending the school, education consisted of a maximum of five years of schooling (Katjavivi, 1990, p. 27).

In 1953 the South African regime developed a new strategy for educating blacks: the 'Bantu Education Act'. The implementation of this project began in South Africa and was later implemented in Namibia. The idea behind this policy was to enable black workers to understand and obey the orders of their colonial masters, but not to be educated more extensively (Harber, 1993, p. 417; Nyambe & Griffiths, 1998, p. 1). The Bantu Education Act, according to Ipinge (2001, p. 2) was just the perpetuation of inequalities in Namibia in terms of the distribution of resources, according to which, quality of education was a priority for whites only. Leu (as cited in Harber, 1993, p.419) quoted these words from Sam Nujoma, former president of Namibia who stated: "Bantu education is brain-washing the African to believe that he is inferior". After the implementation of Bantu Education, Dr. Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs, one of the most influential leaders in the creation of Apartheid, claimed that:

"There is no place for [Africans] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour [...] for that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed" (Nyaggah; as cited in Harber, 1993, p. 417).

Bantu education was an explicitly discriminatory policy based on racial and ethnic segregation, inequality, low-level of transparency and top-down policy from the white minority to the black majority in order to protect white privileges (Pomuti & Weber, 2012, p.2). From 1953 to 1980, the government divided the education system into three different systems according to race: one for whites, another for blacks and the third for 'coloureds'. In 1980 ten different educational systems were developed according to the different ethnic groups (Pomuti & Weber, 2012, p. 2). The education systems were openly discriminatory. For instance, in 1986, according to Chase (1987, in Jauch, Edwards & Cupido, 2011, p. 189) the State spent almost ten times more per white student than per black student. Whites were the only group receiving free and compulsory education, while on the other hand blacks had to pay tuition fees (Harber, 1993, p. 148).

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, Namibia has more than twenty mother tongues. During the apartheid regime, children were supposed to be taught in their mother tongue during primary school education. The language of instruction was a tool used for the domination of the black population, using the strategy of divide and rule, by separating the

ethnic groups' consciousness and perpetuating division among them (Harber, 1993, p. 420). However, according to Salia-Bao, due to the lack of educational resources in Namibian languages, the instruction was mainly in Afrikaans (as cited in Harber, 1993, p.420).

3.2 After Independence

3.2.1 The current situation in education

After independence in 1990, Namibia was firmly committed to break with the former inequalities in education and to ensure the building of a better Namibia without memories of the past (MoE, 1992, p.22). The government replaced the ten segregated ethnic educational systems with a unified one (Jauch, Edwards & Cupido, 2011, p. 199). Equity, justice, democratic participation and respect for human dignity were the main goals of the new approach to education (MoE, 1992, p. 24). Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia ensures that (GRN, 1990, p. 14):

- All persons shall have the right to education
- Primary education shall be compulsory [...] and it will be provided free of charge.
- Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen [...]

An education policy entitled 'Towards Education for All' in 1992 followed the Constitution. The new policy sought to move education away from its colonial moorings (MoE, 1992, p. 22). In the policy there was a serious commitment to abolish any kind of racial and ethnic discrimination (MoE, 1992, p. 25). The policy created a shift from educating the elite to educating all Namibians (MoE, 1992, p. 7). At the helm of this policy there are four major goals: access, equity, qualities and democracy (MoE, 1992, p. 24). Other main reforms in this policy were to make schooling compulsory for ten years, and the use of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards (MoE, 1992, p. 40).

The Namibian primary education system is structured as follows: the entrance age to Grade 1 is seven years, and it consists of Lower Primary from Grade 1 to Grade 4 and Upper Primary from Grade 5 to 7. In the Lower Primary phase, the medium of instruction is in the mother tongue. Grade four is the transition year from the mother tongue to English, and the

Upper Primary phase uses English as the medium of instruction. After finishing Grade 7 there is a national assessment to evaluate learners' acquisition of the basic competencies on completion of the primary phase (MoE, 2004, p. 6). As I will discuss in the findings (Chapter eight), there is a new language policy that will extend teaching in the child's mother tongue for one more year, until Grade 5. This policy had not been published prior to the completion of this thesis.

The commitment of the government to addressing the imbalance in education inherited from the apartheid system is clear, as it can be seen from the national budget allocated to education. Education is a priority for the country's development, receiving the lion's share of the national budget since 1990 (NDP, 2012, p. 46). The government puts 23% of the national budget on education (SACMEQ, 2010, p.11). Namibia invests proportionately more on education than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa (Amukugo, Likando & Mushaandja, 2010, p. 106).

Nevertheless, acknowledging the great investment on education, the government, in the Fourth National Development Plan (2012, p. 46), admits that the education system remains weak and requires significant interventions as a priority for the future of the country. Along similar lines the ADB (2014, p. 9) argues that, while past investments on education have resulted in some progress, such as improving access to primary education, the learning outcomes have not met the government expectations.

The Southern and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) conducted its first research on education in 1995. The SACMEQ I Project aimed to address the quality of education in seven African countries. Namibia received the lowest performance accounts, also revealing large inequalities in learners' outcomes across schools and regions (SACMEQ, 2011, p. 1). The SACMEQ II Project conducted in 2000 provided similar results (SACMEQ, 2011, p. 1). In this project there were fifteen participant countries and Namibia was ranked third from last, ahead of Zambia and Malawi in reading, and occupying last position in mathematics (Makuwa, 2005, p. 171). In the last SACMEQ III Project (Spaull, 2012) Namibia improved tremendously, reducing the illiteracy rate from 43% in 2000 to 14% in 2007, ranking above the SACMEQ average.

3.2.2 Current educational challenges

In Namibia, as in many other countries in the world, there are several groups of people who might suffer from exclusion in the society. According to the Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable children (MoE, 2008a, p. 3) the groups that are at a special risk for exclusion are: children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children with learning difficulties, those who are neglected or abused, the HIV-positive, the indigenous minorities (San and Himba), children of farm workers, children in remote rural areas, street children, children in squatter areas and resettlement camps, teenage mothers, children of families living in extreme poverty and orphans (MoE, 2008a, p. 3).

UNICEF (2011, p. 27) claims that there is a very strong correlation between poverty and low learning outcomes. Children from relatively wealthy families in urban areas perform better than less well-off families living in rural areas (UNICEF, 2011, p. 28). According to UNESCO (2014, p. 195) being born in a poor household in sub-Saharan Africa, presents a serious risk of underachievement in learning outcomes. The vast inequality between rich and poor children in Namibia provides a negative vision for people coming from poor backgrounds. According to UNESCO (2014, p. 195) only 4% of those children both complete primary school, and achieve the minimum learning level.

Poverty has a direct negative impact on schooling for various reasons. Firstly, it has an impact on access to education. While schooling in Namibia is supposed to be free there are some expenses that families have to pay for, such as uniforms, books and stationary. If the families are not able to afford these expenses, the children usually do not attend school (NPC, 2010, p. 60). Secondly, if the children living in poverty manage to attend school, they may experience feelings of shame or exclusion, and moreover, they can be ridiculed, bullied and teased because they are not wearing the school uniform, have dirty clothes or do not have any food to eat at break-times (NPC, 2010, p. 31). Thirdly, children from low socio-economic status, for a multitude of reasons, tend to achieve lower learning outcomes than children from upper socio economic levels.

Poverty highly influences exclusion, but on the other hand, there are also other factors that promote exclusion, such as HIV/AIDS. The threat posed by HIV/AIDS presents a tremendous challenge regarding achievements on education in sub-Saharan Africa

(UNESCO, 2000a, p. 14). HIV/AIDS has a dramatic influence also in Namibia. Research conducted by USAID (2009, p. 2) estimates that the number of children infected by HIV/AIDS oscillates from 12,000 to 14,000. The damage caused by HIV/AIDS does not only constitute the direct infection of children, but also of its high influence on creating orphaned children. In Namibia there are 120,000 orphan children enrolled in school, accounting for 21% of the total numbers of learners (NPC, 2008, p.11). From those orphans, between 50,000 and 85,000 are orphans due to the impact of HIV/AIDS (USAID, 2009, p.2).

Another challenge facing Namibia is a relatively high class repetition and dropout rate. The National Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2010, p. 35) states that learners will normally progress through Grade 1 to Grade 9 without repetition. Only when the teacher, in consultation with the principal and head of the department is absolutely convinced that a learner would definitely not benefit from progression to the next grade, should a learner repeat a grade. When repetition is the only solution, then it must be emphasised that making a learner repeat a grade, will have no benefit unless the learner receives compensatory teaching (MoE, 2010, p. 35).

In 1996 the government implemented a semi-automatic promotion policy, where learners are allowed to repeat only once in each school phase, in order to reduce high repetition rates (MoE, 2004, p. 7), but despite the implementation of this policy, repetition rates remain high. In 2000, repetition rates for grades 1 to 9 averaged 16% (Marope, 2005, p. xvii). Apparently 'exceptional cases of repetition' occur quite often, with UNICEF (2011, p. 11) estimating that the repetition rate for grade 1 was 20,8% in 2009, and in 2000, only a third of those enrolled in grade 1 completed grade 12 (Marope, 2005, p. xvii).

On the other hand, the proportion of school dropouts and repetition rates is not equally distributed in Namibia, but the numbers are clearly unequal between schools and regions. According to Jauch, Edwards & Cupido (2011, p. 199-200), the best results in the national examinations are achieved by private schools that are accessible by the elite only, followed by the former white schools in urban areas, while the worst results are found in rural schools. UNICEF (2011, p. 13) suggests that if schools are well resourced, the teachers are well trained, and the quality of teaching improves, the repetition and inefficiencies in the learning process will be minimised.

A high repetition rate is not the only concern, but also the impact of school failure based on not acquiring the desired competencies during the learning process. Resources would be much more efficiently used if they were used on improving the quality of education for all instead of repeating a class, taking into consideration the low positive impact of repetition on the learner's outcomes, and its negative effect on the learner's self-esteem (UNESCO, 2009, p. 11).

4. Inclusive Education

When looking at education and inclusive education I have had as my compass critical theory and its concern on equity and justice. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.110) critical theory assumes that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors over time, giving a series of structures that are inappropriately taken as natural and immutable. Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011, p. 164) refer to critical theory as an attempt to empower individuals to confront the injustices of a particular society and improve its situation. In my case, I use critical theory to point out the structure of inclusion and exclusion in the Namibian educational system, where children belonging to specific groups are at risk of being excluded. However, it is important to bear in mind that these inequities may be present in any country taking different forms in different societies. In addition to identifying forms of exclusion, I have also been interested in the policies of inclusion and the progress that has occurred in Namibia since independence.

4.1 Inclusion, integration and segregation

One of the most widely accepted statements about inclusive education is that there is no consensus about what is meant by it (Erten & Savage, 2012, p. 221; Loreman, 2007, p. 23; Florian, Rouse, & Black, 2007, p.16; Nutbrown, 2013, p. 8; Green & Engelbrecht, 2011a, p. 5; D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 31). Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006, p.14) also confirm that there is no universal definition of inclusion. For D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, A. & Spandagou (2011, p. 31) the problem is not that inclusion means different things to different people, but rather that it can end up meaning everything and nothing at the same time. The reason for this lack of consensus, according to Florian, Rouse and Black (2007, p. 16) is due to the fact that inclusive education has developed out of different historical, geographical and theoretical contexts. In any case, there is an agreement regarding some of the main principles of inclusive education, such as equity and social justice (Rouse & Black, 2007, p. 16; Erten & Savage, 2012, p. 221; Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 11).

While there is no universal, national or even local definition of inclusion, it is crucial to have some understanding of it in order to achieve equity and social justice in education. According to The National Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia (MoE, 2010, p. 38) inclusive

education means “ensuring that the physical and social environments are conducive to all learners and that all the necessary teaching and learning aids are in place”. UNESCO (2009, p. 8) defines it as a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach all learners. Nutbrown (2013, p. 8) defines inclusive education as the unified drive towards maximal participation and minimal exclusion from schools and from society. For Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua, and Frederickson (2007, p. 110) inclusive education is about ensuring students achieve their maximum growth both academically and socially.

There is a consensus in differentiating inclusive education from the other two models widely used in education: segregation and integration. According to Mitchell (2009, p. 4) in order to have a better understating of inclusive education, it is important to first make a distinction between inclusion and integration. For Anderson, Klassen, and Georgiou (2007, p. 132) integration in education can be seen as an inflexible system with minimal alteration in pedagogical practices, school philosophy and environment, in which all students must adapt to it despite individual learners’ characteristics. Integration is unable to respond to the increasing diversity in schools, and it is contrary to the responsibility of the education system of accommodating every learner, who may be diverse in terms of race, language, gender, learning style, cultural norms, religion or disability (Green & Engelbrecht, 2011a, p. 4).

The differences between inclusion and segregation are much wider than between inclusion and integration. Segregation in education labels and places learners with special educational needs in settings, which exclude them from the mainstream system and society in general. This segregated system is based on the idea that children with disabilities are too vulnerable to receive education in mainstream schools; therefore, special schools must protect them (Kavale & Forness, 2000, p. 280). According to Reddy (1999, p. 11) special classrooms thus became “dumping grounds for those students viewed as unteachable or undesirable”. People in favour of inclusive education criticise segregation because it is just perpetuation of exclusion.

4.2 Approaches to inclusive education

Ainscow et al. (2006, pp. 15-26) provide a list of six different approaches to inclusive education:

- Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as 'having special educational needs'
- Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion
- Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion
- Inclusion as developing the school for all
- Inclusion as 'Education for All'
- Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society

In the following sections I will first discuss inclusion as focusing on disabled children, and compare it to a more holistic approach where all diversity is included in the same education system. I will also discuss the fifth alternative: Inclusion as 'Education for All'. This approach has a more holistic view, which is not just focused on children with special needs, but also on all other groups that might be currently excluded from education. This approach is well known mainly due to the Education for All strategy co-ordinated by UNESCO.

4.2.1 Special needs versus a comprehensive approach

Societies worldwide have excluded people with disabilities throughout the history of human kind. Children with disabilities were seen, and in many cases are still seen, as bringing shame to their families (Rieser, 2008, p. 13). Negative stereotypes of disabled people have made this group the most vulnerable to exclusion. Due to the worldwide exclusion of learners with special needs, some people associate inclusive education as a movement to include learners with special needs into the mainstream education system. This approach is based on the idea that inclusive education is not only about giving access to mainstream schools to children with disabilities, but also, it is essential to combine access with removing barriers to learning.

Some people argue against including children with special needs in mainstream schools, as they believe that special settings would be more beneficial for those children, and besides, inclusive education, in their opinion, is too idealistic and not practical (Kavale & Forness 2000 p. 280). Contrary to this position, supporters of inclusion claim that segregating children into special schools is against the Declaration of Human Rights, since segregation stigmatises the learners for life, generating discrimination between students.

People in favour of inclusion criticise the idea of considering inclusive education as an approach focusing just on children with special needs, because it thus reduces the agenda of inclusion to only the group of learners with especial educational needs, setting aside many other groups of children that are currently excluded (Pather, 2007, p. 628). Thus, if inclusive education focuses only on learners with disabilities, it ignores all other factors leading to exclusion; such as gender, poverty, language, ethnicity, and geographic isolation (Mitchell, 2009, pp. 1-2). According Ainscow et al. (2006, p. 15-16) it makes little sense to foster the inclusion of some learners because they carry one characteristic, while ignoring the lack of participation of others. At the moment, it seems that inclusive education has shifted from being specifically related to children with disabilities, to having a broader agenda of including everyone with diverse characteristics and features (Nutbrown, 2013, p. 7).

4.2.2 Education for All as an approach to inclusion

In the next main chapter I will focus on the global agenda of Education for All (EFA) at the primary education level. I will use this approach to analyse how inclusive the education system is in Namibia. EFA is one of the many approaches for inclusive education. This approach might be the one that has the biggest impact worldwide, as it belongs to a global strategic plan co-ordinated by UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations, which is present in most countries. The Education for All movement originated in 1990 in Jomtiem. This movement has been growing since then via different conventions, and meetings, such as the Dakar International Forum in 2000, and it has a prominent role in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). EFA is a global intervention concerned with giving access, equity, equality and quality education to all children around the world, with a special focus on excluded learners.

4.3 Means to achieve inclusive education

The cornerstone of inclusion is that all children should learn together (UNESCO, 1994, p. 11). According to Loreman (2007, p. 34), the discourse around inclusive education is moving from 'why' it is important to 'how' it can be successfully implemented. In order to make the path for inclusion, UNESCO (2005, p. 26) identifies four key characteristics of inclusion: Firstly, inclusion is a never-ending process to find better ways of responding to diversity. Secondly, it focuses on the identification and removal of barriers to learning. Thirdly,

inclusion is about participation and achievement of all learners. And finally, it places special emphasis on the group of learners who are at risk of exclusion.

Loeber (2007, p. 22) has developed a list of ‘seven pillars’ for promoting inclusion. Those pillars are: (i) developing of positive attitudes; (ii) supportive policy and leadership; (iii) school and classroom processes grounded in research-based practice; (iv) flexible curriculum and methodology; (v) community involvement; (vi) meaningful reflection; and (vii) adequate training and resources. Schools should accommodate all children, regardless of whether they are disabled, gifted, street children, children from remote population, or children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities (Rieser, 2008, p. 22). Inclusive education has an optimistic, but also realistic philosophical background, suggesting that every learner has the ability to learn if they are provided with appropriate support (Green & Engelbrecht, 2011a, pp. 4-5).

Inclusive education is also linked to everyone’s achievement, but not through a competitive system, which only benefits a few, while leaving the majority behind (Florian, Rouse, Black, 2007, p. 25). On the contrary, Ofsted (2000, p. 7) states that, an inclusive school is one in which teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and the wellbeing of everyone matters. It is not about treating all pupils in the same way, it also involves taking into account the learners’ varied needs in order to fulfil their interests, motivations, and capacities.

Inclusion greatly depends on the availability and quality of educational support that the school is able to offer. Moreover, the relationship between learners and teachers is at the heart of the learning process (UNESCO, 2004 p. 228). Even if there is a national responsibility for developing and implementing educational policies, the interaction between learners and teachers has the most significant impact on education (Samoff, 2007, p. 495). Therefore, it is crucial to develop appropriate teacher training that would enable teachers to use their knowledge and skills to deliver quality education to all learners. In order to include all children in the process of good quality education, Samoff (2007, p. 493) states that effective instructional strategies must be locally contingent. Learning objectives are negotiated and those learning objectives and instructional strategies are periodically modified and then modified again according to the circumstances.

For the successful implementation of inclusive education it is fundamental to change the school culture. Peterson and Deal (1998, p. 28) define school culture as the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems and confront challenges. These sets of norms, values and traditions are taken-for granted assumptions that involve us in our daily lives without people noticing (Kaplan & Owings, 2013). School culture needs to have a set of values, feelings, attitude and beliefs that support inclusion. Florian, Rouse and Black (2007, p. 31) state that feelings such as happiness, confidence, pleasure, success; and values based on respect, tolerance, kindness and responsibility need to be strengthened within the education system, and it is also necessary to bring feelings such as fear, failure, intolerance, anger and humiliation into the light, in order to overcome those barriers and prejudices (Florian, Rouse and Black, 2007, p. 31).

The curriculum plays a crucial role in education; therefore it needs to follow the criteria of inclusion, in order to implement an inclusive education system. Rieser, (2008, p. 109) has developed a list of five criteria that a curriculum should have in order to be inclusive. First, the curriculum should be accessible to all learners. Second, it should accommodate different teaching and learning styles in order to fulfil the capacities of all learners. Third, the curriculum has to be flexible enough to respond to the diversity in class according to ethnicity, sex, disabilities or religion. Fourth, the curriculum should support all learners to experience success independently of their entry skills, and fifth, society should support teachers in delivering inclusive education.

4.4 Globalisation and localisation of inclusion

Dyson and Artiles (2009, p. 37) state that inclusive education has a global agenda mainly due to its location in a particular historical moment characterised by the forces of globalisation. The inclusive education movement was born as an effort in western democracies to eradicate any kind of segregated educational system, and this idea has been widely popularised all over the world (Dyson & Artiles 2009, p. 37).

There are two main approaches for understanding the current relevance of inclusive education worldwide. One approach, according to Dyson and Artiles (2009, p. 42) is based on the relationship between inclusive education and the global economy, in which there is a

need for a qualified workforce to make the country competitive. Therefore there are no reasons for excluding potential learners who can contribute to the economic growth. This approach can lead to a cynical conclusion, that the high ideals of inclusion are simply a smokescreen for economic purposes. The second approach supports the Human Rights Declaration and commits to social justice. In this approach, inclusive education is crucial to reduce inequalities in a world that is in constant change. However, education not only needs to adapt to these changes, it also needs to promote a change in the education system and society in general. This approach visualises an optimistic scenario that supports the idea of a diverse world with people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions and languages living together in harmony, peace and respect (Fletcher, 2009, p. 284). These two approaches, the first regarding economic forces, and the second regarding human rights are not static and necessarily unconnected, in many occasions they are the two sides of the same coin.

This same interconnectedness seems to concern globalisation and localisation. Globalisation and localisation both seem to be part of the inclusive education movement as well. Although the movement of inclusion has a global nature and agenda, it is crucial to take into account local characteristics in its implementation (Dyson & Artiles, 2009, p. 37). Most countries in the world are facing similar challenges such as poverty, inequality and exclusion of minority groups. Therefore it is fundamental that governments, educators and international organisations work towards a common goal of providing quality education to all learners (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 8). Globalisation may have a positive impact in bringing voices of excluded groups to the international forefront (Rose, 2010a, p. 4). At the same time, it is important to be aware of the challenges of ‘generalisations’ and ‘transfers’ of a common pattern to achieving inclusive education worldwide (Miles & Ahuja, 2007, p. 132). It is important to understand the contextual factors shaping inclusive education in order to be aware that one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to yield the same expected results everywhere (Rose, 2010b, p. 295). Samoff (2007, p. 490) claims that there are not and cannot be universal best practices, because ultimately, ‘best’ is always local. While dialogue and cooperation are necessary among countries, it is also important to consider the differences in the social, economic, political, cultural and historical contexts (Mitchell, 2009, p. 19).

As has been explained previously in this chapter, inclusive education has many different definitions and approaches. The main reason for this lack of consensus is the fact that a

“perfect model of inclusion that can be exported around the world is highly contested” (Dyson & Artiles, 2009, p. 58). For a successful inclusive education system it is critical to develop a local understanding of inclusion, in order to create educational policies and practices that are culturally and contextually relevant (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 12). Rose (2010a, p. 3) states that inclusion requires an understanding of the cultures and traditions upon which societies have been founded. The global agenda of inclusion based on ‘universal’ principles needs to be contextualised, as the reasons for exclusion vary across countries. Therefore, it is important to develop strategies for the promotion of inclusion that are planned according to the context (Ainscow et al. 2006, p. 155). Still, inclusion as an aim and ideal is common although local applications can differ to certain extent.

4.5 Criticism concerning inclusive education

One of the main critiques of inclusive education concerns the misunderstanding of inclusion. In many countries, systems and policies, inclusive education is primarily understood as being about disabled children (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 9). Miles et al. (2003, pp. 113-115) in research carried out in Zambia, conclude that mainstream teachers associate inclusive education only with children identified as having special needs.

Another common critique concerns resources. Inclusive education is liable to fail if there are not enough resources, hence, it is extremely difficult to achieve inclusion in countries where it is common to find two teachers supporting several classes, or where classrooms are uncomfortable, dirty and without floors and ceilings (D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 36). Widespread poverty and lack of basic resources such as safe building, access to water and electricity and health sanitation drastically challenge the implementation of inclusive education (Pather, 2007, p. 631).

On many occasions, countries implement inclusive education plans as a result of pressures from international agencies. D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, and Spandagou, (2011, p. 32) criticise the manipulation of educational policies by external funding agencies that are pursuing agendas from the developed world. Samoff (2007, p. 491), along similar lines, argues that international agencies are most often attentive to interests, alliances and power, when they determine strategies for improving education.

A major critique regards the gap between inclusive policies and their implementation. Mitchell (2009, p. 11) gives several reasons for this gap; such as barriers arising from societal values, economic factors, conservative traditions among teachers, rigid curricula, inadequate educational infrastructures, and top-down introduction of inclusive education without consultation with schools and communities. This situation is especially alarming in Africa. While inclusion is starting to be well known on the continent, it does not seem to be moving from dialogue and policies into practice. This is a risky situation, the more people use the language of inclusion without making any pragmatic change, the more evasive it becomes (D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 37). For Engelbrecht and Green (2011b, pp. 82-83) the greatest challenge for implementing inclusive education is the gap between the idealism expressed in policies and the realities of the education system.

Some commentators believe that inclusive education is a new way for Western countries to dominate the poor countries of the South. Rose (2010a, p. 3) claims that the imposition of western models of schooling upon poor countries serves to perpetuate cultural imperialism. Gadour (2008, p. 76) maintains a similar position criticising this one-way, uncritical transfer of knowledge from the West to third countries without taking context into consideration. This cultural imperialism that is constraining development is especially visible in Africa. Nekwheva (1999, p. 505) argues that high dropout rates in Africa, are partly caused by an irrelevant westernised curriculum that shows a lack of understanding about African culture and its educational philosophy.

Diversity in approaches to inclusive education might be enriching in order to challenge the one-size-fits-all model, however, quite often there is confusion about what inclusive education really is, remaining as a distant concept in the minds of the most significant partners in delivering inclusive education, such as teachers, families and learners (Pather, 2007, p. 627). Clarification of the principles of inclusive education and making them concrete is particularly important among those who are involved in inclusive education.

4.6 Challenges for inclusive education in Africa

UNESCO (2012, p. 34) states that sub-Saharan Africa has made unprecedented progress during the last decade. Never before has Africa improved so much over such a short period of time. The progress is clearly visible, for instance, in the increase of the net enrolment

ratio in primary education from 59% in 1999 to 78% by 2011 (UNESCO, 2014, p. 52), and the Gender Parity Index from 0.85 to 0.93 over the same period of time (UNESCO, 2014, p. 76)

However, Africa, in general, is lagging behind in managing and promoting an educational system based on equity, quality, democracy and access to all learners. This situation seems to be influenced by the devastating colonisation suffered in most of the continent, where colonisers were merely focused on obtaining the maximum benefits at the minimum costs. Since the second part of the 20th Century, countries in Africa began to gain independence and the new governments had the difficult responsibility of restructuring the inherited inequalities. Some decades after the commencement of African countries independence, the colonial past still has a great influence on the continent and still influences the development of education. According to Eleweke and Rodda (2002, p. 116-117) there are several challenges that inhibit inclusive education in Developing countries, particularly in the African continent: such as limited teaching materials, absence of support services, poor infrastructure, large class sizes and inadequate teacher training programs as well as irrelevant learning materials.

People with disabilities face numerous challenges for inclusion on the continent. For Rieser (2008, p. 13) to be born with disabilities in Africa has been closely associated with the idea that people themselves, or their parents, had done something wrong and all-mighty gods had made them disabled, bringing shame and a curse to the families. While this traditional understanding of disabilities is starting to change, there is still a long way to go. There is also a risk that many NGOs and governments in Africa are copying the old European approach creating a segregated system, instead of including all children in mainstream schools with adequate resources to accommodate diversity (Rieser, 2008, p. 25).

A positive factor towards achieving inclusive education in Africa is the structure of communities. The concept of extended family, and the strong links among individuals and communities serve as a foundation to build social relations that favour a collective responsibility towards inclusion. Therefore indigenous communities have the potential to promote and support, a shift towards inclusive education as soon as negative attitudes against children with disabilities vanish (Kisanji; as cited in Pather & Nxumalob, 2013, p. 423).

Regarding effective contribution of aid agencies, Samoff (2007, p. 503) believes that there has to be a shift in the aid modality, in which agencies instead of implementing their own projects following their own agendas, implement a new approach where the agencies have the choice to support the government or not. In this alternative, aid agencies give funding directly to the governments, who are then responsible for developing and implementing policies to improve education. This shift in the delivering of aid is important, because the current relationship between aid agencies and governments upholds dependency from poor countries on donor agencies, which is corrosive to the national and local control required to improve education (Samoff, 2007, p. 504).

4.7 The state of inclusive education in Namibia

Success in education is not only about access to education. Namibia has accomplished almost 100% school enrolment and girls are highly supported to attend school. Namibia stands out among the sub-Saharan countries in terms of progress in education. Many indicators are well above the average for the region; such as primary school completion, literacy rate, gender parity and primary school survival (UNESCO, 2012, p. 41-43). As a result, Namibia is among the first thirteen countries out of forty-two countries in achieving Education for All (UNESCO, 2012, p. 7). On the other hand, the progression towards Education for All is not equally shared within Namibia. According to Jauch, Edwards and Cupido (2011, p.p. 199-200) private schools, only accessible by the elite achieve the best results. Former white schools take second position, while rural schools have the worst results. These disparities show that Namibia, 25 years after independence is still highly fragmented.

On the other hand, according to Zimba, Möwes and Naanda (2011, p. 43) all children in Namibia might experience exclusion in one way or the other. Factors such as high unemployment, poverty, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS, combined with a lack of educational resources create a panorama whereby exclusion is widespread throughout the country. This situation has its origins in the colonial era, which was characterised by disparities, inequities and exclusion, and is still a daunting challenge for the country (Zimba et al. 2011, p. 44). Ipinge (2001, p. 4-5) states that the factors currently impeding Namibia in achieving quality education include a lack of teaching and learning materials, poor physical facilities, high learner-teacher ratios, inequalities in resource allocation throughout the country and a lack

of qualified teachers. Regarding the facilities that adversely affect quality education, Ipinge (2001, p. 6) refers to a lack of toilets and telephones, as well as running water and electricity, especially in the northern regions demonstrating that resources are not equally distributed in the country. Uugwanga (as cited in Ipinge, 2001, p. 7) after conducting research in the northern region concluded that:

“For many schools in the north, lessons are still given in makeshift classrooms built out of traditional sticks and mud, exposing children to the rains, winds, and heat. The majority of schools in the north have no libraries, laboratories or storerooms. There are few primary schools with toilet facilities, water, electricity, or telephones.”

Zimba et al. (2011, p. 43) claims that while Namibian society is concerned with the high incidence of school failure, there is no understanding regarding the causes of such failure, because of, among other reasons, most Namibians do not understand the concept of inclusion. Therefore it is essential to make people aware of the benefits of an inclusive education system, not only for the excluded children, but also for the broader development of the country.

A wide number of teachers in Namibia do not have qualifications or experience in dealing with children with diverse needs. Therefore, a cornerstone for the effective implementation of an inclusive system is based on shaping teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills according to the principles of inclusion, abolishing the traditional view in which all children learn at the same pace and in the same way. On the contrary, teachers should design and implement approaches that address the individual needs of the learners (Zimba et al. 2011, p. 43). Zimba et al. (2011, p. 48) claim that the implementation of inclusive education in Namibia relies on well-trained and motivated teachers, adequate teaching and learning materials, and a flexible curriculum with active participation of parents and the community at large.

While there are mobile schools for delivering education to nomadic minority groups in the northern regions, a fixed setting is the dominant model of education. This situation is challenging for minority groups living in remote areas such as the San, the Himba and the Zemba people. These groups living in isolated areas have to choose between keeping their

culture and traditions, and attending boarding schools far from home (UNICEF, 2011, p. 15). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights both culture and education are rights and compatible, thus, families should not need to choose between education and preserving their culture (UNICEF, 2011, p. 15).

5. EFA as a global approach to inclusive education

As has been seen in the previous chapter, there are different approaches to inclusive education. EFA is the most widely used and popular global approach to inclusive education, that aims to change the current educational practices in order to ensure equal opportunities for all learners. The main reason for its popularity is that EFA process has been co-ordinated by the United Nations, which highly influences international, national and local agencies and governments worldwide.

EFA considers every child as a whole and unique learning person. It is crucial to design and implement approaches that focus on each child (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 3). The commitment in EFA is to ensure that every learner receives basic education of good quality, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and on the belief that education is central to an individual's and a nation's development (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 3). Education for all is not schooling for all, but also learning for all (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 4). It is fundamental, not only to promote access to school, but also to develop a relevant curriculum, to train teachers in order to be competent, and to facilitate secure physical and social environments (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 5). When a learner is excluded from the education system, it is not because of the learner's characteristics, but due to the system failing to include him or her.

5.1 UNESCO World Conferences

The EFA movement began in 1990 at the World Conference on Education in Jomtiem, followed by the World Conference on Special Needs in Salamanca in 1994, and the World Forum on Education in Dakar in 2000. The World Conference on Education For All (WCEFA) in Jomtiem was concerned by experiences from the 1980's, in which it was observed that if development continued along the same path, only an elite few would live in health, safety and prosperity, while a large part of the world population would live in poverty (WCEFA, 1990, 4). In these circumstances, EFA was considered as the best approach to ensure a more equal society. The participants in the WCEFA agreed that education is a fundamental right for all people, helping to ensure a safer world, while simultaneously contributing to social and economic development, as well as protecting and promoting traditional knowledge and indigenous cultures (UNESCO, 1990, p. 2).

Each country involved in EFA, assessed its progress towards the goals established in Jomtiem and reported its findings at six regional conferences between 1999 and 2000, for instance, the sub-Saharan Conference on Education for All in Johannesburg in December 1999. The Dakar World Forum followed up these regional meetings on education in 2000. Both conferences, Jomtiem and Dakar, recognise quality as a key condition for achieving Education for All (UNESCO, 2004, p. 5). The Dakar Forum was particularly concerned with those living in poverty and in excluded situations (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

Between the two Forums on Education for All, UNESCO published the Salamanca Statement and Framework For Action on Special Needs Education in 1994. It focused on addressing the systemic exclusion of children with special educational needs (UNESCO, 2000b, p.19). The key point in the Statement Framework for Action is the commitment to accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Besides, it claims that inclusive education is not only about giving access to a previously excluded group, but it is also about supporting this access with a child-centred pedagogy ensuring that all children will be successfully educated in the same class (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Although the Salamanca Conference Framework focuses on special needs education, this strategy cannot develop in isolation, indeed, it should be part of the holistic approach of the Education for All strategy (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

5.2 EFA Goals

I use the EFA goals related to primary education as part of my theoretical framework. EFA has six goals that need to be accomplished in order to achieve inclusion:

Goal 1: Early childhood care and education. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

Goal 2: Universal primary education. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality

Goal 3: Youth and adult skills. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs

Goal 4: Adult literacy. Achieving a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all

Goal 5: Gender parity and equality. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality

Goal 6: The quality of education. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential skills

The EFA goals range from early childhood (goal 1) to adulthood (goal 3 and 4), but as my research focuses on primary education I will concentrate on goal 2: universal primary education, goal 5: gender parity and equality, and goal 6: the quality of education. In the next sections I address the interpretation and strategies of fulfilling the goals of EFA.

5.3 Guidelines for EFA

The groups, which are generally excluded in the school system seem to have remained the same since the origin of the Education for All movement twenty-five years ago. According to WCEFA (1990, p. 33) these groups are (i) the poor; (ii) the street and working children; (iii) rural and remote populations; (iv) nomads and migrant workers; (v) indigenous peoples; (vi) ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities; (vii) people with disabilities; (viii) girls and women; (ix) those displaced by war; and (xx) refugees. These factors can also be combined in which case they reinforce disadvantages (UNESCO, 2010, p. 23).

Poverty is the most pervasive source of disadvantage in education, with the vast majority of children in poor circumstances being excluded from their right to education (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 14). The lives of children living in poverty are negatively affected in many ways by such factors as low educational achievement of parents, poor health care and nutrition, reduced motivation for schooling and reduced benefits from it (WCEFA, 1990, p. 54). Inside

the school, UNESCO (2000a, p. 13) finds a strong correlation between poverty and low enrolment, poor retention and unsatisfactory learning outcomes.

The majority of reasons limiting access to education are not related to the learner's attitudes, values, skills or knowledge. On the contrary, the reasons are associated with disadvantages children are born with, and therefore, there is nothing to be done unless there is a dramatic change in the attitudes of the society. It is crucial to understand the factors leading to exclusion, in order to target their underlying causes, as opposed to using general intervention (UNESCO, 2010, p. 38). Exclusion from education is just one more manifestation of exclusion from society (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 2). A failure to address the structural disparities and inequalities holds back progress towards EFA and promotes wider processes of exclusion (UNESCO, 2010, p. 22). Consequently, it is fundamental to understand the context in order to include the children who are currently excluded (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 2). It is crucial to promote access to good quality education for currently excluded children, in order to provide them the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, capacities and self-confidence that will enable an exit from exclusion in education and society (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 2).

5.4 National plans and Curriculum for EFA

In Dakar (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 10), countries committed to prepare National Plans for EFA by 2002, at the latest. These plans should include the following guidelines: (i) direct consultation from the government to the national civil society; (ii) coordination with the development partners; (iii) the six EFA goals should be addressed in the policy reform; (iv) a sustainable financial framework should be established; (v) an action plan would be created with target deadlines; (vi) and the educational reform should be part of a much wider national development framework. Following these advices, Namibia published the EFA National Plan of Action 2002-2015.

The Namibian EFA National Plan of Action 2002-2015 (GRN, 2002, p. 2) follows the commitments of the Government of Namibia that are based on access, equity, quality and democracy. This plan of action also takes into consideration international initiatives, such as the Jomtiem and Salamanca conferences, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (GRN, 2002, p. 2). The Namibian National Plan of Action 2002-2015 (GRN, 2002, p. 21-

25) develops a strategy relevant to the Namibian context in order to achieve the six EFA goals.

Many means are needed to reach the aims of EFA, starting with commitment and co-operation on the national level, to creating relevant policies and action plans where inclusion is comprehensively addressed. At the same time, it is essential to assure that these policies and principles are implemented in effective and culturally sensitive way at the grass-root level. Implementation includes creating a school culture that cherishes diversity, a relevant curriculum and high-quality teaching, while remembering that school is not an island, and that environment has an effect on all its activities.

The curriculum is at the heart of the education system, as it can hinder or facilitate learning at school. The curriculum, in order to facilitate learning of all children should be inclusive, and innovative, with a focus on reducing disparities in school achievement, and offering all children the opportunity to acquire vital transferable skills (UNESCO, 2014, p. 279). Usually curriculum expects all learners to learn the same things, at the same path, by the same methods (UNESCO, 2009, p. 19), however, it is important to acknowledge that learners have different abilities and needs (UNESCO, 2009, p. 19). The Salamanca Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994, p. 28) declares that the curriculum should adapt to the children's needs, not vice-versa, providing curricular opportunities to children with different abilities and interests. It is also important to develop the curriculum in consultation with pupils, families, and community leaders in order to address the needs of teachers and learners (UNESCO, 2014, p. 296).

The education system excludes children by implementing an inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum to groups that are considered excluded, thereby reinforcing their marginalisation (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 8). On the contrary, the curriculum should promote the inclusion of learners with different backgrounds. An inclusive curriculum takes gender, cultural identity and language background into consideration eradicating negative stereotypes not only in textbooks but also in teachers' attitudes (UNESCO, 2009, p. 18). It is also important to be aware that teachers are the professionals ultimately responsible for interpreting and implementing the curriculum (UNESCO, 2003, p. 19).

School failure, in part, can be due to an exclusionary curriculum and the excessive measuring of success through standardised tests. Standardised tests, which determine who continues to the next level, and who repeats classes, promote exclusion, as they do not account for differences in linguistic or cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 9). Due to the pressure to follow the curriculum, learners from disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to grade repetition and dropout (UNESCO, 2014, p. 279).

If learners do not accomplish predetermined objectives, they have to repeat the course. If course repetition results in an improvement in learning outcomes it could be considered as a useful pedagogical strategy, however, evidence shows that achievements gained from repetition are minor, and rarely cost-effective (WCEFA, 1990, p. 61). Repetition often promotes lower self-esteem and increases the likelihood of dropping out of school (WCEFA, 1990, p. 61), while there is little evidence indicating that children learn better through re-exposure to the same contents in the same way (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 8). While repetition is supposed to be a strategy to improve learning, in most cases it widens the circle of exclusion, by preventing a learner from moving up (UNESCO, 2008, p. 8). Instead of repetition, a much more effective procedure to achieve the predetermined course objectives, should be based on improving teaching instruction, and in-class remediation strategies (WCEFA, 1990, p. 61).

5.6 EFA as a universal or contextualised approach

EFA, as part of a strategic plan from an international community, has a global agenda that represents certain key areas that deserve priority attention in most countries (WCEFA, 1990, p. 80). Even though EFA has universal goals, such as eliminating barriers to access to education or improving equity and quality, the approach to achieving those goals varies from country to country. There is no single successful strategy that can be implemented worldwide. Therefore, EFA, while having a global agenda is against the idea of one-size-fits-all, indeed, the heart of EFA mainly lies at country level (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 10), as it is important to make learning relevant, by adapting educational activities to local contexts and real life experiences (UNESCO, 2014, p. 295).

EFA recognises the importance of international cooperation and financial assistance, but it delegates the responsibility of actions to national governments, as the key factor for change

(WCEFA, 1990, p. 80). Furthermore, EFA also supports the participation of all stakeholders in education, such as policy-makers, teachers and parents (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 20). A school-based management approach makes schools more responsive to local needs, gives parents voice, while strengthening teacher participation, motivation and accountability (UNESCO, 2009, p. 28).

In order to meet the learning needs of a country's population it is important to analyse the national background characteristics, financial constraints, current educational efforts and effects and the present conditions of societal development (WCEFA, 1990, p. 41). Once a country has taken these steps, then it can develop a strategy in order to meet the learning needs of all (WCEFA, 1990, p. 41). Ignoring the context and implementing strategies without taking into consideration the previous factors would surely lead to failure (UNESCO, 2009, p. 26), therefore, it is necessary to avoid the tendency to apply 'blueprints' that do not address local conditions (UNESCO, 2009, p. 26). Contextualisation highly influences the process of inclusion and exclusion in education systems, as the lack of contextualisation constraints children in many aspects at school, including constraints such as: non-enrolment, passivity, absenteeism, repetition and dropouts, leading those children to exclusion from the school and society (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 4).

5.7 Benefits of EFA

Basic education is not an end in itself (WCEFA, 1990, p. 11), on the contrary, it greatly influences countries' development. The implementation of strategies to achieve EFA goals focusing on improving access, equity and quality in education will definitely have positive repercussions in many areas of society. In this section I will explain how an inclusive education system would lead to a positive impact on different areas such as health, nutrition, life expectancy, gender, income equality and democracy, while also reducing poverty and fertility in overpopulated countries.

Education can have a great influence on reducing poverty. It offers the poor a route to a better life, enabling them to escape from the trap of chronic poverty (UNESCO, 2014, p. 144). Children whose parents have not attended school are more likely to follow the same path; therefore education is a key to breaking the transmission of chronic poverty between generations (UNESCO, 2014, p. 144). Education can also help families to earn higher

incomes, and to make better use of their earnings through informed consumption choices (WCEFA, 1990, p. 7).

Eradicating gender inequalities in education is crucial not only for women but it is in the interest of everyone (UNESCO, 2003, p. 4). Education can reduce gender inequality by empowering women to overcome unequal and oppressive social limits, enabling them to make choices about their lives (UNESCO, 2014, p. 181). Education helps to close the wage gaps by increasing women's chances of participating in the labour market, thus closing gender wage gaps (UNESCO, 2014, p. 150). Girls' education helps to reduce child marriage, and the chances of giving birth at an early age (UNESCO, 2014, p. 181).

Improving access to, and quality in education cannot replace an effective healthcare system, but it has significant potential in making people aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Educated people are better informed regarding how to prevent diseases, they can recognise early signs of illness, and they make more effective use of healthcare services (UNESCO, 2014, p. 156). Improving education increases awareness that would prevent or reduce the incidence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, heart diseases and cancers (UNESCO, 2014, p. 156, p. 162). The knowledge, skills and behaviours learnt in schools create a 'social vaccine,' that can prevent people from possible diseases (UNESCO, 2004, p. 9).

Education helps to reduce child mortality saving millions of children's lives (UNESCO, 2014, p. 159). Mothers' education is just as crucial for her own health as it is for her offspring's. Educated women are more likely to avoid risks during pregnancy, by adopting simple and low cost practices to maintain hygiene, and by reacting to symptoms (UNESCO, 2014, p. 161). An educated woman is also more likely to be aware of her right to negotiate safer sex, as well as to refuse sex or request condom use (UNESCO, 2014, p. 164). Education also does, as I have explained earlier, a great deal to control rapid population growth by reducing birth rates (WCEFA, 1990, p. 10).

Education has great potential not only in developing individuals, but also societies in general. It helps in understanding democracy, promoting tolerance and trust. It prevents environmental degradation, and it has the potential to empower vulnerable people to overcome discrimination (UNESCO, 2014, p. 170). A lack of, or, a low level of education,

does not necessarily lead to conflict, but research conducted in Sierra Leone reveals that children who had no education were nine times more likely to join rebel groups, compared to those who were attending secondary education (Tickle, 2015).

Another key role of education is the formation of responsible local and global citizens with core skills such as critical thinking, cooperation, leadership and conflict resolution, and the promotion of core values such as tolerance and appreciation for diversity (UNESCO, 2014, p. 295). Therefore, global citizenship, and peace building programs that emphasise inclusion and peaceful conflict resolution have great potential to promote tolerance, respect and harmony across, and within countries.

5.8 Costs associated with achieving the goals of EFA

In a report published by Oxfam (Watkins, 2000, p. 8) the financial support to achieve EFA corresponds to four days' global military spending. Some countries, such as Pakistan and India show relatively little interest in improving education at the same time as they spend six times more on armaments than on education (Mitchell, 2009, p. 28). Other countries despite their interest in improving education are sunk in debt repayments to international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that demand reduced expenditure on public services, such as education, in order to pay the debt (Mitchell, 2009, p. 28). Moreover, the main interests of some donor countries are tied to domestic purchases, instead of improving education in the aid receiving countries (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 18).

UNESCO, in 2004 (p. 23) stated that governments should invest at least 6% of gross national product (GNP) in education. However, only 41 countries out of 150 have reached this goal by 2011 (UNESCO, 2014, p. 111). Namibia is among the countries that have achieved this goal, by raising taxes and increasing the budget to education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 117). Increasing the budget to education is crucial, but even more important is how the budget is used in order to improve quality and access to education, especially for those groups who suffer from exclusion. There are measures to promote inclusion that are not costly, and can definitely improve education, such as initial literacy in mother tongue, peer teaching, and multi-grade, multi-age and multi-ability classrooms (UNESCO, 2009, p. 11).

5.9 Criticism concerning EFA

One of the main areas of criticism concerning EFA is that it focuses mainly on access to education, with little thought paid to what happens once children are attending the school, resulting in some people arguing that quality has been left behind. Even UNESCO agrees with the unfair second position given to quality; Although the United Nations' Millennium Declaration states that all children should be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015, it does not make any specific reference to its quality (UNESCO, 2004, p. 5).

Another reason for criticism is the lack of visible achievements. The main commitment in Jomtiem was universal access to, and completion of primary education by 2000, and in Dakar it was agreed that all children would have access to free, and compulsory primary education of good quality, by 2015. The criticism here does not only refer to the lack of achievements, but also to the formulation of more challenging targets when the previous ones had not yet been met (Jansen, 2005, p. 369).

Jansen (2005, p. 375) provides three reasons for countries to participate in EFA, even if they are not really inspired by its objectives. The first reason is due to the symbolic significance of participating in an international project, to be part of the game. Not to be part of EFA is to be out of line. The second reason is that if a country does not participate in EFA there can be negative consequences, in terms of both internal pressures, as well as external sanctions from powerful international agencies. The third reason is that even if a state is not interested in EFA, it should participate anyhow because of the financial benefits from being part of this project. The promises of international agencies of not leaving any country committed to EFA behind, serve as a significant mobilising factor to secure the states' participation.

Ainscow et al. (2006, p. 22) criticises the idea of setting global targets for specific groups, without taking into consideration the contexts, and the countries' backgrounds. Since the majority of exclusion occurs locally, the strategies to overcome the barriers of exclusion need to be addressed at country and community level and not by universal goals from an international organisation (Ainscow et al., 2006, p. 22).

Another source of criticism is the accusation of imperialism that through global action plans such as EFA, countries of the North dictate the pace and direction to countries of the South (D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 36). It is claimed that the failure of EFA to achieve universal access to education by 2000 was due to a combination of limited resources, and the external manipulation of educational policies by external funding agencies pursuing agendas born in the developed world (D. Armstrong, A. Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 32)

The Jomtiem report (WCEFA, 1990, p. 1) claimed that “On the threshold of the 21st century, the world faces major global challenges characterised by the threat of economic stagnation and decline; widening economic disparities among and within nations; millions of people dislocated and suffering from war, civil strife, and crime; widespread environmental degradation; and rapid population growth”. This statement was written twenty-five years ago, but it seems that not much has changed since then. Currently, it is possible to subscribe the same discourse after the different global initiatives to improve education and societies at large. Still, this does not mean that nothing should be done; in the global world, international co-operation is needed to provide equal opportunities for all.

5.10 Challenges

The Dakar Framework for Action affirmed that “no countries seriously committed to EFA will be thwarted in their achievement of these goals by lack of resources” (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 3). This statement can be considered one of the biggest failures of this strategic plan, because many of the countries are left behind, and they justify the situation with a lack of resources. The rich countries have not taken seriously their responsibility to provide assistance financially, and if they have, the debt conditions attached have rather made the situation of the countries worse.

There are still many barriers to achieve EFA, affecting most of the partners involved in the process such as countries, donor agencies, NGOs, and home institutions. According to UNESCO (2000a, p. 12) some of the challenges are weak political will, insufficient financial resources and the inefficient use of those available, the burden of debt, the inadequate attention to the learning needs of the excluded, the lack of attention to the quality of learning and the absence of commitment to overcoming gender disparities. There are also some other

significant challenges such as poor planning, implementing and monitoring progress in EFA (UNESCO, 2014, p. 112).

One group in particular, that is facing challenges in having their progress monitored, are children with disabilities. The data regarding their school enrolment or information on how much they are learning in school is scarce (UNESCO, 2014, p. 212). Mitchell (2009, p. 33) argues that children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to being overlooked and forgotten. As a whole, a high level of inequality is constraining progress in education, and in society at large (UNESCO, 2009, p. 38)

One major challenge for addressing quality is the lack of clear indicators of good quality. The learning process is a complex issue, and relying mostly on quantitative figures does not address this complexity properly (UNESCO, 2004, p. 15). In addition, quality is usually a second priority after universal access to education, although this lack of attention to education quality is contributing to failures (UNESCO, 2014, p. 186). Therefore it is crucial that policy-makers take action to support good quality education for all, to guarantee that children are not only attending school, but also learning once they are there (UNESCO, 2014, p. 213).

Since Jomtiem, another indicator for failure is the fact that circumstances at birth still have a major influence on the posteriori learning achievements of the individual. Factors such as poverty, gender, ethnicity, disability and where the child is born, still determine whether children go to school and, once there, learn (UNESCO, 2014, p. 191). EFA was committed to eliminate gender disparities by 2005; and to achieve complete equality ten years later, now, in 2015, those numbers are far from a reality in many countries. There can be no doubt that the barriers to achieving EFA are formidable, yet they can and must be overcome.

6. Namibian educational policies and inclusion

Twenty-five years since gaining Independence, Namibia has published numerous educational policies aimed at improving access, equity, equality and quality in education. The Namibian government recognises education as a cornerstone in overcoming the segregation, poverty and oppression that were inherited from the pre-independent Namibia. The Namibian government, with its ambitious project for transforming Namibia into a knowledge-based society, as reflected in Vision 2030, sees education as the pre-eminent tool to achieve this ambition (NPC, 2013, p. 30).

There are currently ten educational policies in Namibia (see appendix A) addressing a range of diverse issues, such as language of instruction, teenage pregnancy, or children with HIV/AIDS. This section focuses on current educational policies that bear some relation to inclusive education. These policies will be introduced in this section, and later on I will employ them in the research findings, in order to compare policies with reality, based on my interviews with seven education experts in Namibia, as well as conducting a secondary comparison with the EFA strategy. The policies that I will focus on are: The National Curriculum for Basic Education, The Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) 2005-2020, The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, The Strategic Plan 2012-2017, and Namibia's National Agenda for Children 2012-2016.

6.1 The National Curriculum for Basic Education

The National Curriculum for Basic Education, launched in 2009, responds to the recent changes in Namibian society, as well as emerging challenges, such as globalisation and HIV/AIDS (MoE, 2009, p. 1). It follows the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, and the Education Act, while also containing a strong commitment towards achieving the long-term goals of Namibia Vision 2030 (MoE, 2009, p. 1-2).

The vision of the Curriculum is to transform Namibian society into an inclusive society in order to achieve the goals of Vision 2030. In order to achieve its vision, the National Curriculum for Basic Education places special attention on issues such as; HIV/AIDS,

education, health and wellness education, human rights and democracy, information and communications technologies and environmental education (MoE, 2009, p. 4).

The objectives of the curriculum will be analysed in the findings in order to establish their relationship with EFA, and also to study how these objectives are implemented at the school level.

Some of the objectives of the Curriculum are (MoE, 2009, p. 5):

- Every learner has all the textbooks and materials appropriate to their ability and needs
- The school is a conducive and well-managed physical, material and social learning environment
- Teachers are equipped with all the necessary teaching aids to support effective learning
- Teachers teach effectively so that all learners progress to the next grade, and only very few learners need to repeat to achieve the basic competences
- The home and community actively support the holistic development of the learner

The Curriculum, acknowledging the great variety of learners' backgrounds in Namibia, provides special attention to inclusive education in order to meet individual learners' needs (MoE, 2009, p. 28). This means that all schools must firstly have the capacity to identify, and secondly, to support learners who manifest educational needs that are not fully met without individual support (MoE, 2009, p. 28). In the case of a child needing an individual educational plan, parents, guardians and learners need to be involved, and agree with the action plan (MoE, 2009, p. 28). This policy strongly defends the right of children with special educational needs to be included in mainstream schools, and that their needs will be given particular attention through differentiation of methods and materials as needed (MoE, 2009, p. 4). Severely impaired learners, who cannot benefit from mainstream education with the aid of individualised materials and methods of instruction, would attend special classes or schools, until they are ready to attend the mainstream school (MoE, 2009, p. 4).

6.2 The Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP): 2005-2020: Planning for a Learning Nation.

In response to the development objectives of Vision 2030, the education sector has prepared a 15 years strategic plan, entitled ETSIP 2005-2020 (MoE, 2008b, p. 3). ETSIP was launched, as the education system did not fulfil the Namibian government's expectations. With the previous policies, there was a high failure rate, high level of school dropouts, low learning outcomes, and inadequate provision of learning and teaching materials. Having this background of ineffectiveness and low quality education, ETSIP set out to address the key weaknesses in the education sector, thus, developing education as a cornerstone for Namibia's intended transition to a knowledge-based society.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia developed ETSIP with technical support from the World Bank, and it follows the guidelines provided by international resolutions, such as EFA and the MDG's. It is also particularly concerned with the findings of the education sector report, written by Marope in 2005, entitled 'Human capital knowledge development for economic growth with equity,' that I have commented on in earlier chapters.

ETSIP identifies six strategic objectives:

- Improve the system's quality and effectiveness
- Ensure equality of educational opportunities, as evidenced by the equitable distribution of access, resources inputs, process and outcomes
- Strengthen delivery capacity at all levels of the system
- Improve the responsiveness/relevance of the system to Namibia's economic and social development goals
- Improve general education system efficiency
- Expand access to senior secondary education
- Consolidate access to primary education (GRN, 2005, p. 27).

The vision of ETSIP is to "develop and sustain an effective, high quality, relevant and equitable general education system that provides an adequate base from which Namibia can build various levels and types of human capital required for the economy and for social and democratic development. Moreover, it is focused on ensuring that all Namibian children

acquire competencies and skills that are contextually relevant; and whose quality is benchmarked to international standards” (GRN, 2005, p. 27).

ETSIP gives special attention to the educational needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The strategies to support OVC are based on promoting more equitable access to education, increasing educational and psychological support, and using minority local languages as a medium of instruction (MoE, 2008a, p. 4). Due to the attention from ETSIP to OVC, this policy provides a platform for the posteriori publication of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education in 2013 (MoE, 2013, p. 3).

6.3 Sector Policy on Inclusive Education

The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was expected to be launched by mid-2009 (MoE, 2008b, p. 8). However, it was not published until five years later, in September 2014, even though Namibia’s Cabinet had approved the policy in 2013. The Government of the Republic of Namibia, The European Union and UNICEF worked together on developing this policy (MoE, 2013, p. ii). It is envisaged that the policy will be reviewed and updated every 10 years (MoE, 2013 p. 7). The aims of this policy are; to provide access, equity and quality education to all children, especially for educationally excluded learners, while ensuring that the education system becomes more inclusive, sensitive, and responsive to children with a wide range of individual abilities and needs in schools (MoE, 2013, p. 4).

The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was launched in an effort to overcome the challenges Namibia was facing including all children in the education system. Before the implementation of this policy, Zimba et al. (2011, p. 47) claimed that there was no understanding regarding the aims of inclusive education, particularly by policymakers, school managers, teachers and parents, resulting in confusion and inertia in the school system. Zimba et al. (2011, p. 48) argued that even if there were attempts to implement an inclusive approach, it usually meant that children with disabilities and other special needs were included in mainstream schools without adequate support. It seems that the claims made by Zimba were taken into account, with Zimba’s work having a significant role in this policy, as reflected in the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education’s bibliography (MoE, 2013, p. 13).

The policy uses UNESCO's definition of inclusive education, i.e., inclusive education is "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from the education system" (as cited in MoE, 2013, p. vi).

The vision of this policy is to pave the way for all children in Namibia to learn, and participate fully in the education system, particularly in mainstream schools, with a learner-centred approach through individualised education according to the needs of the learners (MoE, 2013, p. 1). This vision differs from the previous understanding of inclusive education, which merely focused on children with disabilities, and special education (MoE, 2013, p. 2).

The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education is strongly committed to the achievement of the EFA goals, with particular attention placed on learners who have been traditionally excluded in society, prioritising expanding access to quality compulsory education (MoE, 2013, p. 4). This policy states that children who could be considered as marginalised are: children of farmworkers, children living in remotes areas, street children, children with disabilities, children of families living in extreme poverty, children who head households, child labourers, children with learning difficulties, the girl-child, children with behavioural challenges, children who are gifted, orphans, and children living in squatter, resettlement and refugee camps (MoE, 2013, p. 5).

The policy states that inclusive education is not just about ensuring access to education for excluded learners, but about ending segregation or exclusion of individuals, or groups on the grounds of academic performance, gender, race, culture, religion, lifestyle, health conditions or disabilities (MoE, 2013, p. 6). This policy shifts the focus from blaming the child with learning difficulties, to the interaction between the learner and his/her environment (MoE, 2013, p. 6).

The policy presents eight strategies to promote an inclusive education system (MoE, 2013, p. 7):

- Integrate the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education into all other legal frameworks and policies of the education sector

- Raise awareness of the constitutional right to education and foster attitudinal change
- Support institutional development by developing human and instructional resources
- Review the National Curriculum for Basic Education to reflect the diversity of learning needs of all learners
- Widen and develop educational support services
- Develop teacher education and training for support staff
- Strengthen and widen in-service training for stakeholders
- Develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education

6.4 Education Sector Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children

The Education Sector Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children follows the guidelines from national and international frameworks, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Namibian Constitution. Moreover, this policy was developed in part to accomplish the broader agenda of ETSIP (MoE, 2008a, p. ii).

The aim of this policy is to make quality education as inclusive as possible for all learners (MoE, 2008a, p. 11). In order to achieve this aim, it is crucial to ensure access to, retention of, and completion of basic good quality education for orphans and vulnerable children (MoE, 2008a, p. 5). The objective of this policy is to guarantee that orphans and vulnerable children attend school overcoming any barrier that might constraint their access to education, such as lack of financial means, stigma, discrimination or psychological needs (MoE, 2008a, p. 5).

The Education Sector Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children defines the concept of orphan and vulnerable children (MoE, 2008a, p. 15). An orphan is a child who has lost one or both parents due to death and is under eighteen years. The definition of vulnerable children is more ambiguous, stating that a vulnerable child is one that needs care and protection.

This policy focuses on seven areas (MoE, 2008a, pp. 7-13):

- Addressing school related expenses
- Providing health care and nutritional support
- Ensuring a safe and non-discriminatory environment
- Providing counselling and support
- Ensuring equal opportunities and educational success for all
- Engaging the community and other partners
- Providing training and support to teachers

6.5 Strategic Plan 2012-2017

The Strategic Plan was developed based on ETSIP, providing a necessary link between the Ministry of Education, and other holistic national commitment, such as Vision 2030, and the Namibian Development Plans (MoE, 2012, p. vii). This policy identifies the role of strategic intervention in improving the educational system, which is considered to be the key to the development of Namibian society (MoE, 2012, p. vii).

The Strategic Plan defines quality as “the capacities of learners to act progressively on their own through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes” (MoE, 2012, p. 5). Based on this definition, the Strategic Plan ensures that the Namibian educational system is about quality learning, in which all professionals in the education field are mindful of the decisions they make, in order to improve the delivery of good quality education (MoE, 2012, p. 8). In order to make the Strategic Plan more manageable it is divided into five strategic themes: teaching and learning, leadership and management, infrastructure, regulatory framework, and stakeholder relations (MoE, 2012, p. 8). Among these strategic themes, my research mainly addresses the first strategic theme: teaching and learning, focusing on ‘providing accessible and equitable quality inclusive education to the learners’ (MoE, 2012, p. 8). However, the other theme areas are related with the first one, and quality education for all cannot be reached unless all areas are addressed.

The strategic objectives of teaching and learning are (MoE, 2012, p. 9):

- To provide accessible and equitable quality education
- Improve supervision of teaching and learning

- Ensure quality relevant learning content
- Create a conducive environment for teaching and learning
- Build educator's skills and competencies
- Strategic objectives of teaching and learning

6.6 Namibia's National Agenda for Children 2012-2016

The National Agenda for Children 2012- 2016 is a five-year framework designed to guide Namibia towards fulfilling its obligation to ensure that all the rights of children are met (GRN, 2012a, p. 1). The Government of Namibia commissioned this policy with support from UNICEF and the consultation of a wide range of stakeholders, such as, various ministries, civil society organisations and several United Nations agencies (GRN, 2012a, p. 2). This policy does not solely focus on children's education, but contains a more comprehensive national development approach (GRN, 2012a, p. 3).

This agenda is based on past achievements, while also focusing on the critical gaps impeding Namibia's achievement of the MDGs and Vision 2030 (GRN, 2012a, p. 3). In order to overcome these gaps, this policy awards priority to the wellbeing of all children, and the fulfilment of all their rights (GRN, 2012a, 3). Therefore, it is crucial that different societal sectors work together to ensure that the rights of all children are fulfilled, and that no child misses out on any critical service (GRN, 2012a, p. 4).

This policy has compiled a list of five commitments (GRN, 2012a, p. 7):

- All children are healthy and well nourished
- All children have equitable access to quality integrated early childhood education services and pre-primary, primary, secondary and vocational education
- All children have access to age-appropriate quality HIV prevention, treatment, care and support
- All children have an adequate standard of living and legal identity
- All children are safe from neglect, violence, abuse and exploitation

As my thesis is concerned with education, in the findings I will focus on the second commitment, regarding providing equitable access to quality education.

7. Research questions and methodology

7.1 Research questions

During my stay in Namibia, thanks to the North-South-South Program, from July to December 2014, I collected the necessary data from education policy documents and a variety of educational experts such as schoolteachers, university professors and educational specialists from international organisations working in Namibia. I also visited diverse educational institutions throughout the country. Those experiences have helped me to develop the research design that I am going to present.

This chapter addresses the issues of research design, methodology, methods of data collection and data analysis, having as the main purpose to answer the research questions, in the most honest, reliable and trusted manner. The aim of my research is to get an in depth understanding of the issues of inclusive education issues in the present-day Namibia. I compare the Namibian educational policies and international reports of Education for All, with the answers from educational experts in Namibia regarding the implementation of inclusive education at the primary school level.

My research questions are:

1. How does Namibia address the issue of inclusive education in its educational policies and practices?
2. What are the main successes and challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies?

7.2 Research design

Krippendorff (2004, p. 81) defines research design as the network of steps a researcher takes in conducting a research project. The design I have chosen will guide me throughout the research with the main objective being to answer the research questions in an honest, transparent and reliable way.

My design is based on a qualitative research paradigm. There are a number of definitions for qualitative research. Creswell (2013a, p. 4) describes qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3) qualitative research studies items in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Schreier (2012, p. 21) posits that interpretation is a key feature of qualitative research: Firstly, it is based on the researcher's interpretation of the collected data; secondly, different interpretations of the same data can be valid; and lastly, these interpretation tend to explore personal and social meanings by responding to the research questions of the study.

I have chosen qualitative research instead of quantitative or mixed methods approach, as I was interested in the people's perspectives, experiences and opinions regarding inclusive education in Namibia. The reasoning for using qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007, p. 39) is the realisation that there is an issue that needs to be explored. In this case the issue I want to explore is the implementation of inclusive education in the Namibian context, analysing the achievements and challenges from the policy to the implementation. In order to present accurate answers to the research questions it is fundamental to take the context into account. As Miles and Huberman comment (1994, p. 6) the researcher needs to give a holistic overview of the context under study. Therefore I have considered it necessary to provide an introduction to my research context in chapter two and chapter three discussing the Namibian background from a historical perspective as well as deliberating the current situation in the country in different areas such as economy, politics, and particularly education.

According to Krippendorff (2004, p. 88) the qualitative researcher searches for multiple interpretations by considering diverse audiences, alternative perspectives and oppositional critiques. Following this advice, I have used literature that presents different perspectives concerning inclusive education and I have interviewed educational specialists from different institutions, in order to acquire diverse perspectives to the research questions.

7.3 Epistemological and ontological basis

Worldview is the term presented by Guba (1994, p. 105) as an essential concept when analysing the starting points of research, meaning a basic set of beliefs that guide action. It represents for its holder the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) also claim that those beliefs are accepted as faith because there is no ultimate truthfulness. Other researchers, instead of using 'worldview' prefer to refer to basic beliefs as paradigms (Mertens, 2010, p. 7) or epistemological and ontological assumptions (Creswell, 2013b, p. 20).

This research is based on a transformative worldview in the sense that I believe that education can be changed and inclusion is a key principle that should be pursued in various ways, according to different contexts. For Mertens (2010, p. 21) a transformative worldview often has to confront social oppression intertwined with politics and agenda of certain politics. Creswell (2013a, p. 10) adds that in transformative critical theory the focus is on issues such as oppression, inequality, empowerment and domination. Moreover, it is about giving voice, rising awareness and empowering people to improve their lives (Creswell, 2013a, p. 10). Mertens (2010, p. 21) provides a summary of key features of the transformative worldview. Firstly, it gives central importance to the study of lives and experiences of diverse groups that have traditionally been excluded. Secondly, the research focuses on inequities based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class, which result in asymmetric power relationships. Thirdly, the research links political and social action to these inequities. Finally, it uses a theory to show why issues of oppression, domination and power relationships exist.

Following the features of the transformative worldview given by Creswell and Mertens, I consider that this is the approach I have applied to my own research, since my thesis reflects what Namibia is doing in order to include children who may be excluded; such as minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, or children living in poverty into the school system. I take a transformative approach, as my main goal is to analyse educational policies and then compare them with the real situation, in order to know what is already working positively to support those excluded groups, what can be improved, and what are the challenges in implementing inclusive education. I also acknowledge that the challenges of inclusion exist

everywhere, in that sense Namibia is not unique, although the specific features are always connected to the context. Besides, I acknowledge that a lot has already been done in Namibia, and the policy documents clearly demonstrate the awareness of many aspects of inclusion.

6.4 Researcher's role

It is not acceptable for a qualitative researcher, writing as a human subjective narrator to claim universal and a-temporal knowledge (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 961). On the contrary, according to Creswell (2007, p. 179) what one writes is a reflection of one's own interpretations based on cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics that one brings to the research. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 91) call it an implicit theory. The data in a qualitative research is not objective because it is based on the perspectives of the respondents and then the researcher has to make interpretations of the meanings of the data (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

In line with what Creswell has said, I have taken into account the features Krippendorff (2004, p. 22-24) considers a researcher, especially the one conducting qualitative research in another country, has to take into account in order to have a clear and honest position in the research process. Those characteristics are: texts have no objective qualities, texts do not have single meanings that can be 'found' for what they are, and that meanings invoked by texts need not be shared. I try to be truthful to the texts I have analysed, but the interpretations are mine and thus have also limitations.

7.5 Data collection

The first task in the research is to decide what is going to be researched and then how the research questions are answered, and thereafter consider the methods for data collection (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 97). As I have already explained the first part, in this section I will focus on how I have obtained the data for the research.

My data consists of two different sources of materials. First of all, I have chosen the most important policy papers in Namibia that had some relation to inclusive education and studied them to find out how inclusion was understood and addressed in them. Secondly, the crucial

sources of information in my research were the interviews of inclusive education experts in Namibia. That was particularly important for me, because as an outsider to Namibian context I could misinterpret what I see and read.

According to MacQueen (2012, p. 11), the most common source of information in qualitative research is transcribed data, which is generated from an in-depth interview. Interviewing is a way to come to know other persons and to understand the cognitive models that shape their worldviews (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 139). These interviews usually consist of unstructured and open-ended questions intended to elicit responses from the participants (Creswell, 2013a, p. 190), as well as targeted questions on predetermined categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1282). Following these advices I have conducted in-depth interviews with Namibian experts in education, with the objective of gaining information regarding inclusion and its implementation.

According to Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 27), qualitative researchers generally work with small samples of people, and those samples tend to be purposive rather than random, because with a small number of sampling, one can receive in-depth knowledge from people with knowledge of the particular matter. Thus, I have used a purposive approach in order to find the interviewees with a close relation to inclusive education in Namibia. I have interviewed seven people who work as education experts in different organisations and are in direct contact with issues of inclusive education in Namibia. The interviewees work at different levels in the education sector in the country, from specialists working at schools and universities, to specialists working for international organisations. I am aware that my interview sample highly influences the findings. Depending on whether I interview experts working at university level and international organisations, or parents and learners, the findings could have been different. Nevertheless, as my thesis concerns the implementation of educational policies, I considered it important that the interviewees were familiar with this issue.

I carried out seven interviews of about forty minutes each with inclusive education experts in Namibia. Five of them were females and two were males. I interviewed two class teachers, one teacher from a special school in an urban area, and one working in primary school in a rural area. Two other interviewees are Professors at the University of Namibia who have been involved in issues of inclusive education for more than two decades in the country, and

the last three people whom I interviewed are education experts from two international organisations working in Namibia. These interviews were carried out in the working settings of the participants: I interviewed the professors at the university, the primary school teachers at their school, and the education specialist from the international organisations at their offices.

The interviews were composed of open-ended questions, with the aim that the interviewees freely express their opinions regarding the issues of inclusive education in Namibia. Appendix B includes the question guidelines that I have used to guide the interview. As my interviews were semi-structured, the questions were adapted in relation to answers given, but always keeping in mind the aim of the research.

In addition to the education policy documents and interviews I gained some secondary data through school visits and unofficial discussions with people during my visits, and though their role in my research is minor, they were very valuable for an outsider such as myself in gaining perspective and further knowledge about the context and the issues of inclusion.

7.6 Content analysis

Within qualitative research, there are a variety of methodologies and approaches about how to analyse and interpret data. For my research I have chosen content analysis because it is useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within data in the form of text (MacQueen, 2012, p. 11). It is the most widely used method of text analysis (MacQueen, 2012, p.1). Content analysis is defined by Schreier (2012, p. 1) as a method for interpreting qualitative materials in a systematic way. According to Schreier (2012, p. 5) this method has three key points: it is systematic, flexible and it reduces data to main categories. Krippendorff (2004, p. 18) defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use. Krippendorff (2004, p. 44) adds that it is an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyse relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define content analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.

My research can be considered as content analysis, because I have used both written texts and audio-recorded data that have been transcribed to texts and further analysed. The transcribed text of interviews was then classified into themes, in order to obtain meanings, which would answer my research questions. The main goal of my research is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1277) expose three approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed or summative. All three approaches are used to interpret text data from a naturalistic paradigm (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The major differences among them are coding schemes, origins of the codes and threats to trustworthiness. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text. Summative content analysis involves counting of keywords followed by the interpretation of the underlying text. Directed content analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. Directed content analysis has a deductive approach using an existing theory or prior research regarding the phenomenon that would benefit from further description with the main goal of validating or extending a theoretical framework or theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1285).

In this research I will mostly use the directed approach, as I have studied previous theories of inclusion and the EFA philosophical background, and they have guided my research in discovering the situations of inclusion in Namibian policies and practices. At the same time, when constructing the categories for results I tried to be alert to any new ideas in the texts, which maybe were not introduced in the theories. In that sense one can say that the analysis was heavily influenced by theories and previous research but also by what interviewees said.

In content analysis, coding the data is a key step. Coding the data is a way of structuring the research material into different categories (Schreier, 2012, p.61). Developing a good coding scheme is crucial to organise the data into categories and the use of a systematic analysis process is central to trustworthiness in the research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1285). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1283), one strategy that can be used in directed content analysis is to begin coding the data with predetermined codes, and the data that cannot be coded is identified and analysed later, to determine if they represent a new category or subcategory of an existing code.

Before developing the questions for the interviews, I concentrated on reading theoretical literature on inclusion and the selected Namibian educational policies that were connected with inclusion. I combined those readings with the study of the EFA Global Monitoring Reports. Based on the studied literature and my research questions, I developed the questions for the interviews that could be connected to the themes occurring in the literature. In total, I transcribed sixty-five pages from the interviews. The content analysis resulted in thirteen categories:

- Universal primary to education
- Costs of education, fees
- Quality of education
- Equity
- Language of instruction
- Gender equality
- Comparison between rural and urban areas
- Special education
- Teacher education
- School materials
- Community involvement
- Policy implementation
- Policy monitoring

While designing the interview questions I had in mind eleven of these thirteen categories. When analysing the data two more aspects emerged from the transcribed interviews, which I did not ask in the interviews, but most of the interviewees mentioned: the importance of monitoring the policy implementation, and the issue of school fees.

7.7 Validity and reliability

According to Schreier (2012, p. 27) validity, in a narrow sense, refers to the extent that the research captures what it set out to capture, and in a broader sense, validity refers to the overall quality of the research. To address the issues of validity, Creswell (2013a, p. 202-203) firstly considers it necessary to send back the final report to some of the participants to

determine whether these participants feel that their answers were correctly understood. Secondly, Creswell recommends using rich description to convey the findings; to acknowledge the researcher's bias; and also present discrepant information that runs counter to the themes. And thirdly, Creswell suggests using an external auditor that reviews the entire project. In my research, as I came from a different cultural background I considered it best to send my thesis to be read by the Namibian experts. They know the policy documents and can evaluate the trustworthiness of their interview data. In the consent form there was an option to write the email contact, in order to receive a copy of the thesis before I would submit it, aiming to check the validity of the data I derived from the interviews. Four of the interviewees gave their email. I sent the thesis to them and two interviewees suggested small changes in their quotations.

Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 279) divide validity into two categories, internal validity and external validity. Internal validity refers to whether the findings of the study make sense and whether they are credible to the people studied and the readers and whether the findings give an authentic portrait of the reality. External validity refers to whether the results of the research are transferable to other contexts and how far they can be generalised. The first validity criterion is in my research fulfilled through participant validation. The transferability or generalizability of the results is questionable as each country is different. On the other hand, many of the challenges for inclusive education are very similar whether the country lies in the South or in the North.

According to Schreier (2012, p. 26) to ensure reliability, it is essential that the collected data and the findings are free of errors. Ensuring the credibility of the findings to an external audience is paramount and it is achieved by using a systematic and transparent set of methods and procedures (MacQueen, 2012, p. 15). Gibbs (2007, p. 98) recommends that in order to maintain reliability, one should check transcripts, to make sure that they do not contain mistakes made during the transcription, and that there is not a shift in the meaning of codes during the process of coding. During my research I have tried to be systematic in transcribing the data, and in the posteriori analysis of dividing the interview information into different categories. I have been transparent and have described the steps I undertook in producing this research. Appendix C contains the schedule I have followed during the research.

7.8 Ethical considerations

During a qualitative study, the researcher needs to be aware of the ethical issues and how to address them (Creswell, 2013b, p. 56). One of the issues of special concern, is how the information and identities provided in the interviews should be handled (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 294). Therefore it is important to pay special attention to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. Sieber (1992, pp. 26-52) discusses those issues regarding a research. Privacy is about the preservation of boundaries about giving protected information. Anonymity refers to the lack of information that would indicate which individuals or organisations have provided the data. Confidentiality refers to agreements with a person or organisation about what will be done with their data. For Rayner (2009, p. 3) the meaning of confidentiality is that the researcher knows the participant's name but cannot publish this information unless this is agreed with the participants.

I addressed the issue of privacy, by not discussing the information gained from the interviews with any third persons. I have tried to guarantee confidentiality by using pseudonyms and only providing a general description of the people I interviewed, without giving specific details that could put their confidentiality at risk. Taleni and Tom are professors from the University of Namibia; Kenneth, Sonia and Olga are specialists on education from international organisations; Tweshi is a schoolteacher from a special school; and Victoria is a schoolteacher from a mobile school.

There is a need for an informed consent, whereby the people being studied are fully informed regarding the purpose of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 291). In my research prior to the interview, participants were provided with a consent form that they signed and accepted, and once this step was completed, the interview process could start. In the appendix there is a copy of the consent form (see appendix D), I have also attached another consent form, written by the University of Namibia for the study trip to the Kunene region (See Appendix E). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 115) claim that to deliver consent forms does not prevent unethical behaviour, but it does provide some barriers that make it more unlikely to happen.

The respondents in my research participated in the interviews voluntarily. One of the points raised in the informed consent form was to remind the respondent that they are participating voluntarily, and that they have the right to withdraw at any given moment.

8. Findings

The findings presented below are based on Namibian education policy documents and the Namibian educational experts who were interviewed for this research. References are also made to EFA documents as well as other research and theories of inclusive education.

8.1 On the right track to achieving universal primary education

Universal primary education has been a primordial objective for UNESCO since the World Conference in Education in 1990 in Jomtiem. Ten years later in Dakar, the organisation continued prioritising this strategy, as reflected in the second EFA goal that focuses on ensuring, by 2015 that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNESCO, 2014, p. 52).

Namibia has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving universal access to primary education, as reflected in the ETSIP and the National Agenda for Children. One of the objectives of ETSIP is to eradicate inequalities in access to primary education (GRN, 2005, p. 38). According to its action plan, by 2007 the net enrolment ratio in primary education would be 100%, achieving as well 100% grade 7 completion by 2019 (GRN, 2005, p. 38). The National Agenda for Children (GRN, 2012a, p. 19) also claims that all children will have access to quality primary education before 2016. According to Olga Namibia is on the right track to achieving universal primary education.

The National Agenda for Children links access with quality, however, it seems that while there has been enormous progress in providing access to education, there is much to be improved regarding quality. As Kenneth says “you have a steady increase in learner’s access to education. Quality is of course an issue, but access has been addressed very, very well.”

Access and quality are interlinked, and are mutually reinforcing (UNESCO, 2009, p. 10). If there is an improvement in access, but quality is left behind, the education system would definitely fail to fulfil its expectation of providing quality education to all learners. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge, as Kenneth said before, that improving access

and quality at the same time is particularly challenging, as new learners are more likely to come from communities that are considered marginalised (UNESCO, 2014, p. 203).

8.2 Universal free primary education is not always free of charge

Although universal access to education has increased, there are still barriers that impede children from poor backgrounds in attending school. These barriers, which constrain access to school, or once there, promote dropouts, mostly relate to the costs of education; in terms of the tuition fees, uniforms, textbooks, school materials, or transport (UNESCO, 2003, p. 14).

Excluding children from attending school due to economic reasons is against the Constitution of Namibia and the Education Sector Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, among other Namibian policies. Article 20 of the Constitution, declares that all persons shall have the right to education, and it should be provided free of charge (GRN, 1990, p. 14); the Sector Education Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable children states that no child can be refused admittance to school if their parents are unable to pay school related expenses, such as hostels or a school uniform (MoE, 2008a, p. 7). Excluding children due to economic reasons is also against the objectives of UNESCO (2000a, p. 14), which claim that every government has the responsibility to provide free quality basic education, so that no child will be denied access to school due to an inability to pay for it. In order to increase the school enrolment rate it is crucial to reduce the current costs of schooling (UNESCO, 2003, p. 14).

Free education is not as straightforward as it seems. Olga points out that each country decides what constitutes free education. In Namibia, the Curriculum for Basic Education declares free education in terms of school fees and textbooks from Grade 1 to 12 (MoE, 2009, p. 2). Before 2013 parents were expected to pay the school development fund that would provide the necessary resources to the schools, but this has been put to an end since then. However, schools are currently asking for voluntary donations from the families. As Tom argues, the Government declares that they are going to supply all the basic requirements for schools, but then some schools say that what the Government is giving to schools is less than what some of them were receiving before from parents. Along similar lines Taleni argues that

some schools ask parents to voluntarily make donations enabling them to pay for teacher assistants or to build a computer lab.

Voluntary donations from families will definitely uphold a system based on inequality where families from high socio-economic status will receive better education than families who cannot afford to pay the voluntary donations. Taleni claims:

“Some parents would choose schools where they will not be asked to pay these extras. The schools that are not asking the extras are schools that are actually not able to provide this high quality education. So soon you will find the situation where poorer communities would go to certain schools and parents who can afford to pay these extras will go to better schools. That will take us back from where we came from in the past where you have children from so and so in this school and children from so and so in that school. Which I have said it is a sad situation.”

While Namibia provides free school fees and textbooks, access to education has other costs as well, such as the uniform. In this respect, Tom posits that all children in the country are required to wear school uniforms, but the Government does not buy these uniforms. Tom argues that children are allowed to go to school even if they cannot afford a uniform, but which parent would allow their children to go to school without a uniform and be humiliated at school? Tom says that there is a lot of stigma attached to this, so a few learners might not go to school and are excluded because they cannot afford to pay for school uniforms. Olga claims that another important cost in access to education is transport due to the long distances between schools and some communities.

8.3 Quality needs intensive attention

Quality is at the heart of EFA. The second EFA goal focuses on providing primary education of good quality, and the sixth goal on improving every aspect of the quality of education. However quality, due to its subjectivity, means different things for different peoples and institutions. Some link quality to human capital, others to social capital, others measure it based on national or international testing. Even in a single school, quality in education may have different meanings to the teachers, families and learners (UNESCO, 2004, p. 35).

The educational policies in Namibia are strongly committed to quality education as it is reflected in the Strategic Plan (MoE, 2012, p. 12) stating that, “the Namibian educational system is about quality learning”. Namibia relates quality closely to human capital, and preparing a skilled workforce for the development of the future of Namibia, according to the Strategic Plan (MoE, 2012, p. 1) which focuses on providing accessible and equitable quality education and training for a skilled, productive and competitive nation. The first strategic objective of ETSIP is to improve the system’s quality and effectiveness. In this case, quality means the improvement of learning outcomes in school (GRN, 2005, p. 27). Also in the Strategic Plan (2012, p. 5) quality education prioritises learning in order to provide learners with relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes.

As we have seen earlier, the Namibian policies usually group access and quality together, as in the Sector Policy for Inclusive Education (MoE, 2013, p. 15) where the first objective is “to expand access to and provision of quality education, especially for educationally marginalised learners”. However, as usually happens, not only in Namibia but also in many other countries that quality is set aside, surpassed by providing access to education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 85). Relying on access, while leaving quality behind constrains the purposes of education. As Taleni states “inclusive education is not only about placing people in an environment, but placing people in an environment and providing them support to achieve, to perform, to be happy and to socialise together”. Education for all is not schooling for all, but providing quality education for all (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 4).

Linking quality to access and completion of primary school is risky because there is no guarantee that students will learn while attending school (UNESCO, 2014, p. 209). We can see that sometimes children, after finishing school have not achieved relevant outcomes. As Taleni posits:

“A lot of parents had taken their children to school and they feel that this child has been in school for ten years but they are not making any progress, they are still the same as they were before they went to school. If school does not help to move a child from point ‘A’ to point ‘B’ then, this child could have been at home or spending their days in the park instead of sitting at school and doing the same activities over and over for ten years”.

While Namibia has committed to quality education in its policies, it seems that its implementation has been challenging, but it is not a challenge only for Namibia. As Olga says quality is an issue in the majority of the countries; countries have made a vast progress regarding access to education, but its quality is still a challenge. According to Kenneth, in Namibia there is a commitment to access, equity and equality, what is missing at this stage is the quality.

8.4 Moving in the right direction to achieving equity

Quality cannot be achieved without equity. An education system that is characterised by discrimination against a particular group cannot be considered as high quality (UNESCO, 2004, p. 35). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that EFA goals can be achieved only through strengthening the focus on equity (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). Namibian policies are concerned about equity as is reflected in the second strategic objective of ETSIP. This objective is about ensuring equality of educational opportunities, by eradicating critical factors of inequality in education (GRN, 2005, p. 27). As Olga says:

“An inclusive environment is also an environment that caters for each child and it is respectful and attentive of the talents of each child. Meaning that all children are learning at their own path. It doesn't matter when they come from socially, ethnically; or what you already know, the knowledge you bring to class. These things are absolutely critical in a country like this one with the history they have had.”

It is important to understand the situation of Namibia before its independence twenty-five years ago in order to have a clear picture of inequity in the Namibian education system. According to Kenneth, the new Government has made significant contributions to improve equity in education by abolishing a segregated education system, which provided inferior education to certain racial groups and by combining it into a unified education system. This transition from a fragmented education to a united education system is a great achievement.

Learners do not come to classroom equal. There are many factors that can promote inequity in the education system such as home language, gender, ethnicity, type of school that learners

attend or parents' socio-economic backgrounds (UNESCO, 2010, p. 19). In Namibia there are different groups that might suffer from discrimination, for instance, Olga points out the situation of the San children, who not always, but sometimes are discriminated, bullied and so forth. On the other hand, Olga does consider the country to be moving in the right direction in overcoming discrimination in schools.

Eradicating inequality in education can sometimes be understood as treating all children in the same way. At the school in the Kunene region, Victoria states that:

“In our school, they [Himba and Zemba children] are in their traditional way of life, but when they start Grade four, they go to other schools, then they have to cut their hair, change their clothes etc. because all of them have to wear the school uniform, they are sleeping together with other learners and they have to cut it.”

Responding to the question as to why they have to cut their hair and wear uniform, Victoria replies that “they have to look the same, and also you saw our books...the books get red. Therefore they have to wash themselves so they can write in their book more clearly”. This situation where Himba children are pushed to repudiate their own clothing and hairstyle seems to be in disagreement with the recommendations from the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, which states that schools should respect and accommodate different lifestyles and cultures (MoE, 2013, p. 21).

Inclusion in education is not just about access to it. As Tom declares, although education in Namibia is free of charge the socio-economic status of parents has a great influence on inclusion or exclusion in the education system. Tom continues saying that many families from northern Namibia come to the capital, and usually move to informal settlements because they are normally unemployed, and on a number of occasions they are illiterate and poor. These parental characteristics greatly promote exclusion of their children. On the other hand, according to UNESCO (2010, p. 19) in countries with an equitable system, there is a smaller correlation between learners' backgrounds and school achievements.

It is crucial to reduce the inequalities between schools in order to achieve the EFA goals (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). Within the same countries, especially in developing ones, there are

large variations between schools according to class size, availability of learning materials, qualified teachers and school infrastructures (UNESCO, 2010, p. 19). ETSIP (GRN, 2005, p. 34) has the reduction of this great variation as one of its objectives, providing equitable surroundings and improving physical learning environments. The proportion of schools across the country that meet the required physical infrastructure is expected to be 70% by 2019 (GRN, 2005, p. 34).

It is important to be aware that the expenses of educating elite groups are usually less, because they mainly live in urban areas, while minority groups usually live in isolated areas making it more costly to reach them. Therefore, a school system based on equity does not necessarily mean spending the same amount of funding on every learner. In order to achieve equity, article 71 of the Salamanca Framework For Action (UNESCO, 1994, p. 70) states that “the distribution of resources to schools should take a realistic account of the differences in expenditure required to provide appropriate education for all children, bearing in mind their needs and circumstances.” One thing is clear, it is crucial to reduce the inequalities between schools in order to achieve the EFA goals (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

8.5 Language of instruction is complex in a multilingual society

The language of instruction has significant consequences on quality education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 26). Twenty per cent of the world’s population belong to the category of linguistic minorities. Therefore, according to UNESCO (2014, p. 279) it is important to implement a bilingual curriculum that gives children from language minorities the same opportunities to learn as their peers by providing materials in a language, which those children fully understand. UNESCO (2014, p. 284) criticises that there is a too rapid transition to the official language after only a few years of instruction in the mother tongue. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa support bilingual education only until fourth grade and from Grade 4 there is a shift to the official language. Instead, UNESCO (2014, p. 284) suggests that at least six years of mother tongue instruction is needed to overcome the language barriers at school.

The Curriculum for Basic Education implemented in 2010 (MoE, 2009, p. 24) puts in practice this too rapid transition that UNESCO criticises. Mother tongue is the language of instruction from Grade 1 to 3 in Namibia. Grade 4 is a transitional year where the medium

of learning changes from the mother tongue to English. From Grade 5 to 7 English is the language of instruction, using mother tongue only in exceptional cases. In December 2014 there were seminars throughout the country aimed at implementing a new language policy. This policy has not been published at the time of this thesis, but I have received the same answer from all the interviewees regarding its aim. Sonia, Taleni, and Olga confirm that the new language policy emphasises that teaching in mother tongue will be extended until Grade 5, and English will be introduced as a subject from grade 1.

In order to promote quality education for minority linguistic communities, a key strategy is to recruit teachers from those groups to ensure that children are able to learn in their own language as well as get a positive view of their own identities (UNESCO, 2010, p. 29). This is a challenge in Namibia, since there is a lack of teachers who are able to teach in minority mother tongues, as Namibia has a small and sparse population, and there are thirteen official languages in schools. As Sonia says, the number of students studying minority mother tongues at the University of Namibia is very small, so they cannot go to all schools in the country. Olga gives an example about the San:

“There is only one San language, out of the 13 that is used, as a mother tongue instruction. Right now for example, in the university there is no lecturer in that language, so you don’t produce teachers in that language. So training teachers who can teach that mother tongue is still a little bit of a challenge.”

In rural areas, during colonisation, ethnic groups were divided into different regions in the country, and these divisions while they no longer officially exist, are still present today. Due to this ethnic separation Tom explains, the language of instruction is usually not a problem in rural areas, as teachers and learners in most cases have the same mother tongue. The situation is much more problematic in urban areas. According to Tom, in urban areas, where children come from different regions of the country, you have classrooms made up of children from four or five different mother tongues and you cannot expect teachers to be able to teach in all those languages. So in this case, according to Taleni, the teacher usually decides to teach in English, or the language spoken by the majority that might not be the language spoken by some learners in the class.

According to Olga, the use of English, a language that is not the mother tongue for most of the people in the country, is one of the reasons for the weak learning outcomes. Tom claims that if you are not using the mother tongue in schools, you are creating educational disabilities. The system is creating special needs, because you have learners in Grade 8 who have been in school for seven years but are unable to read and write.

On the other hand, UNESCO (2010, p. 26) reports that some parents and children support the idea of learning in the official language as soon as possible, because they see the official language as key to future employment. If the curriculum focuses too long on teaching in local languages, it gives no status beyond the community preventing learners from engaging with the wider world (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 10). This disagreement among parents is true also in Namibia. According to Sonia:

“Most of parents are saying they don’t want their children to be taught in their mother tongue, (...) most of them opted for their children to be taught in English”.

8.6 Gender equality reached in most of the areas

In many countries, girls have fewer possibilities when compared with boys (UNESCO, 2010, p. 19). This situation is mainly due to the fact that gender-based discrimination is still prevalent in many societies constraining girls for their right to education (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 16). Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest gender disparity in access to education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 78).

Namibia belongs to Sub-Saharan Africa, but it has been more progressive in gender equity than many of its neighbouring countries. There is a significant consensus among all the interviewees on the issue of gender equality in Namibia. Sonia, Tom, Kenneth, Olga, Taleni and Suama all agree that Namibia has achieved gender equality. Some of them even go a step further, claiming that nowadays girls have more opportunities to access, and to stay in schools longer than boys. Tom states:

“I have done some studies about gender studies, and I can say that Namibia has done better than a lot of African countries, actually better than many countries

in the world. In terms on gender parity the Namibian girl-child is better off, educationally, than are the Namibian boy-child, educationally.”

According to Tom, there are more girls at all levels of the system than boys and they also have a better performance. Nowadays Namibia, as Kenneth says, is more concerned about boys dropping out of schools. Tom has the same view, wondering what can be done to the boy-child to improve performance and reduce the danger of dropout. According to Olga, girls might have difficulty in accessing education, but the moment you manage to put a girl into school, she usually stays in school longer than boys.

In order to achieve the fifth EFA goal it is necessary to eliminate the gender gap (UNESCO, 2010, p. 19). To ensure access for girls to education is fundamental, but it is not enough. Achieving parity in education is not only about equal numbers of male and female learners but also about equal opportunities, treatment and outcomes (UNESCO, 2003, p. 16). We should also be aware that real equal opportunities require compensatory efforts to close the gap in learning achievement between girls and boys (WCEFA, 1990, p. 55).

Tom states that gender equality is still a challenge in two regions of Namibia: the Kunene and the Kavango. This could perhaps be due to the lack of compensatory efforts to close the gap. According to Sonia, some ethnic groups, such as the San, tend to be culturally excluded, with some San girls dropping out of the school, as the schools do not take their culture into account. Taleni gives an example regarding the Himba people, claiming that although all children can go to school, there are some cultural conceptions among the Himba that constrain them in attending school. In order to promote access to education for girls who might be excluded at the moment in some ethnic groups, it is crucial to take into account factors that would encourage parents to send their daughters to school: such as creating a safe school environment, improving the school facilities, reviewing the curriculum and textbooks, removing gender stereotypes, installing separate latrines for girls and boys, and training teachers in gender sensitivity (UNESCO, 2014, p. 77).

8.6 Rural areas and urban areas face different challenges

Rural areas suffer from limited quantity and quality of schools, irrelevance of the curriculum, long distances between home and the school, and high costs of educating children whose

labour is needed at home (WCEFA, 1990, p. 55). This situation puts children in rural areas at a greater risk of not reaching minimum levels of achievements (UNESCO, 2014, p. 196).

The Namibia's National Agenda for Children (GRN, 2012a, p. 19) utilises a study made by SACMEQ to reveal a persisting gap in performance between rural and urban learners. According to this research, based on the results of a national English assessment, 70% of learners in a rural region (Ohangwena) got a 'below basic achievement' assessment compared to 21% in an urban area (Khomas). It is not only about learning outcomes but also, as Kenneth says, there is a much higher number of dropouts in rural areas. Tom sums the situation up, by declaring that in rural areas the access to quality education is not as good as in urban areas. Rural areas, according to Taleni, are likely to have less educational resources, such as Internet or electricity.

Regarding teacher quality in urban and rural areas, there is a disagreement between some of the interviewees. According to Kenneth, nowadays we cannot say anymore that there are more skilled teachers in urban areas, because the Government has taken actions to place more skilled teachers in rural regions. However, Tom and Taleni state that good quality teachers are much more represented in urban areas. According to Tom, good quality teachers tend to stay in urban areas because they have better facilities.

At the same time, Tom acknowledges that the comparison between rural and urban areas is a too general statement, because the diversity between schools in cities is big:

“In urban areas there are a variety of schools. There are schools that they are more advantage than before, they are well resourced, with very good teachers, there are also schools in the capital city that are not well resourced and they don't have very good teachers, in the same city itself. So if you stick only to urban and rural areas you will miss the point of informal settlements in Windhoek for example, where there are schools that are poor resourced. What has happened in rural-urban migration is to create overcrowding in urban areas and to create situations where life becomes extremely difficult. There are poor sanitation, poor housing, and in those areas with poor sanitation and poor housing, there are poor schools.”

Tom points out that because of migration to cities and informal settlements urban schools can be overcrowded and lack facilities for such big numbers. As discussed earlier the choice of language of instruction is also difficult in multilingual classes.

8.8 Dilemma between inclusion and special schools

Namibia has developed an understanding of inclusive education as a holistic approach instead of just focusing on special education. In the Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2009, p. 29), inclusive education was discussed in terms of social acceptance of the different abilities of learners with impairments as equal members of the class and school. In a more recent policy, the Sector Policy for Inclusive Education, Namibia has adopted the UNESCO approach, referring to inclusive education as a process of addressing, and responding to diverse needs of all learners through increased participation in learning, cultures and communities, and as a reduced exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2008, in MoE, 2013, p. 6). Tweshi is a teacher in a special school in Namibia; however, she feels that special education in Namibia is not special and wishes the special needs were better addressed in curriculum, teaching and assesment:

“I feel special education is supposed to mean that the curriculum is specialised to fit the needs of the learners. Therefore the way these children are assessed should be according to their needs. But in Namibia, at the special schools we still use the same curriculum as the mainstream schools have, the same syllabi, the same assessments form, the same everything... So I don't know how special is the education in Namibia.”

The Education Sector Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (MoE, 2008a, p. 11) states that the curriculum should be flexible in order to adapt to learners with special educational needs, but it seems that the objective of implementing a flexible curriculum has not been accomplished yet.

According to Sonia, one of the main challenges for effectively implementing special education is the lack of qualified teachers. In this respect, Tom exposes an example about the lack of trained teachers for hearing impaired learners. Tom says that you can have at school some teachers who are supposed to teach a hearing impaired learner using sign

language, but they cannot sign themselves because there is very limited training at university. Demand exceeds what the university can offer.

Special schools, according to Sonia, Olga and Kenneth have been successful in the way they are providing education to the group of children that otherwise would not have received education at all. For them, the main constraint is the lack of special schools throughout the country. According to Kenneth, those schools are few, and far from homes, so parents have to send their children long distances; they have to go to boarding schools or stay in hostels. According to Taleni, Olga and Tom, due to the lack of special schools, they cannot take all children with special needs. According to Taleni, special schools have a waiting list that is longer in numbers than the population the school can take, and some learners remain on the waiting list until they are too old to start school.

The low quality of some special schools contributes to the stigmatisation of disabled children, because of the inadequate physical access, shortages of trained teachers and teaching aids, and discriminatory classroom practices (UNESCO, 2010, p. 27). Sometimes there is a lot of stigma associated with sending a child with special needs to a special school. According to Taleni some people still believe that if you have special needs you are almost doomed and you cannot progress, and so many parents still do not send their children to school.

Even if parents send their children with special needs to school, they can be far from home. So the children, according to Kenneth:

“Grow up continuously with this feeling that I am separate from my family, I am separate from other children because I don’t look like them or because I don’t have the same abilities as they have, so the education system is perpetuating otherness of the child with special needs. It is not the intention, because the intention is to provide them education, it is a good thing that they are there, otherwise they would have no education but they are perpetuating discrimination by not providing the child an education close to their families.”

Sometimes there are parents who contribute to the stigmatisation of their children because they want to send them to special schools for benign reasons such as having an albino child. As Taleni says:

“Albinism is just a skin problem, therefore they can go to any school, but parents feel that ‘oh my child will be teased, they should go to school with people like himself or herself, where they are not going to be exposed to bullying and teasing and so on’. So instead of addressing the problem of teasing the problem of not acceptance of diversity, we want to solve the problem by taking the child away.”

This is clearly in contradiction to the Curriculum for Basic Education, which establishes that special education will be provided only in cases where the degree of learning disability is such that the learner cannot benefit from full inclusion in a mainstream school.

There is constant debate on whether children with disabilities should attend special or mainstream schools. According to the Salamanca Framework (UNESCO, 1994, p. 13) special education comes with a high cost and usually only an urban elite benefits from it, while children with disabilities living in rural areas are provided with no services whatsoever. Therefore, the solution is that, rather than concentrating efforts on special schools, there should be a focus on the development of an inclusive education system (UNESCO, 1994, p. 13). Education strategies increasingly recognise the importance of accommodating children with disabilities in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2014, p. 287). The EFA approach supports inclusive education, not only by emphasising access for children with disabilities to mainstream school, but also by encouraging that all the necessary inputs are put in place, in order to reach their learning potential (UNESCO, 2010, p. 29).

The recently published Namibian Sector Policy on Inclusive Education supports a school system in which children with special needs are accommodated in the mainstream schools (MoE, 2013, p. 6). As Taleni says, the Government has ratified the Salamanca Declaration and has no intention to create more special schools as they were created in the past. Olga claims that in order to implement the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream education, a very strong support system is needed otherwise mainstreaming children becomes problematic. Olga also adds that special schools in Namibia have gained very good results, but there are just not enough of them yet.

8.9 Lack of qualified teachers with training in inclusion

Teacher training is sometimes set aside compared to the objective of getting more children into schools. However, this strategy can considerably jeopardise achievements in education (UNESCO, 2014, p. 85). In order to promote adequate teacher training, the Curriculum for Basic Education (MoE, 2009, p. 37) emphasises that primary school teachers must be qualified at diploma level at least. However, according to Kenneth there is a teacher shortage because:

“After the independence all the four teacher colleges that provided the supplies of new teachers were closed. They gave practical and theoretical expertise to teacher pre-services. And those four were closed down in favour of the university-based qualification. The colleges had different entry requirements and they were more accessible. Now it has become really academic qualifications. You can understand, if we talk about the professionalization of the career, that you want to drive it to some kind of university qualifications, but the colleges were stepping stones towards getting qualifications while still getting pre-service training. So that is kind of removed now. And not every child who wants to become a teacher is necessarily qualified for the university entry requirement.”

Kenneth is referring to the merge of colleges to become part of university training and evaluates that this change became a hindrance for some students to enter teacher education and thus possibly increased teacher shortage.

While the curriculum has an important role in providing quality education, teachers are the most important educational resource (UNESCO, 2010, p. 20), therefore the key to ending the learning problems, is to recruit the best teacher candidates, give them appropriate training, deploy them where they are needed and give them incentives to reinforce their commitment to teaching (UNESCO 2014, p. 186). However, it seems that teachers in many countries are not trained well enough to provide an education based on inclusion. According to Tom there are many teachers in Namibia that are not being exposed to teacher education, and therefore they have not been trained to handle issues of inclusive education. Sonia says, that while the Curriculum states that teachers should be able to produce locally and culturally relevant materials, teacher education is in English and when teachers start teaching they are

asked to provide material in local languages although teachers have not had any previous practical work in those languages. Along similar lines, Tweshi argues that teachers are trained to teach the so-called ‘normal children’; so implementing inclusive education where teachers teach learners with diverse needs is challenging.

Namibia is again taking a new approach to developing education based on inclusion, and acknowledging that teacher training is a key for developing inclusive education. Therefore the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (MoE, 2013, p. 11) declares that inclusive education practices should be infused in all teacher-training programs, and all teaching staff should be trained for differentiated instruction. As Tom claims, “you cannot talk about inclusive education if teacher education is not inclusive”. Taleni points out that in order to fulfil this objective, the University of Namibia has been providing inclusive education to all students who have been going through teacher education after 2004.

To provide an inclusive education is quite challenging for primary school teachers because, according to Olga, you need to be able to manage a classroom, which is very diverse, with children coming from different kind of backgrounds, diversity in social status and diversity in language. So implementing an inclusive system is demanding, but in the long run it is a very positive point that will bring quality to education.

Kenneth, Sonia and Tom agree that teacher education in Namibia is currently too academic with little or no practical training. Sonia declares that before the teacher colleges were closed down, teacher education combined theory and practice where teachers went out to schools to do internships and they could really see how a classroom was run. Now the teacher education system has changed, according to Tom, to a more theoretical curriculum. According to Tom this is a mistake because :

“Talking theoretically about inclusive education does not make sense. We need to work a lot on strategies on how to teach inclusively, how to behave inclusively and how it would be treated this inclusiveness.”

8.10 Culturally relevant material and adequate facilities are needed for inclusion

Textbooks play an important role in delivering quality education but there can be some factors constraining their potential such as a low budget for books, an inefficient distribution system and negligent practices (UNESCO, 2004, p. 26). UNESCO states that while Namibia experienced a rapid increase in school enrolment between 2000 and 2007, the availability of textbooks did not keep pace (UNESCO, 2014, p. 87). In order to improve the provision of textbooks, ETSIP (GRN, 2005, p. 33), expresses a commitment to achieving the goal of one book per learner by 2019. In a more recent policy, the Strategic Plan expects to reach this goal by the end of 2015 (MoE, 2012, p. 15).

It is crucial that learning resources promote quality education by developing relevant content for all learners (UNESCO, 2014, p. 285). In this sense, Taleni comments that Namibia has significantly changed after independence

“When I was at school you find in most of books that a doctor would be a white male, and a nurse would be a black female, and a domestic worker would be black female and she will be dressed in a certain way. But most of the schoolbooks are now addressing that. I have been doing a research in a school this year and there, the books have a picture of a Herero woman on the cover. Those things were unheard in the past.”

Thus, Namibia is also facing other challenges apart from the provision of books, for instance how relevant those materials are for the wide diversity of children’s backgrounds. It is a significant challenge to write textbooks in minority languages. According to Olga it is a challenge because the group that speaks a language can be small and for a publishing house it is not profitable to print material in minority languages unless you have support from the Government. So there are some reasons as to why, sometimes there are school materials that are not culturally relevant.

A poor physical environment such as badly ventilated classrooms, leaking roofs, and poor sanitation constrain learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2010, p. 20). This is especially visible, according to UNESCO (2014, p. 89) in sub-Saharan Africa where children are often in overcrowded classrooms or learning outside (UNESCO, 2014, p. 89). According to ETSIP

(GRN, 2005, p. 36) all schools in Namibia should have access to clean water by 2007 and access to electricity by 2010. However, according to the UNICEF (2011, p. 19) 19% of the schools in Namibia have no access to water and 44% have no access to electricity. UNICEF, (2011, p.20) using the rate provision from 2001 to 2009, states that it will take seventeen years to have water supply and eighteen years to have electricity in all schools. The lack of electricity and running water is unacceptable due to the negative impacts on learner health, well-being and learning outcomes.

8.11 Community involvement required to achieving inclusive education

Some of the Namibian educational policies pay attention to the involvement of communities in order to improve quality in education. The Curriculum for Basic Education (2009, p.5) states that the community needs to actively support the holistic development of the learner. In the Sector Policy for Inclusive Education the community also has an important role in schools, claiming that communities should be capacitated to support inclusive education (MoE, 2013, p. 21). This policy document also states that teachers, school management, parents and the broader communities should support each other to benefit each learner (MoE, 2013, p. 10). The Education Sector on Orphans and Vulnerable Children also emphasises the community involvement in order to mitigate the vulnerability, for whatever reasons, of its learners (MoE, 2008a, p. 12).

However, it seems that there is a lack of understanding of what this collaboration between communities and schools is all about. Victoria, the teacher in the mobile school in the Kunene region made a comment that shows that co-operation does not always work and joint vision and agreement are needed. Victoria explained that:

“You see, we were just putting nicely a wire around the school, but now everything is just removed from there by the community. The community they removed it and they use it for their gardens.”

Therefore any improvement at school level needs to be accompanied by a general societal development. Changes in reality occur gradually. While the policy can be changed easily, the people’s mentality takes longer. It is a long walk to inclusion, but definitely a walk worth to be made. In order to promote inclusive education, Tweshi claims that people out of schools

do not know what inclusion means, they do not know how to go about it. Therefore, Tweshi continues, inclusive education will not be materialised unless communities become aware about it. This lack of understanding, according to Olga is mainly due to communities not participating in developing the education system; there is a limited consultation, so the people do not feel they are involved in developing education, they do not own it.

Within the communities, guardians are the ones that need to be involved in developing education. According to the Sector Policy on inclusive education (MoE, 2013, p. 20) parents should be seen as equal partners in developing inclusive education, and they should be provided with all the relevant information as well as real opportunities to participate in the schools.

However, while the policies try to reinforce the role of guardians in the schools, the reality seems to be different. According to Sonia, the participation of parents has been a challenge in Namibia, because they tend to give all the responsibility to the education system. Olga adds that parents rarely come to school because they are not really interested on what is happening there. As an example, Victoria explains that

“Parents are used to just send their children to school. They are not communicating with us, or maybe to ask learners how was the school today? What did you learn about? They are not asking, the parents are not asking their children.”

UNESCO (2014, p. 296) goes a step further claiming that not only is it important that the community supports inclusive education but it is also important to develop the curriculum in consultation with pupils, families, and community leaders in order to address the needs of teachers and learners. So the communities will also own the project and it is not a top-down policy implementation.

8.12 From rhetoric to reality to ensuring inclusive education

The Curriculum for Basic Education admits that the main challenge of the curriculum is its implementation (MoE, 2009, p. 5). The challenges of implementation are also visible in ETSIP. Five years after its implementation in 2005, it was reported that the education system

has not changed much with this strategy, and issues such as low quality education, inequalities in the distribution of educational resources and in learning achievements across the country are still the main weaknesses of the system (MoE, 2011, p.7 in NPC, 2013, p. 34). Namibia, according to Olga, has a number of policies working towards creating an inclusive education system. On the other hand Taleni, who has been working in the area of inclusive education in Namibia for the past twenty years, claims that Namibia has all these nice policies, but when it comes to implementing them it is always problematic. The Sector policy on Inclusive Education, according to Kenneth:

“Is asking for system change, it is asking for mainstream, it is asking to remove the institutionalisation of children with special needs, bring them as one group in the community, that is not going to happen overnight, I think there is still a lot of thinking that needs to go around, how do you gradually change the education system to become inclusive, you can’t all of a sudden close down all the schools for children with special needs and tomorrow you have inclusive education.”

Olga made an interesting remark, saying that the development of the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education was a long process, which lasted more than six years. So, if six years were needed to launch a 35-page document, how long would it take to implement it? Moreover, Tom believes that the policy does not clearly explain the mechanisms used for its full implementation. Still, one must note that Namibia is not alone when talking about the problems of implementing policies; it seems to be a very universal problem. Policy guidance and monitoring is needed everywhere to ensure successful implementation.

8.13 Monitoring the implementation of inclusive policies is essential

Apart from slowness in implementation, another main challenge is related to monitoring the implementation. The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education mentions monitoring as an essential strategy in the realisation of the policy (MoE, 2013, p. 11). This strategy includes plan of monitoring the successful implementation of the policy, putting mechanisms in place for early identification of individuals at risk of educational marginalisation, and ensuring that every student has the rights to enter school (MoE, 2013, p. 11). Taleni explains that if

there is no monitoring of the implementation process, Namibia is going to experience great difficulties. Taleni provides an example, describing a pilot project on inclusive education:

“We have schools that were declared in 1995 already as pilot schools of inclusion, but you cannot pilot a project for 20 years, you should go back and monitor and say this is what it has been achieved, and these are the loopholes. Currently those schools are still referred to as pilot schools and it has been more than 20 years now so this is what shows you a lack of monitoring.”

Monitoring requires much attention in Namibia. According to Olga, Namibia has a clear set of objectives and a clear framework, so that you know what you want to achieve. However, you can have in place fantastic policies, fantastic frameworks, but if you are not monitoring them, you might have very few results at the end.

9. Discussion

9.1 Introduction

The study set out to explore the issues of inclusive education, in primary education in Namibia, comparing the guidelines from EFA with Namibian educational policies and their actual implementation through interviews of experts in education in the country. The aim of the study is to analyse educational policies and the school realities with a particular focus on inclusive education. The study also seeks to identify successes and challenges in providing access to good quality education based on equity and equality. I have also attempted to provide a brief overview of the Namibian background including the influence of its colonial past in creating inequality. This study seeks to answer two questions:

1. How does Namibia address the issue of inclusive education in its educational policies and practices?
2. What are the main successes and challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies?

I focused the research on four main aims that are presented in the EFA Goals for primary education: universal primary education, equity, gender equality, and quality of education. These concepts are central in the theoretical framework of this research. The literature studied for the thesis is related to research on inclusive education and reports from UNESCO, such as the Global Monitoring Reports, and World Forums. I have particularly sought to include literature regarding inclusive education in Namibia. The two main research data sources were the Namibian policy documents and the interviews with experts on education.

In this chapter, I firstly interpret, and discuss the findings using the four EFA goals that relate to primary education as the headings of my discussion. Secondly, I suggest some guidelines for future research and I present my conclusions concerning the research process. Finally, I express my final thoughts regarding my experiences in conducting this thesis.

9.2 Interpretation of the main findings

9.2.1 Universal primary education

The second EFA goal refers to universal primary education, claiming that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Universal primary education is one of the main achievements in inclusive education in Namibia. In terms of access to education, EFA in its second goal states that all children should have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. The net enrolment ratio in Namibia by 2012 was 99.6% (MoE, 2013, in NPC, 2013, p. 29), which means that universal access to education is almost accomplished. Some problems were reported, for instance concerning a few cultural groups or various school expenses.

It is important to acknowledge the near achievement of universal primary education, in a country like Namibia, the country that was explicitly unequal before independence. The first educational policy after independence, 'Towards Education for All' (1993) committed to move education away from its colonial moorings (MoE, 1992, p. 22). One of its main objectives was to provide access to education to all children in Namibia, making a determined shift away from pre-independence strategy, which focused on providing access only to an elite minority group (MoE, 1992, p. 7). As a consequence of this policy, Namibia had a steady increase in the net enrolment ratio from 89% in 1992, to 99,6% in 2012 (MoE, 2013; as cited in NPC, 2013, p. 29). However, according to the latest Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2015, p. 233) Namibia has slightly slowed down its positive progression. Nevertheless, in the African context, the net enrolment rate is considerably high. Moreover, regarding the completion of primary education, Namibia with 84% in 2012, ranks well above the sub-Saharan average that is 70% (UNESCO 2012, p. 41).

9.2.2 Gender equality

The fifth EFA goal relates to gender parity and equality. It is concerned with eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring that girls have full and equal access to, and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Namibia, according to UNESCO (2012, p. 4) has already achieved gender equality in almost all areas. This achievement is even more impressive if we take into account the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest gender inequality (UNESCO, 2014, p. 78). Namibia, since independence in 1990 has made a significant effort to ensure equal access to education (MoE, 2004, p. 4). The net enrolment ratio of girls is higher than the net enrolment ratio of boys, and in general, girls have a higher survival rate than boys (MoE, 2013; as cited in NPC, 2013, p. 29). All the interviewees support the same view that there are more girls than boys in schools, performing better and staying in school longer than boys. As explained in the findings, in only two out of fourteen regions, Kunene and Kavango, girls are in a disadvantaged position compared to boys.

9.2.3 Equity in education

Equity is a cornerstone to achieve inclusive education. Equity is not about treating everyone equally but treating them in the best way possible to fulfil their individual potentials. The use of the same rigid curricula and the same national modes of assessment for all learners do not promote equity. There are examples of these inflexible practices in Namibia, for instance, in schools for children with special needs, or among Himba, Zemba and San children who are living their traditional way of life in their home communities and are exposed to the same learning materials as children attending the mainstream schools. They are also expected to take the same national tests at the end of Grade 10 without taking into consideration their personal or community backgrounds.

One of the main challenges to providing equity in education in Namibia relates to the language of instruction. As pointed out, there are around 30 mother tongues in a country with just over two million people, and thirteen of these languages are used as language of instruction in primary schools. The adoption of English as the medium of instruction has become a focus of much debate in the country, as it has effects on pupils' learning and identity (Murray, 2007, p. 69; Nekhwevha, 1999, p. 502, Fourie, 1997, p. 31).

Language diversity in the same classroom is a challenge for teachers and learners. One solution would be to divide learners according to mother tongue, but this is against the principles of inclusion and would lead back to the apartheid era where there were eleven different education systems based on ethnic group origin. In order to promote an inclusive education system where children with different mother tongues are accommodated in the same class it is essential to have a strong support system with enough qualified teachers, teacher assistants and teaching materials to help children reach their potential regardless of their native tongues.

The controversy around what is the best approach to language of instruction was visible during the interviews. Some interviewees believed that mother tongues should be used as a language of instruction, because they are the languages that children use at home. Others believed that learners need a full immersion into English from the beginning of primary education. The views of parents also differ in the same way as those of experts.

In the literature, Murray (2007, p. 69) claims that using English as the language of instruction for children with different mother tongues contributes to poor academic performance, high repetition and dropout rates. In an article published in the Guardian (Kisting, 2012) with the dire headline of 'Namibia's language policy is 'poisoning' its children' the writer argues that the language policy, put in place over 20 years ago, has failed to deliver widespread competences and it deeply affects the levels of success in education. Namibia has recently developed a new language policy, which states that teaching through the mother tongue is extended from Grade 4 to Grade 5 aiming to improve learning outcomes in learners' mother tongues and to make the transition to English smooth.

To achieve equity in education, the role of special schools must be discussed. There is no agreement about how much special schools are needed when inclusion is the aim. In western countries there was in the past an increase of special schools as the best approach to teach learners with special needs, but nowadays, there is a tendency to include all children in mainstream schools. The special education system has not been fully implemented in Namibia, but there is currently pressure to stop developing them and to prefer putting children with special needs to mainstream schools. While I consider that the shift from

special education to inclusive education system is crucial, the decision on how this transition is made, should be determined by the country itself.

Most of the interviewees agreed that special schools in Namibia are providing good education to the groups of learners than otherwise would be left aside. According to them, two of the main problems are who there are not enough schools to accommodate all the children with special needs, and secondly that there is a lack of curricular adaptation for those learners, as at the moment special schools are using the same curriculum and the same materials as the mainstream schools. Zimba et al. (2011, pp. 47-48) argues that including children with special needs in mainstream schools without adequate support does not promote quality in education. The interviewees also stated that very often the special education institutions are situated very far from homes, forcing children to attend boarding houses.

9.2.4 Quality of education

The sixth EFA goal addresses quality of education. It refers to improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential skills. Moreover, the second EFA goal, as I have presented earlier, also focuses on quality of education when it claims that by 2015 all children should have access to, and complete primary education of good quality.

Quality of education while difficult to achieve, is the cornerstone of an inclusive education system. The concept of quality also needs to be defined with care, as it has different meanings, visions, and objectives. In this research, quality is based on the concept of inclusion that I have discussed and analysed throughout the research. Therefore quality will not be achieved if children from any groups are left behind, such as for instance children from minority language groups or children with special needs. An educational system based on quality should adapt to the needs, capacities and potential of all learners, providing knowledge that is relevant for all the students.

In the interviews, all educational experts mentioned that quality is still lagging behind in Namibia. Their reflections are in line with most of the literature about this issue. Garrouste

(2011, p. 224), Marope (2005, p. 20) and SACMEQ (2010, p. 1) all agree that while access to education has been a major achievement in Namibia, the quality of education is still a major concern for the Government, and society in general. Namibia emphasises quality as a cornerstone in many of its policies such as in ETSIP (2005), the Strategic Plan (2012) and Vision 2030 (2005). However, the main challenge is in transferring these policies to everyday practices in schools.

Access to education without quality means very little; while access to education has significantly increased in Africa in the last decades, delivering an adequate infrastructure where learning can take place still needs efforts. There is a global movement where international organisations, governments and NGOs are working together to send children to school. But, if there is no real learning visible while children attend the school, children and parents might feel that there is no real benefit. With these experiences, future generations may not be so willing to send their children to school. Quality education is based on equity and relevance, responding to students' various needs. If there is gender inequality or discrimination against learners, if a learner does not understand the language of instruction, or if the school material is not relevant for the children, then we cannot talk about high-quality education and there is no inclusive education.

Namibia has a huge cultural diversity visible in the diversity of languages, cultures and traditions. This diversity is enriching when people from different backgrounds live together, but it also requires a strong support system so that teachers are able to manage a class where diversity is respected and promoted. To learn to teach inclusively is a challenging and demanding process that will take time, but this is the path that Namibia has decided to take and has made great progress.

Policy by itself does not result in change if it is not accompanied by similar practices. If educational policies address the issue of quality, but if they are not implemented properly, they make little sense. All the interviewees agree that Namibia has excellent policies, but when it comes to implementing them the situation is usually problematic. This is a general problem, not only in Namibia but also in most of the countries throughout the world. It often happens that educational policies are more symbolic in terms of abolishing injustices and inequalities rather than pragmatic with the intention to be really implemented. Namibia, according to Amukugo, Likando and Mushaandja (2010, p. 109) has developed relevant

policies but the Government is falling short in their implementation. While the policies have been promoting equity, equality and quality compare to time before independence in 1990, after twenty-five years, the implementation of inclusive education still remains a challenge. Efficient policy guidance and monitoring systems are needed to identify the bottlenecks and make changes accordingly. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that Namibia is more inclusive now than ever before.

9.3 Conclusion and direction for further research

This thesis describes a certain point in the educational process; it attempts to evaluate the current state of inclusive education in Namibia. Policies, practices and approaches to inclusion are dynamic phenomena and they are continuously evolving. The Namibian government is committed to improve the education system in the country and, for instance, it is currently revising the curriculum for basic education in the collaboration with educators and education experts, in order to face the challenges the country is facing. Therefore, this research is context and time related, and the results from it may differ compared to future studies concerning the same topic.

The EFA approach is coming to an end this year, 2015. In May 2015 the third World Forum on Education takes place in Incheon, South Korea, where a new approach towards improving education will be defined. The six EFA goals will be preceded by five themes: right to education, equity in education, inclusive education, quality education and lifelong learning. This World Forum, as well as other regional meetings will design the framework for the publication of the Post-2015 Development Agenda with a renovated global agenda to improve education.

In conclusion, following the research questions, I state that Namibia has made considerable positive changes in a short period of time in overcoming the segregated system of the past. However, there are still challenges that need to be faced in order to improve the provision of an education system based on quality and equity.

This study sought to provide a holistic picture of inclusive education at national level in Namibia including all children, particularly the ones that might be currently excluded in society, such as children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, or children living in rural areas.

Therefore in future research, it might be relevant to focus on case studies of one of these groups due to the vast differences between them. Another relevant topic may be to concentrate on certain areas and study how inclusion varies according regions. One more possible focus of study could also be an in-depth research on one of the issues I have analysed in this thesis, such as gender issues, language of instruction or teacher training. Moreover, one of the main results in this research was the discrepancy between policies and practices, which is very common in many countries. It would be challenging but important to study why there is such a gap.

9.4 Final thoughts

I am a Spaniard studying a Master's in Education and Globalisation in Oulu, Finland and writing a thesis about Namibia. This combination pretty much summarises my philosophy of life. I consider important to put into practice the academic knowledge gained during my studies in Finland. It may sound paradoxical, but being in new places and meeting new people helps to become aware of your own values, traditions and beliefs. These experiences also help you to realise that what unites people throughout the world is greater than what divides them. Most of the people around the world, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion, ideology, sexual orientation or social class, have the same goal: to be happy.

Writing a thesis about inclusive education in Namibia has been an enriching personal experience that has definitely shaped my values and beliefs. I acknowledge my limitations in writing a thesis about a country, in which I have lived for only five months, but on the other hand this thesis is not an end, but the beginning of a path I wish to follow in my future career.

Twenty-five years ago Namibia gained Independence from a regime based on inequalities and oppression from an elite minority towards a majority of people who were oppressed based on their skin colour. Since independence, Namibia has made considerable progress in a relatively short time. Currently, Namibia, in the African context stands out in terms of good governance, low-levels of corruption, high-levels of literacy, net enrolment ratios and gender equality. The Government is strongly committed to developing education investing in it more than 20% of the national budget. The five months I spent in Namibia were really inspiring in the sense that I realised the fast process of transformation in Namibia. This

experience has helped me to realise that a country is able to change if the people are willing to do so. This experience is also valuable for me in the context of Spain, my home country, where things that are constraining development can also be changed.

During my time in Namibia my experience was that people are enthusiastic about transforming their society. People want to turn the page on the past and start writing a new chapter in which everyone has own voice and something to say. I got the impression that Namibia is full of enthusiasm for making the country a nation, where life is enhanced and flourishes for all Namibians. Namibia, as its National Anthem says, is the land of the brave:

Namibia, land of the brave

(...)

Together in unity

Contrasting beautiful Namibia

Namibia our country

Beloved land of savannahs,

Hold high the banner of liberty

Namibia our Country,

Namibia Motherland,

We love thee.

Figure 2. Sossusvlei. Namib Desert.
(Picture taken by the thesis author)



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Appendix A

List of educational policies currently in used

- The National Curriculum for Basic Education
- The Strategic Plan for the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP): 2005-2020.
- Sector Policy on Inclusive Education
- Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
- Strategic Plan 2012-17
- Sector Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy
- Language Policy for schools- 1992-1996 and Beyond
- ICT Integration for Equity and Excellence in Education
- Namibia National Textbook Policy
- Namibia's National Agenda for Children 2012-2016

Appendix B

Interview's guideline

- Is the education inclusive in Namibia at the moment? How it is or is not inclusive?
- In your opinion, what are the main improvements in inclusive education since the independence in 1990?
- What do you think are the good points in the Sector Policy for Inclusive Education?
- Is there anything missing? Would you make any change in the policy to make a better inclusive education framework?
- Were teachers included in developing the policy?
- What do you think will be the main challenges for the implementation?
- Do girls have the same opportunities to attend to school as the boys have? Is there any kind of cultural factor, economic or any other kind of factors that prevent girls for attending to school?
- How similar or different is the education in rural and urban areas? Do learners have the same opportunities to have access to good quality education that is culturally relevant for them?
- How is the special education in Namibia at the moment? What would you improve?
- What are the groups who are excluded at the moment? What do you think are the reasons for exclusion? Do you think the society and schools will truly included them in the near future?
- How would you handle the issue of language of instruction?

- Are the books and other school materials adapted to minority languages and minority cultural contexts?
- Is education totally free? What about school fees, books, transport, food, hostels?
- How do the expenses affect school attendance? Are there families who cannot afford sending their children to school?
- Is there something that you could say about this inclusiveness or exclusiveness in Namibian society, that influences the education system as well?
- Can the schools be inclusive if the society is not inclusive? Who must do the first step, schools or the society?
- Could you name three things you would like to change in the current system in order to achieve inclusive education for all learners?

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix C
Research schedule

Dates	Place	Activities
May 2014	Oulu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented and accepted research topic • Literature reviewed • Developed theoretical framework • Developed methodology
August-December 2014	Windhoek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange student at University of Namibia. • Study visit to a primary school in Kunene • Study visit to three special schools in Windhoek • Visit the UNESCO's and UNICEF's offices in Windhoek • Participation in a national conference on education in Rundu • Interviews • Data transcriptions
January-March 2015	Malaga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis writing
March-May 2015	Oulu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis writing • Thesis submission

Appendix D

Consent form

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the presence of the Education For All, as an approach for inclusive education, in the Namibian policy for primary education and to compare what it is written in the policy with its implementation at the school level. The data will be collected from Namibian policy documents and interviews to experts in primary school education such as university professors, experts in Education For All Policy from UNESCO and UNICEF, primary school teachers, and NGOs involved in inclusive education.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time that you are participating. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed and before it is officially published. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only I will know your identity.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

Signature of Participant

Date

Email (in case you want to receive a copy of the research):

Diego Martinez Madrid
Master Student in Education and Globalisation,
University of Oulu, Finland

Appendix E

Letter to Mobile Primary School in the Kunene Region

To: The Director of Education: Kunene Region

Cc: The Inspector of Education: Mobile Schools. [REDACTED]

From: Dr. [REDACTED]

Head of Department: [REDACTED]

Subject: Research and Familiarization Visit by Team of the University of Namibia

Date: 8 October 2014

Dear Sirs

Our telephonic conversation regarding the above matter has reference. We are three members of the Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education. As you might be aware, we have started with the research on Inclusive Education and Marginalized Communities in August 2011 and are continuing with this project. We would like to visit your region, especially the area in which mobile schools are operating, to do observations during your outreach programme to the schools. Our intended visit is planned from 16 – 19 October 2014. This time around, we are accompanied by an exchange student who is currently registered at the University of Oulu in Finland and who is writing his thesis on the Education of Marginalized Communities in the Sub-Region. He might have questions to ask to enhance his research. During the visit, we would also like to share or provide a briefing on work we have done since our last visit to your region in 2011.

Kindly grant us permission to continue with our work with your communities. We are aware of the examinations and the ethics related to research with marginalized communities and we will abide by these ethics as far as possible.

Thank you for your kindness in accepting our invitation despite the short notice. We had to change dates due to the University Examinations, which had led to us having to undertake this trip earlier than planned. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any issues for which you need clarifications.

Yours truly,

[REDACTED]