

**Opportunity Granted or Denied: An analysis of teachers' implementation of English Language syllabus' learning objectives and the fate of Grade 10 ESL learners at Public Schools in Windhoek**

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**Abstract**

*There is growing evidence that a lack of mastery of the English language causes negative academic consequences for learners. Poor performance of learners in national examinations in some countries, including Namibia, where English is the medium of instruction, has been attributed to low proficiency in English. Studies have also shown that there is often misalignment between what is intended to be taught in the classroom, and what is actually taught. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore whether teachers implemented intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives, specifically in terms of content coverage in their classrooms. The study used a mixed method sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data was collected by questionnaire from thirty teachers of English as Second Language (ESL) at public schools in Windhoek. For the qualitative phase of the study, four teachers were interviewed. The study revealed that teachers do not implement all the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives in their classrooms. This ultimately compromises learners' opportunity to learn and attain academic success.*

**1. Introduction**

In some multilingual contexts in Africa, particularly where a national unifying language is absent, English has been adopted as the language of both intra-national and international communication, in addition to being the medium of instruction. It is believed that "those who master English are likely to reap many academic, social and professional benefits" (Tella, Indoshi & Othuan, 2011, p. 809). However, students that are deficient in the language of instruction may be incapable of performing well in various school subjects, which are taught in English (Feast, as cited in Fakeye & Yemi, 2009). For example, learners' poor performance in national examinations in Nigeria, Kenya and Namibia has been attributed to their lack of mastery of the language of instruction – English, which ultimately affects their performance in other school subjects (Wolfaardt, 2005; Fakeye & Yemi, 2009; Tella, et

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al., 2011; Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2012). In contrast, learner performance in various school subjects can be improved if teachers ensure a match between what is contained in policy documents and what is taught in the classroom, thereby providing all learners an opportunity to perform (Squires, 2009). The fact remains, however, that those who are deficient in the language of instruction will be incapable of performing well in various school subjects taught in English, despite content coverage in these subjects. To what extent, therefore, are learners afforded an opportunity to learn in the English classroom?

## **2. Literature review and background**

Research has shown that there often is a mismatch between the intentions of curriculum designers and the manner in which curricula are implemented (O' Sullivan, Smith & Southerland, as cited in Orafi & Borg, 2009). Yet, the reason behind the establishment of content standards, which specify the particular skills and knowledge students are to acquire during schooling, is to provide guidance to teachers regarding the most important content to be taught in class (Polikoff & Porter, n.d.). However, sometimes teachers teach what they believe is most important, or what they think the students are most ready to comprehend, or what is most enjoyable, or easy to teach (Porter, 2004). This may lead to a mismatch between the intended (content specified in policy documents) and enacted (content taught in the classroom) ESL learning objectives.

In Namibia, the *National Curriculum for Basic Education* provides a coherent and concise framework to ensure that the curriculum is delivered in a consistent manner at all schools nationwide (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2008a). In addition, it specifies the key learning areas and end-of-phase competencies all learners should achieve. The former refers to the field of knowledge and skills, which forms part of the foundation required to effectively function in a knowledge-based society (MoE, 2008a). One such key learning area is languages, which requires that learners be proficient in a mother tongue, a predominant local language and English. In English, learners are expected to attain a "high level of communicative and social competence in face-to-face and virtual interaction, as well as understanding, using and producing good written and mixed (written and visual and/or oral and aural) texts for a variety of circumstances and situations" (MoE, 2008a, p. 12).

The ESL syllabus elaborates on how these curriculum objectives can be achieved by outlining the intended competence for ESL learners. This means that teachers must use the ESL syllabus to develop their work schemes and lesson plans, in order to ensure that the goals, aims and objectives of the curriculum are implemented in a consistent manner in all classrooms. In other words, if a topic is

specified in the Grade 10 ESL syllabus, it must appear in the teachers' lesson plans and work schemes. In addition, the topic must be taught in the classroom and it must be reflected in class exercises. By so doing, the playing field between children from different socio-economic backgrounds is levelled and the achievement gap is reduced (Squires, 2005).

Similar to other countries in Africa, English plays an important role as an official language, as well as a medium of instruction in Namibia. Thus, English is the language of intra-national and international communication. Like in Nigeria and Kenya, English is a medium of instruction from primary to tertiary level and a compulsory subject at secondary school level. However, according to *The Language Policy for Schools 1992-1996 – and beyond* (MEC, 1993), peculiar to Namibia is the fact that the prescribed medium of instruction for Grade 1 to Grade 3 is the mother tongue, and English is introduced as a compulsory subject from Grade 4 (Wolfaardt, 2005).

The intention of this approach is to develop mother tongue or home language skills first, after which these skills can be transferred onto English development (Swarts, 2002). The expectation is that, after completion of the primary education cycle, learners will acquire reasonable competence in English and thus be prepared for English medium instruction throughout the secondary school cycle (Swarts, 2002). However, discrepancies exist in the implementation of this policy and many schools introduce English as a medium of instruction from Grade one. According to Wolfaardt (2005, p. 367), the result of this is that often learners "do not reach the minimum level of English language proficiency required when they enter the Junior Secondary phase of school." In fact, for learners to be successful at the Junior Secondary phase, mastery of English is essential.

However, studies have revealed concern regarding the performance of Grade 10 and Grade 12 learners in Namibia's national examinations (Wolfaardt, 2004; Wolfaardt, 2005; Ipinge & Likando, 2012). The late Minister of Education, Dr Abraham Iyambo (Zimunya, 2011), concurred that the academic performance of Namibian learners is dependent on their English language proficiency. He added that only an average of 50% of learners enrolled for Grade 10 progressed to Grade 11 from 2006 to 2010. The poor performance of learners in national examinations can also be as a result of a mismatch between national standards and what happens in the classroom, which eventually has the potential to compromise the academic achievement of learners, as misalignment between ESL learning objectives taught in the classroom and what is intended to be taught, may compromise the English language proficiency of learners. This may ultimately affect learners' performance in other subjects because "proficiency in English will make learning other subjects easier" (Tella et al., 2011, p.

809). It is, therefore, essential that what happens in the classroom be interrogated if learners are to achieve academic success (Chaata, 2011).

According to Wolfaardt (2004), learners do not attain the required language proficiency after the completion of the Junior Secondary phase. For example, the examiners' report for the October/November Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) ESL examinations in 2006, confirmed that the overall performance of learners in paper 1 ranged between average and poor and that English had not improved among the majority of the candidates (MoE, 2006). According to the examiners' report for the October/November JSC national examinations in 2009, learners were unable to express themselves in English (MoE, 2009). Wolfaardt (2005) agreed that language proficiency affects examination results. However, low language proficiency in ESL may be due to issues of alignment. Instead, Wolfaardt (2005) attributed the problem of proficiency to the stage of development and the competency the child has reached in the first language. She then calls for the revision of the language policy. While the purpose of this study was not to undermine the interdependence of first and second languages in the development of competency in language skills, it advocates the significance of curriculum alignment to ensure that all students have an opportunity to learn and improve their ESL proficiency and thus attain academic success.

There is agreement beyond Namibian borders that proficiency in English impacts performance in other subjects (Aina, Ogundele & Olanipekun, 2013). Adegbo (as cited in Aina, et al., 2013) attributes poor performance in Mathematics in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) in Nigeria to a lack of proficiency in English. He emphasised that there is a need to improve the teaching of English in order to improve performance in Mathematics. In addition, despite the fact that performance in English might be slightly higher than in Mathematics, poor reading ability compromises performance in Mathematics. Other studies that found a positive relationship between proficiency in English and performance in other school subjects include Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2012). In addition to English proficiency, Adeyemi et al. (2012) argue that if comprehension and vocabulary in English are improved, achievement would be positively affected, particularly in Social Studies. Therefore, they conclude, that "the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing should be given equal teaching attention" (p. 33).

Fakeye (2014) conducted a study in two Nigerian states of Oyo and Osun, with a view to assess the extent to which the English language proficiency of students at Secondary School predicted their overall academic performance. According to Fakeye (2014), academic achievement of secondary

school students in Biology and Mathematics increased as proficiency in English increased. The negative impact of English on other school subjects, however, stretches beyond the Secondary School phase. Feast and Graves (as cited in Fakeye, 2014) conducted separate studies in order to assess the relationship between English language proficiency and the performance of students at tertiary level. They used the Grade Point Average (GPA) as a measure and found a significantly positive relationship between proficiency in English and performance at University. Aina, et al. (2013) conducted a study amongst 120 students at a college of education in Nigeria in order to assess the relationship between English language proficiency and performance in other subjects. They found that proficiency in English is a requirement for improved performance in science and technical education. One way of ensuring improvement in English proficiency of learners, is to ensure that the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives and teaching in the classroom, are aligned.

### **3. Research methods**

This study adopted the mixed method sequential explanatory design, which involved collecting and analysing quantitative data and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases of the study (cf. Ivankova, Cresswell & Stick, 2006). After numeric data was analysed, qualitative data was collected and analysed to refine and explain statistical results by exploring participants' views in depth. Therefore, the “quantitative data are more heavily weighted than qualitative data; hence, the model is known as the QUAN-qual model” (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 463). The study used a questionnaire for the quantitative phase and interview guides for the qualitative phase. The numerical data obtained through the use of a questionnaire offer added opportunities for the exploration of quantitative results in greater detail. However, this analysis would only present a general understanding of the research problem (Ivankova, et al., 2006). Therefore, descriptive data derived from phase two of the study was important to elaborate on the quantitative results (Gay, et al., 2009). When both quantitative and qualitative methods were combined, the overall strength of the study was greater, as the weaknesses of one method were complemented by the strengths of the other (Creswell, Plano, Guttman & Hansen, 2003).

#### **3.1 Participants**

Thirty Grade 10 ESL teachers from public schools in Windhoek participated in the study. There were twenty-five public schools in Windhoek at the time the research was conducted, and each school was expected to at least have one Grade 10 ESL teacher. The study participants derived from Grade 10 ESL teachers at nineteen of the twenty-five public schools in Windhoek. Surveys require larger sample sizes, while studies of a qualitative nature require small sample sizes. However, when the

population size is less than hundred, the entire population should be surveyed (Gay, et al., 2009). Conversely, thirty Grade 10 ESL teachers at nineteen of the twenty-five public schools consented to participate in the study. Therefore, because the accessible population constituted thirty Grade 10 ESL teachers at public schools in Windhoek, these teachers represented the quantitative sample. The qualitative sample consisted of four teachers who consented to the interviews and these four are included in the sample of thirsty teachers.

### **3.2 Procedure**

Data for the quantitative phase of the study was collected using a questionnaire. However, before the questionnaire could be administered, written permission was requested from the Director of Khomas Education Region to carry out research in the region). In order to gain access to Grade 10 ESL teachers at schools, appointments to meet each principal at the twenty-five public schools were scheduled. These meetings served to verbally request permission to conduct research with the Grade 10 ESL teachers and to explain the purpose and the procedures of the study. In addition, these verbal requests were accompanied by a letter outlining the purpose and procedures of the study. One of the schools was randomly selected to pilot the questionnaire. In addition, two lecturers at tertiary level – with Grade 10 ESL teaching experience – participated in the pilot study. Through pilot testing, two questions which were unclear were improved. After the questionnaire was improved, meetings were scheduled with each Grade 10 ESL teacher with a view to explain the purpose of the study and to obtain teachers' written consent for participating in the study. Another purpose of the scheduled meetings was to distribute the questionnaire at all schools in order to collect quantitative data for the first phase. To ensure maximum return, each teacher completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. By so doing, questions by the teachers were addressed immediately. Based on the quantitative results, eight teachers were selected for the qualitative phase of the study but only four of these teachers consented to individual interviews.

### **3.3 Data analysis and discussion**

The objective of the quantitative phase was to determine whether teachers implemented all the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives. Information on the teachers' knowledge and opinions of the intended curriculum as well as information on teachers' implementation practices in terms of content (topics, time and cognitive demand) collected using a questionnaire was assigned a unique identifier. Then responses to the questionnaires were coded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Each questionnaire was compared to the corresponding data in the database to ensure the information contained in the two documents matched. Data was then summarised using descriptive sta-

tistics, particularly, frequencies and percentages. In addition, a value was assigned to each response item on the questionnaire, and the responses to these items were scored in order to obtain an implementation score for each teacher.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

The following section presents the findings of the study in relation to the study objectives:

##### 4.1 Teachers' knowledge and opinions of the intended curriculum

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of eleven questions and solicited responses on teachers' familiarity with and opinions on the intended curriculum. One of the ways in which teachers were expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the intended curriculum was to indicate how regularly they consulted the National Subject Policy Guide for Grade 5 – 12. The purpose of the National Subject Policy Guide for Grade 5 – 12 is to ensure that teaching delivery is in accordance with the guidelines of the MoE. Teachers' familiarity with this document can improve subject management, which can also translate into the successful delivery of the ESL teaching programme (MoE, 2008b). Table 1 shows teachers' responses to the question on their familiarity with the National Subject Policy Guide for Grade 5 – 12.

In the tables provided below, the abbreviations used are indicating the following:

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree/Neutral; DA = Disagree; SDA = Strongly Disagree; NR = No Response; AL = Always; US = Usually; SO = Sometimes; RA = Rarely; NE = Never; CR = Create; EV = Evaluate; AN = Analyse; APP = Apply; UND = Understand; REM = Remember; NR = No Response

**Table 1: Teachers' familiarity with the National Subject Policy Guide (N=30)**

Response	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	NR
Frequency	5	13	6	2	1	3
Percentage	17	43	20	7	3	10

More than half (18) of the teachers indicated that they regularly consult the National Subject Policy Guide for Grade 5 - 12, while six (6) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, three (3) teachers indicated that they do not regularly consult the National Subject Policy Guide for Grades 5-12, while the remaining three (3) teachers did not answer the question.

Another way in which teachers were expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the intended curriculum was to indicate their familiarity with the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content. The Grade 10 ESL

syllabus outlines the learning objectives for ESL at the Junior Secondary phase (MoE, 2008a). The assumption is that if teachers are well-acquainted with the syllabus content, chances of them implementing this content in the classroom may be improved. Table 2 summarises teachers' familiarity with the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content.

**Table 2: Teachers' familiarity with the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content (N = 30)**

Response	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	NR
Frequency	18	11	0	0	1	0
Percentage	60	37	0	0	3	0

Almost all (29) the teachers indicated familiarity with the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content, with one indicating unfamiliarity with the content of the Grade 10 ESL syllabus. It is the belief of the researcher that the teacher erroneously indicated a lack of knowledge of the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content as teachers are exposed to subject syllabi during teacher training. This is because of the fact that all the respondents are trained at Namibian Teacher Training institutions where components of the Grade 10 ESL syllabus are taught. Therefore, the researcher expected increased teacher effectiveness in the implementation of the intended curriculum, because the results showed that teachers were well-acquainted with the National Subject Policy Guide for Grade 5 – 12 and the Grade 10 ESL syllabus content.

According to Emmanue and Ambe (2014), knowledge about the subjects assigned to teachers could determine the level of curriculum implementation. However, teacher effectiveness in delivery of the curriculum could be affected by the opinions they held. Therefore, teachers were asked to indicate their opinions about the intended curriculum. Table 3 indicates teachers' opinions about the intended curriculum.

**Table 3: Teachers' opinions about the intended curriculum (N=30)**

Statements	Frequency of responses					
	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	NR
The Grade 10 ESL syllabus clearly identifies what learners are expected to learn.	12	16	2	0	0	0



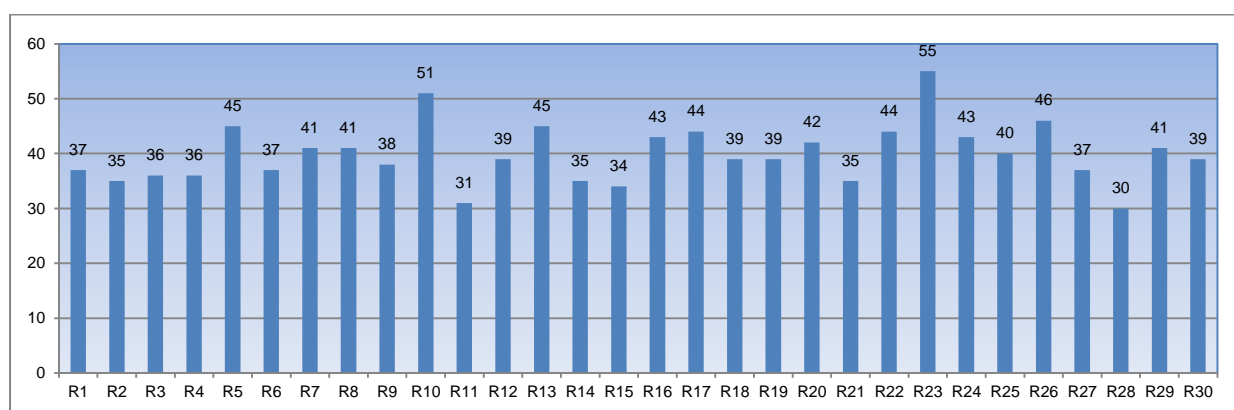
<b>Grade 10 ESL learning objectives are easy to teach.</b>	12	16	2	0	0	0
<b>Grade 10 ESL learning objectives are clear and achievable.</b>	9	15	5	1	0	0
<b>The Grade 10 ESL syllabus is a useful guide when planning what to teach.</b>	12	15	2	0	0	1
<b>To achieve success in the English class, teachers must plan their lessons.</b>	16	11	1	1	0	1
<b>Some Grade 10 ESL learning objectives are easy to understand.</b>	9	19	1	0	0	1
<b>I sometimes skip learning objectives that are difficult to understand or teach.</b>	1	8	2	9	10	0
<b>The time allocated to cover the Grade 10 ESL learning objectives is sufficient.</b>	2	7	4	8	8	1
<b>I teach all Grade 10 ESL learning objectives outlined in the syllabus.</b>	4	13	7	4	1	1

As shown in the Table 3, the teachers' opinions about the intended curriculum were positive. A significant number of teachers (28) indicated that the Grade 10 ESL syllabus clearly identifies the intended learning objectives learners are expected to acquire and that these are easy to teach. Twenty-seven (27) teachers regarded lesson planning as important if success was to be attained in the English L2 classroom, and they regarded the Grade 10 ESL syllabus as valuable in lesson planning. A similarly high number of teachers (24) considered the intended learning objectives as achievable, and at least seventeen (17) teachers reported that they teach all intended learning objectives in the Grade 10 ESL classroom. Positive perceptions of teachers and their attitude towards the intended curriculum result into higher levels of curriculum implementation (Evans as cited in Owusu & Yiboe, 2013).

Despite these positive sentiments about the Grade 10 ESL intended curriculum, there were concerns of time constraints for enacting the intended learning objectives and challenges in comprehending some of the intended learning objectives. Some teachers (9) skipped intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum learning objectives that they perceived to be difficult. This is in line with Porter (2004), who opines that what teachers implement in the classroom is determined by the level of difficulty of the intended learning objective. However, the majority of the teachers (19) indicated that they did not skip intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum learning objectives. Thus, even though there were negative sentiments about some aspects of the intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum, these negative sentiments came from a limited number of teachers. However, the sentiments of these teachers should not be

ignored as they may act as hindrances to teachers' implementation of the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives. For example, in response to whether teachers implement all intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives outlined in the syllabus, seventeen teachers provided a positive response, and although seven teachers neither agreed nor disagreed, five teachers provided a negative response.

In order to obtain a thorough understanding of each teacher's knowledge and opinion of the intended curriculum, teachers' responses to the eleven questions on the intended curriculum were scored. This provided an implementation score for each teacher. A high score implied that the teacher was well-acquainted with the intended curriculum and embraced a positive attitude towards the curriculum. Figure 1 summarises the individual scores for the intended curriculum.



**Fig. 1: Teachers' scores for the intended curriculum (N=30)**

As can be noted, two (2) teachers scored above fifty (50), followed by twelve teachers whose scores fell above forty (40) out of a possible maximum score of 55 for the intended curriculum. The lowest score for the intended curriculum was thirty (30), with the scores for the remaining fifteen (15) respondents ranging between thirty-one (31) and thirty-nine (39). This implies that most implementation scores were relatively high, indicating that the majority of the teachers were well-acquainted with the intended curriculum and embraced a positive attitude towards the curriculum. This indication reinforces the interpretation of the earlier results that a majority of the teachers embraced a positive attitude in relation to the intended curriculum. The following section details participants' responses to the implementation of the intended curriculum.

#### **4.2 Teachers' implementation of the intended curriculum**

The objective of this study was to determine whether teachers implemented all intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives. The learning objectives of interest to the researcher were restricted to the *reading and responding in speech and writing (including literature)* component of the ESL syllabus. Therefore, data on teachers' implementation of the intended learning objectives, in relation to topical coverage and cognitive demand, was collected. Porter (2002) refers to the implementation of the intended curriculum as the enacted curriculum. This is because teachers' implementation of the intended curriculum provides a window to the contents that learners have the opportunity to learn. Therefore section B of the questionnaire focused on the topics that learners had an opportunity to learn as well as how often they were exposed to these topics in the Grade 10 ESL classroom. Hence, it focussed on how often teachers allowed learners the opportunity to practice the learning objectives listed under the *reading and responding in speech and writing (including literature)* component of the Grade 10 ESL syllabus. Table 4 and table 5 summarise teachers' responses to the questions on implementation of the intended learning objectives with regard to topical coverage and cognitive demand.

**Table 4: Topical coverage and cognitive demand of intended learning objectives Q 17-24 (N=30)**

Statements	Frequency of responses						Cognitive levels						
	AL	US	SO	RA	NE	NR	CR	EV	AN	APP	UND	REM	NR
Read aloud to convey understanding of the text.	10	8	12	0	0	0	0	4	3	10	8	0	0
	33	27	40	0%	0%	0%	0%	13	10	33%	27%	0%	0%
Demonstrate a personal interpretation of a reading text.	7	11	12	0	0	0	2	3	3	5	10	1	1
	23	37	40	0%	0%	0%	7%	10	10	17%	33%	3%	3%
Demonstrate the ability to find meaning, spelling and idiomatic usage in dictionaries.	11	8	10	0	0	1	2	6	3	6	6	1	1
	37	27	33	0%	0%	3%	7%	20	10	20%	20%	3%	3%

<b>Read silently using appropriate reading strategies, e.g. skimming and scanning.</b>	9	13	7	1	0	0	1	2	4	12	4	1	1
	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Respond appropriately to different types of questions, e.g. objective, open-ended and 'yes' or 'no' questions.</b>	12	14	3	1	0	0	1	3	7	5	8	1	0
	<b>40</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Identify plot and characterisation in novels and plays.</b>	2	7	16	2	1	2	1	6	9	3	3	2	1
	<b>7%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Identify and explain different figures of speech in poems, e.g. irony, personification, alliteration and rhythm.</b>	8	11	9	2	0	0	1	4	7	8	1	3	1
	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Work out the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual clues.</b>	11	7	10	1	0	1	3	1	4	8	7	0	2
	<b>37</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>

As is evident from table 4, responses of the teachers varied in terms of how often they allowed learners opportunity to practice the intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum objectives in their classrooms. However, for the majority of the teachers, the responses were centred on the AL (always), US (usually) and SO (sometimes) response options. For example, the majority of teachers AL, US or SO allowed their learners the opportunity to read aloud in order to convey an understanding of the text. Conversely, the number of teachers who AL or US allowed learners the opportunity to practice the identification of the plot and characterisation in novels and plays dwindled and the majority of the responses, which represented 53%, were centred on SO.

It has also become evident from table 4 that teachers skip or rarely allow learners the opportunity to practice some of the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives. For example, one teacher indicated

not having allowed learners the opportunity to identify the plot and characterisation in novels and plays. However, compared to the number of teachers who skip some Grade 10 ESL objectives as evidenced by the teachers' responses about their opinions of the intended curriculum, this number is small (one teacher indicating skipping). This can be an indication of inconsistency in the responses provided by the teachers, particularly because nine (9) teachers indicated that they skip difficult learning objectives and seventeen indicated that they teach all the intended learning objectives (see Table 3).

In addition, it is evident from table 4 that teachers have varying expected levels of mastery for learners to achieve. Some teachers (10) expect learners to be able to apply reading aloud in order to convey an understanding of texts, whereas other teachers expected learners to analyse (3) or evaluate (4) how to read aloud to convey understanding of texts. Although most teachers allowed learners the opportunity to practice demonstrating a personal interpretation of texts, some teachers (10) wanted learners to understand how to demonstrate a personal understanding of texts. Other teachers (5) expected learners to apply what has been read and others expected learners to achieve this learning objective at higher levels of cognitive demand.

Teachers' responses in relation to the highest level of cognitive demand they expected of their learners varied, particularly for the intended Grade 10 ESL learning objectives captured under questions 17 – 24. Teachers' responses centred on REM (remember), UND (understand) and APP (apply). The reverse was true for question 22, as teachers' responses shifted from REM (remember), UND (understand) and APP (apply) to EV (evaluate) and AN (analyse), particularly in relation to the highest level of mastery for identifying the plot and characterisation in the novels and plays. For identifying and explaining different figures of speech, the expected highest level of mastery for twelve teachers was AN, EV and CR, and for the other eight teachers, the expected highest level of mastery was centred on REM, UND and APPL.

**Table 5: Topical coverage and cognitive demand of intended learning objectives Q 25-31 (N=30)**

Statements	Frequency of responses						Cognitive levels						
	AL	US	SO	RA	NE	NR	CR	EV	AN	APP	UND	REM	NR
Use grammatical structure to identify relationships between words,	7	15	8	0	0	0	2	4	4	9	3	4	0

phrases and sentences.													
	23	50	27	0%	0%	0%	7%	13	13	30%	10%	13%	0%
Demonstrate ability to identify conflict, themes and symbols in texts.	3	9	14	3	1	0	1	4	10	3	5	1	1
	10	30	47	10	3%	0%	3%	13	33	10%	17%	3%	3%
Write introductory, developmental and concluding paragraphs.	14	11	4	1	0	0	14	1	0	8	1	1	0
	47	37	13	3%	0%	0%	47	3%	0%	27%	3%	3%	0%
Write formal letters, reports, articles and speeches.	15	11	3	1	0	0	14	1	0	8	0	1	1
	50	37	10	3%	0%	0%	47	3%	0%	27%	0%	3%	3%
Compose different types of compositions, e.g. imaginative, descriptive, argumentative, etc.	13	12	4	1	0	0	15	2	0	6	2	0	0
	43	40	13	3%	0%	0%	50	7%	0%	20%	7%	0%	0%
Write with a sense of audience and purpose.	13	11	6	0	0	0	12	1	2	6	0	2	2
	43	37	20	0%	0%	0%	40	3%	7%	20%	0%	7%	7%

<b>Q31 Write selected information in a summarised format, e.g. note or paragraph form summaries.</b>	17	10	3	0	0	0	11	2	3	7	2	0	0
	<b>57</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

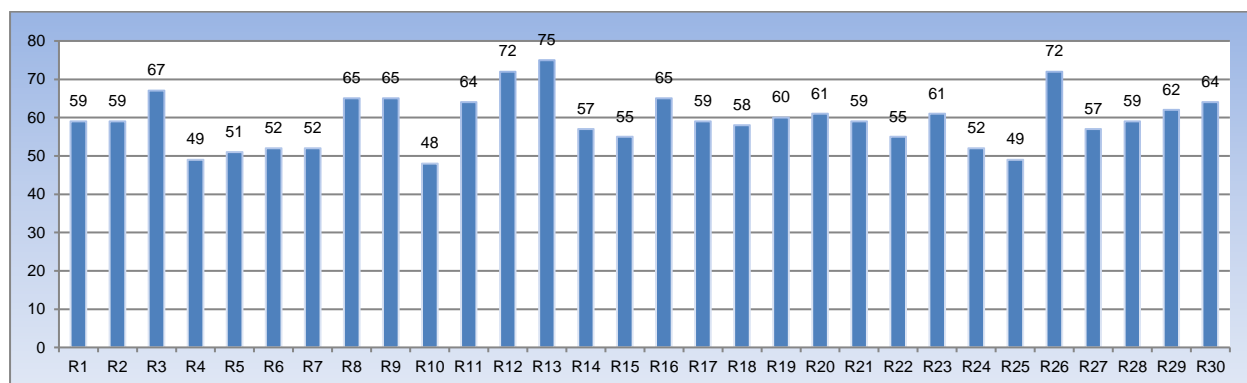
As was the case for questions 17 – 24, the concentration of responses for questions 25 – 31 were centred on the AL, US and SO response options. Approximately half of the teachers allowed their learners the opportunity to practice the intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum learning objectives captured under questions twenty-seven (27), twenty-nine (29) and thirty (30), whilst at least half of the teachers allowed their learners the opportunity to practice the writing of formal letters, reports, articles and speeches. In addition, more than half of the teachers (57%) exposed their learners to the writing of selected information in summary form.

However, the number of teachers who allowed learners the opportunity to practice some intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum learning objectives decreased. For example, seven teachers allowed learners the opportunity to practice the use of grammatical structures to identify the relationships between words, phrases and sentences. Three teachers allowed learners the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to identify conflict, themes and symbols in texts. In addition, three teachers indicated that they permitted learners to demonstrate the capability of identifying conflict, themes or symbols, while one teacher indicated skipping this learning objective.

In relation to the expected level of cognitive demand that learners are to achieve, approximately half of the teachers' responses were centred on AN, EV and CR. For example, 15 teachers expected learners to create different types of compositions, while 14 teachers expected learners to compose introductory, developmental and concluding paragraphs, in addition to being able to compose formal letters, reports and speeches. Moreover, a few responses were centred on the REM, UND and APP response options. However, about nine teachers expected learners to apply the use of grammatical structures to identify relationships between words, phrases and sentences, and for this learning objective, the majority of responses were centred on the REM, UND and APP response options.

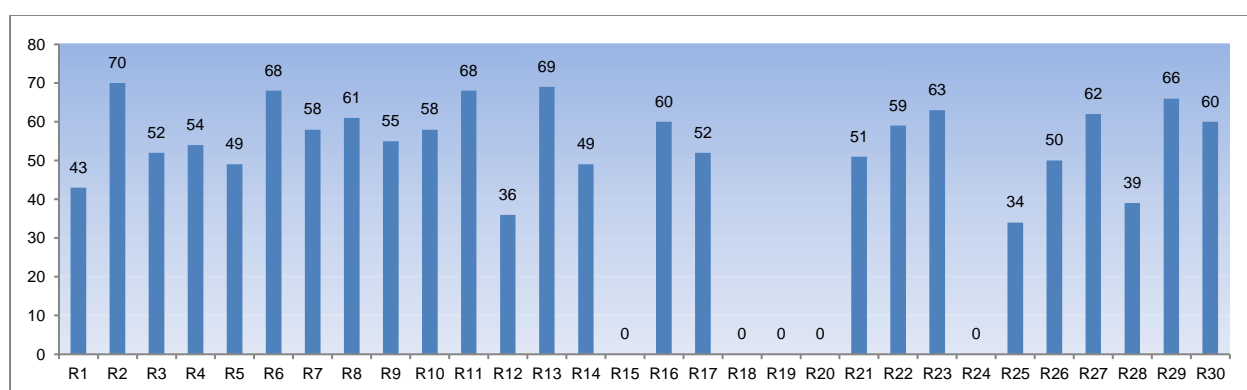
Furthermore, it was important to obtain a complete understanding of teachers' implementation practices of the intended Grade 10 ESL curriculum learning objectives in terms of topical coverage and cog-

nitive demand. Therefore, the responses for questions 17 – 31 which relate to topical coverage were scored to obtain an implementation score for each teacher. Figures 2, 3 and 4 summarise the scores on topical coverage, cognitive demand and the overall implementation scores for each teacher.



**Figure 2: Teachers' scores for topical coverage (N= 30)**

Individual scores for the enacted curriculum for topical coverage (see fig. 4) showed high implementation scores for approximately half of the teachers, with the highest score being 75. This implies that at least half of the teachers whose scores ranged between sixty (60) and seventy-five (75) implemented at least 80% of the topics, while the lowest score of 48 indicated that the teacher with the lowest score implemented at least 64% of the topics covered. Figure 3 below presents the teachers' scores for the enacted curriculum in terms of the highest level of cognitive demand they want their learners to achieve.

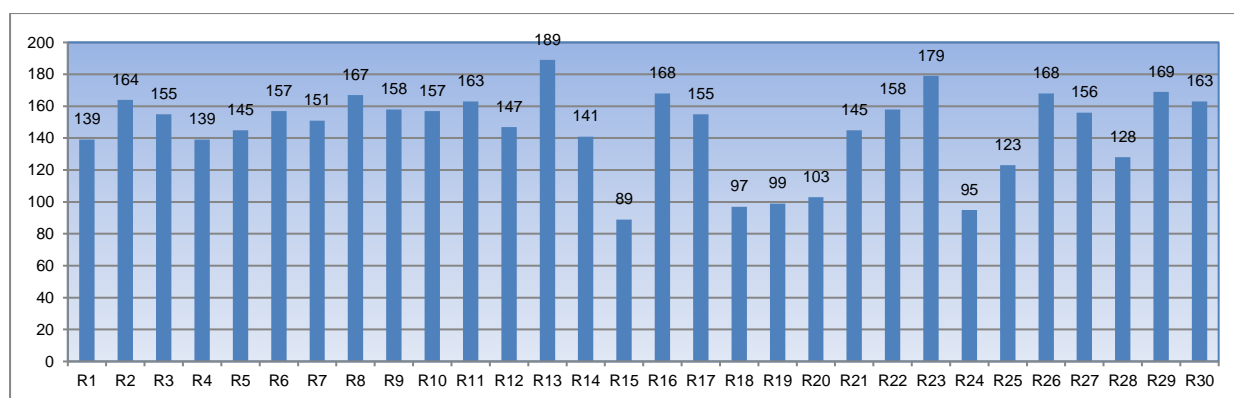


**Figure 3: Teachers scores for cognitive demand (N= 30)**

The possible highest score for the enacted curriculum relating to the expected cognitive demand was ninety (90). However, the highest score obtained by teachers was seventy (70). The higher the score obtained by teachers for the enacted curriculum (cognitive demand), the higher the cognitive



level at which these teachers expected learners to perform in the various learning objectives. Similarly, the lower the score obtained for the enacted curriculum (cognitive demand), the lower the cognitive levels at which these teachers expected learners to perform. The lowest score obtained for cognitive demand was 34 (37.7%). As shown in fig. 3, five teachers did not complete this section of the questionnaire, which meant that the actual lowest score for this section was nil (0).



**Figure 4: Teachers' overall implementation scores (N= 30)**

When scores for Section A, B and C (see fig. 4) were added, the highest implementation score was 189 (representing 86%) out of a possible maximum score of 220, with the lowest score being 89, representing 40%. Five (5) of the lower scores (89, 95, 97, 99 and 103) were as a result of Section C, which was incomplete. This means that of the complete questionnaires, the lowest score was 123 (representing 56%), followed by a score of 128 (representing 58%). In other words, only two teachers had scores below 60% and only two teachers had scores above 80% (179 and 189). The table below summarises the statistics for the assessed curriculum elements.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics for assessed curriculum elements**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intended Curriculum	30	30	55	39.93	5.407
Coverage	30	48	75	59.43	6.951
Cognitive Demand	25	34	70	55.44	10.087
Overall Implementation	25	123	189	155.36	14.977
Valid N (list wise)	25				

As shown in table 5, the mean score for the intended curriculum was 39.93, with a standard deviation of 5.407; and for topical coverage, the mean score was 59.43, with a standard deviation of 6.951. This means that there was little variation in teachers' opinions and familiarity of the intended curriculum. However, the statistics reveal that there was a little more variation in terms of the implemented learning objectives (topical coverage). The spread of the scores from the mean became wider for cognitive demand, which had a mean score of 55.44 and a standard deviation of 10.087. The spread of scores for the overall implementation was wider than for cognitive demand, which meant that there was a slightly wider variation in teachers' implementation of intended learning objectives in Grade 10 ESL classrooms.

### 4.3 Teachers' views on curriculum implementation

Eight teachers were selected for the qualitative phase of the study. In other words, four teachers with low implementation scores (Group 1) and four with high implementation scores (Group 2) were selected using the following criteria: 1) lowest Grade 10 ESL teaching experience and lowest qualification (LELQ), 2) lowest Grade 10 ESL teaching experience and highest qualification (LEHQ), 3) highest Grade 10 ESL teaching experience and lowest qualification (HELQ), and 4) highest Grade 10 ESL teaching experience and highest qualification (HEHQ). Four of the eight teachers availed themselves for the qualitative phase of the study. Data for this phase was collected by means of individual face-to-face interviews. The main purpose of conducting interviews was to determine teachers' interpretation of the findings of the research. Responses to the interview questions are summarised in table six below.

**Table 6: Teachers' responses to interview questions**

Question focus	Responses			
	*Anthia	*Agnes	*Alletha	*Anka
<b>How to ensure a match between the prescribed and taught learning objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring a match is a challenge (some learners have not mastered aspects specified for the lower levels)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom activities are affected by learners' level of knowledge and background</li> <li>Teachers do not recall what they planned to teach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By reflecting on lessons delivered in class</li> <li>By constantly checking the syllabus to see if there is a match</li> <li>Assessing learners to see if they mas-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By understanding and being able to interpret the syllabus well</li> <li>Being aware of what needs to be taught and one's own competencies</li> </ul>

			tered the covered competencies	
<b>Possibility of ensuring match without planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is not possible (if you do not prepare, you struggle to get the message across to the learners)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It depends on the interpretation of planning (writing or thinking about how to present lessons)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will be difficult (ensuring a match requires proper planning)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of lesson objectives not implemented on the performance of Grade 10 learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative impact (teachers have no knowledge of what will be covered in the examination; therefore, it compromises performance)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No impact (not knowing how to respond to questions in the examination is more important than knowing all the topics)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative impact if learning objectives are assessed in that examination only (teachers only skip learning objectives that are not usually assessed in final examinations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is some negative impact although it is difficult to discuss this issue with certainty</li> </ul>

#### **4.4 Obstacles to curriculum alignment**

Teachers had contrasting views with regards to how to ensure a match between the prescribed and the taught learning objectives. While some teachers reported that classroom realities posed a challenge for curriculum alignment, others opined that the awareness of what needs to be taught by constantly consulting the syllabus, understanding and interpreting the syllabus, and reflecting on lessons delivered would ensure that the intended learning objectives and what was enacted in the classroom matched. Being acquainted with the syllabus is a requirement of the MoE (2008b). However, according to Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (as cited in Wang, 2008), misunderstanding the intended curriculum or having a superficial understanding of the intended curriculum may pose challenges to curriculum alignment. One of the reasons that teachers cited as a hindrance to aligning the intended and enacted learning objectives was the fact that learners' level of content mastery for lower levels, as well as their knowledge and background influenced what was taught in the classroom, and this in turn influenced curriculum implementation. Teachers were, however, in agreement that ensuring a match between the intended learning objectives and what was enacted in the classroom can be impossible without lesson planning.

#### ***4.5 Influence of lack of curriculum implementation on learner performance***

The majority of the teachers were of the opinion that the impact of lesson objectives being not implemented in the Grade 10 ESL classroom on performance was negative. While one teacher said that skipping some learning objectives affected the performance of learners, as teachers were unaware of what might be covered in the examination. Moreover, the teachers opined that the impact would be negative if the skipped learning objectives were assessed in the examination. In contrast, one teacher argued that the knowledge of how to respond to questions in the examination was more important than topic coverage.

### **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

The main purpose of this study was to explore if the intended and enacted Grade 10 ESL learning objectives matched. Teachers are the most important players in ensuring a match between the intentions of policy makers and what is taught. However, teachers do not faithfully implement the intended curriculum (Wang, 2008). As indicated in the results, teachers with high implementation scores, at the most only implement 80% of the intended learning objectives, whereas those with lower implementation scores implement approximately 64% of the intended learning objectives. In addition, teachers revealed that they skip the learning objectives that are difficult to teach. Thus, what teachers enact in the classroom is determined by the level of difficulty of a particular learning objective (Porter, 2004). Furthermore, teachers stated that ensuring a match between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum was a challenge. They revealed that to ensure a match was not possible without the proper interpretation and understanding of the syllabus, as well as effective lesson preparation. According to O' Sullivan (as cited in Wand, 2008), classroom realities in Namibia, which include teachers' professional and linguistic capacity, learner capacity and support services, may present obstacles to ensuring a match between what is expected to happen and what actually happens at school level.

The study thus concludes that teachers lack knowledge of how to align the intended and enacted Grade 10 ESL learning objectives. In addition, teachers are unable to effectively interpret the Grade 10 ESL syllabus. They lack an understanding of some aspects of the syllabus and they lack effective lesson preparation skills as revealed during the teacher interviews. These deficiencies have resulted in a mismatch between the intended and enacted learning objectives, and ultimately this may compromise the learners' opportunity to effectively learn in the ESL classroom.

Thus, the Ministry of Education should organize refresher workshops to train teachers and Heads of Departments of Languages on syllabus interpretation. This may increase the teachers' understanding and interpretation of the syllabus and reduce the number of the intended learning objectives that teachers may skip due to lack of understanding. Training Heads of Departments of Languages may reduce the burden of repeated training by the Ministry of Education. In these training workshops, issues that lead to the lack of understanding of the syllabus can be identified and addressed by improving the syllabus so as to aid interpretation and understanding. Moreover, workshops can also be conducted to train teachers on curriculum alignment and how to use policy documents to align teaching and class activities with the intended curriculum. In these workshops, the importance of aligning ESL learning objectives to improve the English language proficiency of learners and to increase overall academic performance of learners can be highlighted. Further research on a large scale in the area of curriculum alignment, including the effect of curriculum alignment on performance of learners, in the Namibian context is necessary.

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