

**EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE
OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY
CURRICULUM IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF
THE OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA**

by

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I, Professor N.P. Khumalo, declare that the dissertation/thesis has been submitted to originality checking software.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the assessment strategies used in assessing Oshindonga First Language at the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) level in selected secondary schools in Namibia. The study also sought to understand how teachers perceive assessment strategies, their classroom assessment practices, the challenges they face, and their views on how to improve assessment strategies to promote effective language learning. The study was underpinned by the Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) framework, as proposed by Box et al. (2015), which informed the analysis of teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The study population comprised all schools offering the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum in the Omusati Region. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participating schools and all study participants. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm, using a qualitative approach and a case study design. Semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis were used to collect data. The gathered data were analysed using a rigorous process of thematic analysis. The findings reveal that assessment practices remain predominantly examination-driven, with teachers heavily reliant on outdated Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary level (NSSCO) past papers rather than the NSSCAS syllabus. Teachers also reported limited exposure to training in assessment design, marking, and curriculum interpretation, resulting in reduced capacity to plan assessments that measure higher-order competencies. Additional challenges include limited support from the Heads of Department (HOD), poor classroom monitoring, and inadequate teaching resources. Linguistic diversity and limited professional development further hinder the development of consistent assessment standards. Results also showed that teaching practices were characterised by the prioritisation of English, persistent dialectal interferences, and the contextualisation of activities to support meaningful Oshindonga language learning. Additionally, the study revealed that assessment in the Oshindonga First Language curriculum can be improved through sustained teacher development, better resource provision, continuous reflective practice, and more rigorous marker selection to ensure fairness and effective learning outcomes. The study recommends the urgent need for structured professional development programs, improved instructional leadership from HODs, and enhanced resource allocation to address these challenges. It also highlights the importance of dialect-sensitive assessment practices and the integration of reflective learning to promote learner-centred pedagogy.

Keywords: Oshindonga, NSSCAS, assessment strategies, teacher training, curriculum implementation, professional development, learning outcomes.

ABSTRACT translated into Oshikwanyama First Language

Elalakano linene loshipekapekwa eshi okukonakona omikalo detalashiivo hadi longifwa motundi yOshindonga pondodo yomufika wopombada (NSSCAS) meesekundofikola odo di na eendodo dopombada moNamibia. Epekapeko eli ola lalakanena yo okuuda ko nghene ovahongifikola ve udite ko elongifo lomikalo detaloshiivo, nghene have di longifa meetundi davo, omashongo hava shakeneke, nomafeneko nghene ku na okuxwepopalekwa omikalo edi, elihongo lelaka li nghonopalekwe. Epekapeko ole likanghamekela kotheori yedina *Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT)*, ya etwa po ku-Box navakwao (2015), tai yandje ouyelele wokukonakona etaloshiivo netulomoilonga lalo kovahongi. Ovakufimbinga mepekapeko, eesekundofikola odo hadi hongo eendodo domufika wopombada (NSSCAS) mOshitukulwa shaMusati. Mokuholola oshipangula [osampela], okwa longifwa omukalo wonhomenawina mokuholola eefikola novakufimbinga aveshe. Epekapeko ole likwatelela komufango wokufatulula hau ifanwa *interpretivist paradigm*, melongifo lomukalo womafatululo omoule [qualitative] osho yo ekonakono lomoule lohinima shonhumba (*case study*). Mokwoongela ouyelele, epekapeko ola longifa omukalo weenghundafana doohandimwe, eenghundafana dopaungudu nosho yo omukalo wokukonakona oinyolwa yOshindonga. Ouyelele wa monika, owa konakonwa, kwa longifwa omukalo wokukonakona oifimanitwa. Oidjemo oya ulika kutya oilonga yetaloshiivo meetundi, ohai kala ya tala unene kekonakono, omo omataloshiivo e likwatelela unene keembapila dokomakonakono makulu nokwa kusha, domufika wopedu wo-NSSCO, ponhele yokulikwatela kOmufindahongo wOshindonga, omufika wopombada (NSSCAS). Ovahongi ova holola yo kutya ihava pewa omadeulo a wedwa po e na sha nomikalo diwa detaloshiivo, okutala oinyolwa yovahongwa, nefatululo lomoule lomufindalandu, osho she va etela eudeko la nghundipala. Ounghundi umwe vali wa ulikwa, ovahongi ihava pewa omakwafo okudja kOvawiliki vOikondo peefikola (HOD), okutalela po eetundi dovahongi okwa nghundipala, noikwafifohongo inai henena. Okuhongela mumwe ovahongwa vomihoko da yoolokafana motundi imwe yelaka nosho yo omaudelo a wedwa po ovahongi, oyo imwe yomoinima oyo tai i moshipala exwepopalo metaloshiivo li na omakanghameno noli li pamufika. Oidjemo oya ulika yo kutya, ehoololo lelongifo lelaka lOshingilisha, nokuhahonga ovahongwa she likwatelela konghalo yoshili, oyo imwe oyo tai eta oidjemo yanghundipala. Kakele kwaasho, oidjemo oya ulika yo kutya etaloshiivo

IOshindonga otali dulu ashike okuxwepopalekwa ngeenge ovahongi otava kala tava pewa omaduelo a wedwa po efimbo nefimbo, tava pewa oikwafifohongo tai wapalele, omatalululo eetundi akwalukeshe, opo ku kwashilipalekwe exwepopalo loidjemo yoshihongwa. Epekepeko otali faneke pa ningwe omalongekido omeendelelo e na sha neeprograma dokukwafela ovahongi va mone omadeulo a wedwa po efimbo nefimbo, ovawiliki voikondo peefikola (HOD) va kale neudeko loihongwa oyo tava pashukile, noikwafifohongo tai wapalele, opo ku kelelwe omashongo aa. Epekepeko eli otali faneke ku yandjwe yo omataloshiivo taa wapalele eenyapilaka adishe tadi hongwa motundi yOshindonga, nokukwatela mo omukalo wetalululo lotundi, opo ku nghonopekwe omukalo wehongo lomuhongwa ta dana onghandangala.

Isizulu version

Inhloso eyinhloko yocwaningo kwakuwukuphenya amasu okuhlola asetshenziswa ekuhloleni isi-Oshindonga njengoLimi Lokuqala ezingeni leNamibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) ezikoleni ezithile zamabanga aphezulu eNamibia. Ucwanningo luphinde lwahlose ukuqonda indlela othisha abawabona ngayo amasu okuhlola, indlela abenza ngayo ukuhlola eklasini, izinselelo ababhekana nazo, kanye nemibono yabo mayelana nokuthuthukisa amasu okuhlola ukuze kugqugquzelwe ukufunda kolimi olusebenzayo. Ucwanningo lwalusekelwe kuhlaka lwe-Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) oluphakanyiswe u-Box nabanye (2015), olwasiza ekuhlaziyeni izinkolelo nemikhuba yokuhlola yothisha. Inani lababambe iqhaza lalihlanganisa zonke izikole ezifundisa i-Oshindonga njengoLimi Lokuqala ezingeni le-Advanced Subsidiary esifundeni sase-Omusati. Kwasetshenziswa indlela yokukhetha ngenhloso (purposive sampling) ukukhetha izikole nababambe iqhaza. Ucwanningo lwalandela umbono we-interpretivist, lusebenzisa indlela yekhwalithi (qualitative) kanye nomklamo wocwaningo lwecala (case study). Izingxoxo ezihleleke ngokwengxenywe (semi-structured interviews), izingxoxo zamaqembu (focus groups), kanye nokuhlaziywa kwemibhalo kwasetshenziswa ukuqoqa imininingwane, eyabe isihlaziywa nge-thematic analysis.

Imiphumela yocwaningo iveze ukuthi imikhuba yokuhlola isalokhu igxile kakhulu ezivivinyweni, othisha bethembele kakhulu kumaphepha amadala e-Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSCO) kunokulandela i-syllabus ye-NSSCAS. Othisha baphinde babika ukuntuleka kokuqeqeshwa okwanele ekwakheni ukuhlola, ukumaka, kanye nokuqonda uhlelo lwezifundo, okuyinciphisa ikhono labo lokuhlela ukuhlola okulinganisa amakhono aphakeme. Ezinye izinselelo zihlanganisa ukwesekwa

okuncane okuvela kumaNhlolo oMnyango (HOD), ukuqapha okungeluhle kwamakilasi, kanye nokushoda kwezinsiza zokufundisa. Ukuhlukahluka kwezilimi kanye nokuntuleka kwamathuba okuqeqeshwa okuqhubekayo nakho kuphazamisa ukuthuthukiswa kwezindinganiso zokuhlola ezifanayo. Imiphumela iphinde yaveza ukuthi ukufundisa kugxile kakhulu esiNgisini, kunezithiyi ezidalwa ukwehluka kwezindlela zokukhuluma (dialects), kanye nokuhlelwa kwemisebenzi ngendlela ehambisana nesimo ukuze kusekelwe ukufunda okunenjongo kolimi lwesi-Oshindonga. Ucwangingo luphinde lwabonisa ukuthi ukuhlola kungathuthukiswa ngokuthuthukisa othisha ngokuqhubekayo, ukuhlinzeka ngezinsiza ezingcono, ukuzindla okuqhubekayo ngomsebenzi, kanye nokukhethwa ngokucophelela kwababhalayo ukuze kuqinisekise ubulungiswa nemiphumela efanele yokufunda. Ucwangingo luncoma isidingo esiphuthumayo sezinhlelo eziqhubekayo zokuqeqeshwa kochwepheshe, ukuqiniswa kobuholi bezemfundo kuma-HOD, kanye nokwabiwa kangcono kwezinsiza. Luphinde lugcizelele ukubaluleka kokuhlola okubheka umehluko wezilimi kanye nokuhlanganisa ukufunda okuqondiswe kumfundi.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS
NSSCAS — Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary
NSSCH — Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher
NSSCO — Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary
MoEAC — Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
PPAT — Personal Practice Assessment Theories
AfL — Assessment for Learning
SBA — School-Based Assessments
CA — Continuous Assessment
UNISA — University of South Africa

AO — Assessment Objectives
NIED — National Institute for Educational Development
DNEA — Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment
TOT — Training of Trainers
HOD — Head of Department
SLTA — Segregated Language Skill Teaching Approach
SMS — Short Message Service
TPD — Teacher Professional Development
CPD — Continuing Professional Development
ODeL — Open Distance and e-Learning

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

Language education is crucial in shaping every country's educational landscape, serving not only as a means of instruction but also as a conduit for cultural preservation and identity formation. Namibia has nine standardised indigenous languages that are spoken, taught, and assessed at the First Language level in schools in the Namibian education system. These languages are Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Rukwangali, Thimbukushu, Rumanyo, Setswana, Silozi, Otjiherero, and Khoekhoegowab. This study focused on the Oshindonga First Language, which is widely spoken by indigenous people across Namibia and beyond (Norro, 2022). However, learners' performance in Oshindonga First Language at the Namibia Senior Secondary Advanced Subsidiary level (NSSCAS) has produced undesirable results over the past few years (2021–2023).

Oshindonga is one of the dialects of the Oshiwambo language, which comprises multiple dialects predominantly spoken in the northern regions of Namibia. According to Mbenzi (2019), the Oshiwambo language comprises about 12 dialects: Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Oshikwaluudhi, Oshimbalantu, Oshingandjera, Oshindobodhola, Oshikwambi, Oshihakafima, Oshikwankwa, Oshikolonkadhi, Oshimbandja, and Oshivale. Speakers of these dialects understand each other because these languages share similar morphology, syntax, and semantics.

Despite their prevalence, many of these dialects are not officially standardised for use in schools. Therefore, most learners who speak dialects not standardised by the Namibian Education Curriculum prefer to be taught in Oshindonga, the First Language, which is closely aligned with their dialects. However, the challenge is that, although learners prefer to be taught in Oshindonga, they are not familiar with all Oshindonga terminology because it is not their first language, and they only encounter it in the classroom. Additionally, they face challenges in comprehending Oshindonga concepts, particularly in vocabulary, syntax, and morphology, which limits its use as a lingua franca (Johannes & Jonas, 2021).

According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) (2021–2023) entry statistics, 2,425 candidates sat for the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Level examination, whereas 4,140 learners sat for the other eight languages. Although all the Namibian standardised African First Languages are taught in schools from Pre-

primary to Grade 12 (Namibia Senior Secondary Advanced Subsidiary level), it is noticed that Oshindonga First Language teachers have challenges in assessing the language properly, as the subject's results keep declining in comparison with the other standardised African languages used in Namibian schools.

According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) (2019), the communicative approach to language teaching develops language competencies in an integrated manner that mirrors real-life use of language. Therefore, teachers should use assessment strategies in an integrated way. Hence, this study seeks to explore the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum in secondary schools within the Omusati Region, Namibia. Furthermore, by soliciting perspectives from teachers, HODs, and Regional Education Officials, the researcher sought to capture a comprehensive understanding of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language as a school subject.

In line with the above, Killen and O'Toole (2023) argue that the purpose of an assessment task is to enable learners to demonstrate their success in specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. For this reason, assessment activities should accurately measure the intended competencies. Teachers need to use a variety of assessment strategies or a combination thereof to effectively evaluate learners' abilities and improve their performance in the subject (Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). Additionally, teachers should be mindful of the advantages and disadvantages of each assessment strategy and consider their appropriateness for different contexts.

Although several studies on language assessment have been conducted in Namibia, particularly in Oshiwambo languages, there remains a significant gap in research focusing specifically on assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Existing studies, such as Nghiueuelekwah's (2009) research on continuous assessment in Oshikwanyama, primarily focus on Senior Primary phases, while Ndume's (2020) work examines Oshiwambo proverbs and their assessment. These studies do not adequately address assessment practices at the Advanced Subsidiary level, where higher-order competencies and curriculum alignment are critical.

This lack of focused research on Oshindonga assessment strategies at the NSSCAS level highlights a critical gap in understanding how assessment is implemented in classrooms and how it aligns with curriculum objectives. Furthermore, Oshindonga First Language continues to raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of assessment

strategies used by teachers, as learner performance consistently falls below expected ministerial standards when compared to other recognised Namibian First Languages such as Rukwangali, Oshikwanyama, and Silozi. Notably, results for Oshindonga First Language at the Advanced Subsidiary level have not improved since the introduction of the NSSCAS examination in 2021.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by investigating the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms at the NSSCAS level, identifying the challenges faced by teachers, and proposing contextually relevant strategies to improve assessment practices. By doing so, the study contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of language assessment in Namibia and supports efforts to improve learner performance and curriculum implementation.

My personal involvement has been as a Senior Education Officer, where I have coordinated national examinations for African languages, including Oshindonga First Language, for 16 years to date. During the national marking process, it was noted that some teachers of African languages struggled to use marking grids/rubrics to award marks properly. The most intriguing aspect of these observations is that the marking tools are included in the syllabus, which teachers are supposed to use to grade learners' schoolwork and ensure that they have mastered the syllabus objectives before the final examination. Since the introduction of the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Level curriculum in Namibian secondary schools in 2021, the results have shown a decline rather than an improvement.

Furthermore, every year, the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) receives higher forecast grades from schools that offer Oshindonga First Language; however, the actual results remain poor in some schools by the end of the year. According to the MoEAC grading report (2021), a forecast grade is the grade a teacher expects a candidate to achieve for a syllabus. In other words, it reflects the projected performance of the candidate in the final examination. Despite these high expectations, actual learner performance does not align with the forecast grades. Hence, this study explores the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms.

The Omusati Region was chosen as the study site because it is home to seven Oshiwambo dialects, which are taught under Oshindonga as a First Language. Additionally, the region has many teachers who teach Oshindonga at the Namibia Senior

Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) level who are originally from other dialects rather than Oshindonga itself.

My interest in this research stemmed from my responsibility for national examinations and assessment of African First Languages in Namibia, including Oshindonga. The persistent undesirable results over the past three years have raised serious concerns and motivated this investigation into the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms.

2. Background to the research

The Namibian education system has undergone significant reforms since gaining independence in 1990. One of the recent notable changes was the revision of the curriculum, which included discontinuing the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher (NSSCH) and introducing the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) level (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MoEAC], 2019). This curriculum reform represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of the educational system.

The NSSCAS level curriculum was first introduced into the Namibian Education Curriculum in 2021, signalling a fresh approach to senior secondary education. Designed as a one-year course, the NSSCAS level is offered in Grade 12 and is benchmarked to the Cambridge International AS level certificate. This implementation reflects Namibia's commitment to providing a globally competitive education and preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century.

The MoEAC (2019) states that the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSCO) level and the NSSCAS level share many common aims and assessment objectives. Still, the NSSCAS examinations represent a significant addition in breadth and depth. MoEAC (2019) further states that the increased demands of the NSSCAS level are found in the range of learning content, the increased level of text difficulty, the style and demands of the written tasks, and the demands placed by the assessment criteria.

The NSSCAS curriculum promotes greater access to information and emphasises the development of critical thinking skills in learners. It also aims to equip learners to analyse, interpret, and evaluate information effectively. Moreover, the curriculum seeks to inspire and challenge learners to make the best use of their potential while contributing positively to society, the economy, and the environment (MoEAC, 2019).

One of the key factors that stimulated my interest and motivated me to undertake this research on assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms is evidence presented in the MoEAC Oshindonga Examiner's Report (2022). The report indicates that candidates were required to respond to questions by demonstrating an understanding of the given passages, including the author's point of view, and by conveying themes of risk and uncertainty through appropriate language and stylistic choices. However, the report revealed that a significant number of candidates merely selected phrases from the passages that were unrelated to the questions posed. These findings suggest that many learners at this level struggle to understand and respond to the assessment objectives stipulated in the Advanced Subsidiary curriculum. While implementing the NSSCAS curriculum is intended to provide substantial educational benefits to learners, it also presents several challenges for teachers. Such challenges include adjusting to revised standards and learning objectives, adapting to new curriculum content, rethinking assessment practices, and reviewing existing evaluation approaches (MoEAC, 2019).

Hence, this study aimed to explore how teachers implement the assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools. By doing so, this study could contribute to enhancing Oshindonga language education in Secondary Schools in Namibia by shedding light on current assessment practices, addressing challenges, and offering practical recommendations for improvement.

3. Theoretical framework

According to Varpio et al. (2020), a theoretical framework is a structured compilation of interconnected concepts and premises derived from one or more theories, constructed by a researcher to support a study. Constructing a theoretical framework involves outlining relevant concepts and theories to underpin the research, establishing logical connections between them, and demonstrating their relevance to the study at hand.

Additionally, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of a theoretical framework as a collection of theories and thoughts that relate to the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, Passey (2020) holds the view that a researcher constructs their theoretical framework by identifying one or more theories through several studies. Moreover, authors such as Varpio et al. (2020) have further noted that researchers in a wide range of academic fields, including education, frequently use theoretical frameworks

to guide their work, demonstrating teachers' preparedness and implementation of challenges.

The Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) framework, as proposed by Box et al. (2015), was chosen for this study due to its relevance to the research, which aims to explore the assessment strategies used in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners in Namibian Secondary schools. The Personal Practice Theory of Assessment (PPAT) was established by Cornett, drawing from the curriculum development model of Personal Practice Theories, several decades ago, to understand the complexity between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and assessments of learners' learning (Box et al., 2015). Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPATs) were selected for this study because they aim to improve teaching by understanding assessment strategies used by teachers in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms.

According to the Personal Practice Assessment Theories, teachers are not supposed to assess learners' activities out of the blue; instead, they are guided by their experiences and surroundings, whether personal or influenced by outside factors. In these theories, assessments play a crucial role in teachers' work, providing valuable information about learners' learning progress (Box et al., 2015).

Box et al. (2015) further indicated that during assessment development, teachers consider two important aspects: their anticipated learning outcomes and the purpose of the assessment. These aspects influence what is to be assessed, how it should be assessed, and how the results will be used during the implementation phase. This study also aims to explore factors contributing to poor Oshindonga results relative to the other Namibian-standardized languages.

According to Box (2008), the underlying assumptions of the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) informed the conceptual framework and guided the analysis of this study on the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Teachers' beliefs and practices vary significantly due to their skills, backgrounds, and personal theories. This shows the importance of considering individual differences when studying assessment strategies. This study also highlights that teachers care more about learners' learning and engage in self-reflection on practices that affect it. This suggests that teachers are motivated to refine their

assessment strategies to improve learner learning, particularly when they identify areas for improvement through self-reflection.

Box (2008) furthermore indicated that to adopt new assessment strategies, teachers often need to be dissatisfied with current learners' performance. This implies that dissatisfaction with outcomes can be a powerful motivator for changing assessment strategies. Moreover, teachers' personal practice assessment theories can influence their classroom assessment decisions. This means teachers' belief about assessment play a crucial role in shaping their assessment strategies.

According to the MoEAC (1993), the key factor in assessing Basic Education is to improve the reliable outlook of each learner's progress in relation to the minimum competencies indicated in subject syllabuses. In this case, assessment should be used to persuade learners to strengthen their knowledge base, refine their abilities, and develop sound values. Apart from that, it should also help learners build confidence and apply the skills they have acquired to solve problems.

The reasons for choosing the personal practice assessment theories to underpin this study was because when teaching Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level within the revised curriculum, there are various factors to consider within and beyond the school setting, such as tasks or questions set, the quality of the assessment given in response to the syllabus assessment objectives, and the process used in monitoring accuracy and consistency in awarding learner's marks.

Rogan and Grayson (2003) note that factors such as teachers' language proficiency, participation in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), attitudes towards the subject, and overall competence, as well as critical conditions such as the time allocated to teaching, can significantly influence assessment practices. This implies that under such constraints, the knowledge and skills teachers intend to assess might not be accurately measured.

4 Key concepts

The following discussion introduces key concepts used in this study and provides the necessary context to understand them.

4.1 Basic concepts

4.1.1 Assessment

According to Othman et al. (2024), assessment is a method for evaluating learners' understanding and skills by collecting and evaluating information. Berry (2010) explains that assessment is an established strategy for discovering what learners know or can do, and it involves several activities aimed at determining learners' achievement. In this study, assessment refers to a systematic process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting information about learners' performance in Oshindonga First Language. It involves evaluating learners' knowledge, skills, and understanding to determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved.

4.1.2 Assessment strategies

Altmisdort (2016) indicates that assessment strategies are the approaches used to measure learner learning, achievement, and progress. Berry (2010) suggests that assessment strategies are essential to evaluation. In the context of this research, strategies are viewed as systematic methods or approaches that teachers use to design, administer, and interpret assessments to evaluate learners' performance in Oshindonga First Language.

4.1.3 Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum (NSSCAS)

According to MoEAC (2019), the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) is a one-year advanced-level qualification designed to provide learners with in-depth subject knowledge, critical thinking skills, and academic preparation for tertiary education.

4.2 Related concepts

4.2.1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

According to Meng (2023), Continuous Professional Development (CPD) involves organised learning opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and online courses, that address key areas like differentiated instruction, formative assessment, classroom management, and technology integration. These programmes equip teachers with the knowledge and tools to meet learners' diverse needs, enhance engagement, and foster a positive, effective learning environment. In this study, CPD refers to the professional development programmes in place to support, especially, teachers' assessment competencies.

4.2.2 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes outline what learners should know or be able to do upon completing a course or unit (MoEAC, 2019). Harefa et al. (2023) further state that learning outcomes reflect a learner's ability to understand the material taught by the teacher. In this study, learning outcomes refer to the specific knowledge, skills, and competencies that Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS learners are expected to demonstrate through effective teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

5 Preliminary literature review

Assessment is a crucial component of education that supports learning and improves classroom practices. It focuses on the ongoing process of learning and on achieving outcomes, whether at the end of the lesson, chapter, term, or year. According to MoEAC (2019), secondary schools effectively manage human and material resources, enabling them to achieve the academic goals set by the Ministry of Education in Namibia.

According to Irons and Elkington (2021), formative assessment activities should promote learner engagement and enhance learning without placing excessive demands on marking or further increasing already heavy workloads. It is noted that formative assessment is influenced by learners' expectations, motivation, and self-regulation capacity. In addition, workload may be managed through strategies such as sampling learners' work for feedback, a process that can be further supported by allowing learners to indicate the work they would prefer to receive feedback on. Feedback that is focused on learning objectives and assumes that all learners can succeed is viewed as more beneficial than feedback that encourages comparison between peers, as such comparisons may negatively affect learners' confidence. Furthermore, the literature indicates that several formative assessment techniques can provide meaningful feedback without requiring excessive time. In this regard, peer feedback and self-assessment are highlighted as constructive approaches that promote learner self-reflection while also helping to manage assessment workload.

Brown (2022) further states that, rather than relying solely on classroom testing, teachers engaged learners in real time, using questions and feedback to guide their learning toward predetermined assessment objectives. This formative assessment approach fostered a more learner-centred learning classroom by providing much-needed support and fostering deep engagement. Additionally, MoEAC (2019) states that education in

Namibia focuses on an ongoing process of discussion, evaluation, and improvement, aimed at providing remarkable education for the Namibian people.

In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, Munikwa (2016) found that the country makes a concerted effort to support cutting-edge educational methods, technological advancement, and economic growth. As a result, it's critical to evaluate and reinterpret the principles of education and their relationship to the country's advancement. The author further suggests that having this knowledge enables practitioners to provide up-to-date, appropriate methods that could promote quality, global competitiveness, and learner achievement.

Josua et al. (2022) state that teachers may not be able to effectively teach learners the new curriculum if they are not properly trained. The authors examined studies that investigated teachers' perspectives on assessment in language education, their use of assessment strategies, their preparedness for lessons, the challenges they face, and any professional development opportunities related to assessment. Training for teachers may be available at the beginning, but it is not always possible for all subject teachers to attend, nor is it offered as a refresher course for teachers or newly appointed staff.

Another challenge to implementing the curriculum is the availability of financial resources. According to Fletcher-Campbell et al. (2003), financial resources can either enable or hinder educational settings and should be carefully considered. Josua et al. (2022) have also indicated that financial resources are allocated for purchasing educational resources, funding training efforts, maintaining physical resources, and purchasing teaching aids. However, the unavailability of funds can affect the agency and culture. Additionally, insufficient resources can compromise effective teaching and learning, leading to potential failure.

In China, various assessment strategies are employed in language instruction; for instance, Berry (2010) noted that many schools focus their assessments on paper-and-pencil tests, which may include short-answer or essay items. Some of the learners' skills, however, cannot be measured using test items such as examinations or quizzes, as this form of testing may largely focus on the retrieval of factual information. The way learners are assessed affects their learning.

When learners appropriately employ assessment strategies, they can enhance their learning. Berry (2010) explains that assessment strategies serve the purpose of

assessing learners' learning before, during, and after the lessons. In other words, assessments are essential tools for guiding learners toward their personal goals, with teachers overseeing their work and providing guidance when needed. These strategies can also serve as a basis for evaluating learners' academic achievements and reflecting on their own teaching.

Nhongo et al. (2017), in a study on teaching strategies in Ndebele in Zimbabwe, found that various classroom assessment strategies can be used to gather information on learners' learning progress. They further indicated that one set of the assessment strategies mentioned includes tests, examinations, quizzes, and learners' exercises, all of which are teacher-centred. Apart from these, other assessment strategies are learner-centred, including presentations, portfolios, group work, concept maps, and journals.

In Namibia, Zannier and Lumbu (2016) state that teachers have used learner-centred assessment strategies in languages since their introduction in the Namibian educational system in the early 1990s. According to the MoEAC (2019), learners are expected to use learner-centred strategies in language learning. Some of the assessment strategies used include open-ended writing assignments, writing examinations, quizzes, and homework exercises, such as short and longer pieces. According to Thomas (2012), these types of assessment strategies are time-consuming and require additional time to administer and score. The author further indicates that assessment is a complex activity, which requires knowledge of assessment methodologies and proficiency in assessment strategies. In addition, assessment strategies enable learners to write creatively and produce texts that interest and engage the reader.

According to the latest curriculum policy document by MoEAC (2016), the Namibian curriculum aims to create a knowledge-based society in which learners' existing knowledge and skills are continually evaluated and new knowledge and skills are acquired daily. The policy document further recognises that a knowledge-based society requires individuals to possess independent thought, creativity, and advanced communication, social, and teamwork abilities (MoEAC, 2016). The assessment strategies used for teaching and learning should develop the core skills in learner-centred education and enable learners to adapt easily as required.

In addition, MoEAC (2016) indicates that children develop problem-solving skills through a repeated process of gathering information, building knowledge, and analysis. This

process is unique to each child and stage of development. Teachers can foster learners' critical thinking by providing opportunities for them to apply their extensive knowledge to complex challenges. Furthermore, Brown (2022) stated that assessment is more than just a graded assignment; it is a tool for assessing learning outcomes. However, the challenge lies in assessing higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for educational success and are often more difficult to measure than simple factual recall. Learners need to demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Nevertheless, evaluating these skills effectively is a complex and challenging task.

Lastly, MoEAC (2016) states that teachers need to assess how well each learner has mastered the basic competencies described in the subject syllabus, and, from that, they will have a picture of the learner's progress. Teachers must carefully plan their assessment strategies and mark them using the marking criteria and the teacher-set marking scheme, in line with the assessment objectives in the NSSCAS syllabus. The learners should be given the criteria for assessing activities other than tests before the assessment. To inform their teaching, teachers have the discretion to give and record more continuous assessments than mandated, provided they serve a formative evaluation purpose.

Killen and O'Toole (2023) state that teachers focus more on the syllabus that frames the examination in pursuit of external examination success, meaning that the assessment strategies used are more focused on ensuring learners perform well in the external examination rather than on the comprehension of the taught content. Teachers often rely on their own experience to make decisions about assessment strategies, despite the fact that the learners being taught are from a different generation. It is worth noting that the times have changed, and the needs of current learners differ from those of previous eras. Furthermore, Killen and O'Toole (2023) noted that teachers should be aware that not all assessment strategies are effective for all learners. Teachers need to select the assessment strategies most likely to help the class achieve the intended learning outcomes.

6. Problem statement

The Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS), introduced in 2021 in the Namibian education system, expects all learners of the standardised First Namibian African languages to be critical thinkers. Learners are also expected to obtain symbols or grades A, B, and C, which are considered quality symbols. As a result, any

learner who obtains grades D and E is considered to have achieved low symbols (MoEAC, 2019). To understand the factors contributing to the decline in Oshindonga First Language performance, this study aimed to explore the assessment strategies used in selected secondary schools in the Omusati Region, Namibia.

According to Berry (2010), assessment strategies can be considered as aspects of evaluating teaching and learning. Essentially, these strategies are designed to assess learner performance at various stages of the learning process: before, during, and after the lesson. They can be viewed as plans to guide learners towards their objectives, involving a continuous data-collection process in which teachers monitor learners' work and provide necessary support. Additionally, these strategies can serve as a basis for judging learners' academic achievements and for reflecting on one's teaching practices.

Although several studies on language assessment have been conducted in Namibia, particularly in the Oshindonga language, such as Nghiueuelekwah's (2009) research on continuous assessment in Oshikwanyama, primarily focusing on Senior Primary Grades, and Ndume's (2020) analysis of Oshiwambo proverbs and their assessments, there is a notable absence of research specifically examining Oshindonga assessment strategies at the NSSCAS level. This research gap underscores the need for studies that directly address the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Namibian curriculum's assessment objectives in Oshindonga classrooms, as well as providing practical support to teachers.

Oshindonga, the first language, has raised significant concerns about the assessment strategies used by teachers, as the subject falls short of the anticipated ministerial standards compared to other recognised First Namibian African languages, such as Rukwangali, Oshikwanyama, and Silozi. The results for Oshindonga First Language, Advanced Subsidiary, have not improved since the introduction of the NSSCAS examination in Namibia in 2021.

The table below summarises the results of Oshindonga First Language at Grade C, compared to other languages over a three-year period (MoEAC, 2021; MoEAC, 2022; MoEAC, 2023).

Table 1

Year	Language	Pass percentage
2021	<i>Oshindonga First Language</i>	29.52%

	Oshikwanyama First Language	44.29%,
	Silozi First Language	66.67%
	Rukwangali First Language	96.67%.
2022	<i>Oshindonga First Language</i>	48.63%
	Oshikwanyama First Language	73.01%
	Silozi First Language	96.17%
	Rukwangali First Language	98.7%
2023	<i>Oshindonga First Language</i>	34.46%
	Oshikwanyama First Language	66.97%
	Silozi First Language	89.69%
	Rukwangali First Language	85.87%

According to the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture (MoEAC) examination report (2022), the decline of Oshindonga results raised serious concerns, not only within the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture itself, but also among parents, members of the public, higher education institutions, and all educational stakeholders. Some concerns point to assessment strategies, teaching and learning styles, and other formative and summative assessments.

Hence, this study aimed to explore the assessment strategies used in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners in the classroom.

6.1 Main research question

What assessment strategies are used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Namibia secondary schools?

6.2 Sub-research questions

6.2.1 How do teachers perceive the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?

6.2.2 What practices do Oshindonga First Language teachers use in the implementation of formative assessment during teaching and learning?

6.2.3 What are the challenges faced by the Oshindonga teachers on the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?

- 6.2.4** Which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes and classroom support are provided to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies?
- 6.2.5** How can assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum be improved to promote effective language learning outcomes?

7. Aim and objectives

7.1 Main research objective

The overarching goal of this study is to explore the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools.

7.2 The objective of the study is:

- 7.2.1** To explore teachers' perceptions of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms.
- 7.2.2** To identify practices Oshindonga First Language teachers use in implementing formative assessment during teaching and learning.
- 7.2.3** To investigate the challenges Oshindonga First Language teachers face in implementing assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms.
- 7.2.4** To examine the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and classroom support provided to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies.
- 7.2.5** To enhance the effectiveness of language learning outcomes in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum.
- 7.2.6** To explore ways to improve assessment strategies within the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum in Namibian secondary schools.

8. Research methodology

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) proffer that a research methodology is a broad term referring to the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in a well-planned study to resolve a specific problem. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) highlight that methodology outlines the systematic approach to conducting research, including identifying research problems, underlying assumptions, and potential limitations. The authors emphasise the importance of addressing or minimizing these limitations.

The most critical aspect of the research methodology, according to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021), is the approaches that will be used in the study, whether the study will use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, and the justification for taking such a decision. This section comprises the research design and the research methods.

8.1. Research design

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) define research design as a plan for how the researcher will carefully collect and analyse the data needed to answer the research questions, based on the evidence collected and the data analysis. This section explains the research design for this study. The details of the research paradigm, research approach, and research type are also discussed.

8.1.1 Research paradigm

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) define a research paradigm as a worldview that shapes what is considered acceptable in research and the approaches employed. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2020) describe a paradigm as a framework consisting of accepted assumptions and a design for collecting and interpreting data.

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm as its guiding framework. As noted by Bertram and Christiansen (2020) and De Vos et al. (2020), the interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of complex phenomena. In this case, the assessment strategies used by Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers make this paradigm most suitable for this investigation. Lincoln and Guba (2016) outline four key elements of a paradigm: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology.

Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and what is to be known. It reflects how knowledge is acquired and understood (Khatri,

2020). In this study, the use of assessment strategies by Oshindonga teachers is regarded as central to addressing the main research question.

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and existence, often termed the theory of reality (Khatri, 2020). The relevance of teachers' assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language classrooms aligns with this element and justifies the study.

Methodology focuses on the processes and tools used in research, including participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures (Guba, 2016; Khatri, 2020). Consistent with this view, the study uses appropriate methods, as detailed in Section 8.2, to ensure rigorous data generation and analysis.

Axiology relates to the ethical considerations underpinning research, addressing issues of right and wrong conduct (Lincoln & Guba, 2016; Khatri, 2020). In line with this, I ensured that ethical standards were observed, as outlined in Section 10.

Together, these four elements highlight the relevance of exploring assessment strategies used by Oshindonga First Language teachers. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore their practices and perspectives, and to identify the support and guidance needed to strengthen assessment strategies in Advanced Subsidiary classrooms within the Omusati Region.

8.1.2 Research approach

The study was qualitative. De Vos et al. (2020) state that qualitative research aims to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings through their accounts. In addition, qualitative research allows participants to provide thick descriptions or detailed accounts of the process, participants' contributions, the context, and the researcher's self-reflection (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). This study allowed participants to provide full descriptions of the challenges, coping mechanisms, and assessment strategies they use in the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS in classroom settings. Furthermore, Maree (2023) explains that qualitative research offers a realistic perspective, focusing on accepted situations in which interaction occurs. This approach views social life in terms of processes that occur rather than in terms of a fixed state.

This study enabled me to gather participants' views on their practices and experiences with the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary. This aligns with Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021), who state that qualitative researchers explore the core qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings

people attach to phenomena. Furthermore, they emphasise that qualitative researchers systematically examine everyday life to gain a deeper understanding not only of others but also of themselves (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021).

De Vos et al. (2020) also state that the qualitative approach is used to explore the complex nature of phenomena from the participants' viewpoints. Given its focus on understanding and describing these complexities, this approach was relevant to this study, which aimed to explore how teachers use assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum within Namibian secondary schools in the Omusati Region.

8.1.3 Research type

The proposed study used a case study design. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) note that a case study offers a detailed examination of a social phenomenon within a real-world context.

In addition, Bertram and Christiansen (2020) explain that a case study is a systematic and in-depth investigation of a specific case. The case for this research focused on the Oshindonga First Language in the Omusati Region. A case study approach enables the research to capture participants' experiences and views of the assessment strategies they use (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020).

According to Kumatongo and Muzata (2021), case studies may be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive. This study used exploratory case studies. An exploratory case study facilitates understanding of a specific unit, such as the operations of a school or college, or the performance of a group of learners, thereby enabling conclusions to be drawn about that unit. In some instances, case studies may also contribute to theory generation. In this study, the case comprised teachers, HODs, and Regional Education Officials who are knowledgeable in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary and who use assessment strategies for teaching and learning in the Omusati Region. This study used a case study design to explore assessment strategies in the Omusati Region. The approach enabled me to holistically explore how these strategies are applied, with particular emphasis on the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum.

8.2 Research methods

This section of the research study presents the selection of participants, describes the data collection process, and outlines the data analysis.

8.2.1. Selection of participants and sampling methods

The population of this study was all the schools that offer the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum in the Omusati Region. The Oshindonga First Language is offered in 52 registered secondary schools in the Omusati Region.

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020), “a sample is a subset of a population that is selected to research the population without having to collect data from its entirety”. This study used purposive sampling to select schools and all the participants. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) further indicate that purposive sampling involves the researcher making particular choices about which individuals, groups, or items to include in the sample. The sample comprised six secondary schools in the Region that offer Oshindonga as a First Language at the Advanced Subsidiary level. Among those participants are NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language teachers, Heads of Department (HODs) for Languages, and the Oshindonga Regional Education Official. The total number of teachers participating in the study was six. The criteria for selecting research participants are: two teachers teaching NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language from top-performing schools in the Omusati Region; two teachers from middle-performing schools in the Region; and two other teachers from the lowest-performing schools in the Region. The selection of schools was done using the Omusati region NSSCAS results.

The study also included three HODs for Languages who are monitoring the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language implementation from the selected schools. One of the HODs was selected from a top-performing school, another from a middle-performing school, and the last from a lower-performing school. Lastly, one Oshindonga First Language Regional Education Official who oversees the implementation of the NSSCAS curriculum in the Omusati Region participated in the study. In total, this study had ten participants.

8.2.2 Data collection

This study used semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple data collection tools enabled triangulation, thereby providing a more complex and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Maree, 2023). In addition, combining these data collection methods enabled me to obtain a more substantive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maree, 2023).

Below are the three data collection instruments used in the study.

- **Semi-structured interviews**

This study used semi-structured interviews as one of the primary data collection tools. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) stated that an interview is a planned and directed discussion in which the researcher designs specific questions to elicit particular information from respondents, based on the information available to them. Since semi-structured interviews were used in this study, some structured questions were followed by further inquisitive and clarifying questions.

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study, as they enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms. The strength of interviews lies in their flexibility, which allows me to clarify and simplify questions for participants to ensure accurate understanding (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). However, interviews also had certain limitations, such as generating large volumes of data that required considerable time to analyse (De Vos et al., 2020). To address this challenge, systematic data management procedures were used, including careful transcription, coding, and categorisation of responses through thematic analysis. In addition, qualitative data analysis software was utilised to organise and retrieve data efficiently, thereby ensuring that emerging themes were accurately identified and interpreted within the study context.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Heads of Departments (HODs) of Oshindonga First Language to obtain detailed insights into their experiences and practices regarding assessment strategies. This method enabled me to pose investigative and clarifying questions and to engage in discussions that probed participants' understandings (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were deemed suitable for allowing HODs to elaborate on their assessment practices, challenges, and reflections within the NSSCAS Oshindonga context.

The use of semi-structured interviews complemented other data collection methods, such as focus group interviews and document analysis. While the semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs) provided in-depth insights into their individual experiences and perspectives on assessment strategies, the focus group interviews with teachers encouraged the sharing of collective views, comparisons of practices, and reflections on common challenges within the NSSCAS Oshindonga context. Document

analysis further supported these methods by providing objective evidence from assessment records, schemes of work, and policy documents. The integration of these methods, enabled data triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility, validity, and comprehensiveness of the study findings.

- ***Focus group interview***

According to Baral et al. (2016), a focus group interview involves bringing together individuals with similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. It is also a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of participants discusses a given topic in depth (Van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). In this study, the focus group interview involved six participants: two teachers teaching NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language from top-performing schools in the Omusati Region, two teachers from middle-performing schools in the Region, and two teachers from the lowest-performing schools within the Omusati Region. I selected the schools using the Omusati Region NSSCAS rank-order of schools per subject document, obtained from the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA).

- ***Document analysis***

Moreover, I further utilised document analysis as a data collection method in the study. Armstrong (2021) explains document analysis as an organised and systematic approach to examining printed and digital documents. Like other qualitative methods, it required detailed analysis and interpretation to generate meaningful insights and deepen understanding. Document analysis was also commonly combined with other qualitative techniques to achieve triangulation, whereby multiple methods were used to explore the same phenomenon (Denzin, 2017).

In this study, I investigated how Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers employed assessment strategies in their daily lessons. De Vos et al. (2020) state that document studies are cost-effective and yield relatively unbiased information. The documents analysed included tests administered to learners, learners' workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, Oshindonga First Language school past examination question papers, and Heads of Departments' language monitoring files. The document analysis aimed to ascertain the assessment strategies used by Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers.

8.2.3 Data analysis

I used thematic analysis as the method for analysing data in this study. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data. In this study, thematic analysis was applied to data collected from interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, thereby addressing all the research questions. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover participants' experiences, opinions, and lived realities related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six-phase thematic analysis process. This approach involved: (1) familiarisation with the data through transcription, immersion, and initial note-taking; (2) generating initial codes to identify significant features, semantic content, or underlying meanings within the data; (3) collating codes into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes at two levels, where Level 1 examined the alignment of themes with coded extracts and Level 2 assessed their relevance to the entire dataset; (5) defining and naming themes by refining their scope and developing a coherent narrative; and (6) writing up the analysis by presenting the identified themes and refining the overall account (as cited in Humble & Mozelius, 2022). This systematic process enabled me to identify meaningful patterns and relationships within the data, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the assessment strategies and experiences of participants in Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms.

To ensure the quality and credibility of the findings derived from the thematic analysis, I adopted measures to establish trustworthiness throughout the research process. These included strategies to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data and interpretations. Ethical considerations were also observed to protect participants' rights and well-being, ensuring that the study upheld the principles of integrity and confidentiality.

9. Measures for trustworthiness in qualitative studies

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) are of the view that the concept of trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research. These criteria served as the qualitative equivalent of validity and reliability in quantitative research, thereby ensuring the scientific consistency of the study. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020), the trustworthiness of a study is demonstrated by its comprehensive nature and strengthened through detailed descriptions of data. Du Plooy-

Cilliers et al. (2021) further noted that trustworthiness was a crucial aspect of research quality, often associated with ensuring the rigour and integrity of a study. Trustworthiness was particularly important in establishing the credibility of research results and maintaining the confidence of both the research community and the broader audience. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured in the following ways:

9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which research findings accurately represent the realities and lived experiences of participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). In this study, credibility was ensured through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was achieved by employing three complementary research instruments: semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments, focus group interviews with teachers, and document analysis. The combination of these methods enabled cross-verification of information from multiple sources, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings. Member checking involved providing participants with transcriptions or summaries of their responses to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations and to ensure that their perspectives were faithfully captured. This process enhanced the study's trustworthiness by aligning my analysis with the participants' intended meanings.

9.2 Transferability

Transferability referred to the extent to which the research findings could be applied or transferred to other contexts or settings (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). To enhance transferability, the study provided a detailed description of the research context, participant characteristics, and data collection procedures, thereby enabling other researchers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings.

9.3 Dependability

Dependability referred to the stability and consistency of the research process over time (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). To establish dependability, I maintained a clear and detailed record of all research steps, including data collection procedures, coding decisions, and thematic analysis processes. Peer examination and review by supervisors were also used to assess whether the research process was logical, traceable, and sufficiently documented to allow replication, thereby enabling other researchers to scrutinise, replicate, and evaluate the study.

9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are shaped by participants' narratives rather than by the researcher's bias (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). To ensure

confirmability, I maintained an audit trail documenting all decisions made during data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Reflexive journaling was used to record my assumptions and reflections throughout the study. Triangulation of data sources further supported confirmability, and the collected data, analysis procedures, and findings were made available for review by supervisors and other scholars to verify that the conclusions were grounded in the participants' experiences.

10. Ethical considerations

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021), ethics is an obligation to act in a trustworthy and respectful manner, even in the face of hardship. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institution prior to the commencement of data collection. In addition, permission was obtained from the Executive Director at the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, as well as from the Director of Education in the Omusati Region. Permission was also sought from school principals, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Participants were fully informed of their voluntary participation in the study and of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. I ensured mutual respect between myself and the participants. Participants were informed that they would remain anonymous throughout the study and that the data collected would be used solely for this research. The data collected remained confidential between my supervisor and me; therefore, participants' identities were not disclosed. Codes or pseudonyms were used as identifiers.

Consent was obtained from participants prior to the interviews. Information gathered from both printed and electronic documents, including tests administered to learners, learners' workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, and Heads of Departments' monitoring files, was appropriately acknowledged to ensure that the study was free from plagiarism or academic dishonesty. The study also ensured that all sources cited were accurate and that the information used was trustworthy. Finally, the study was not submitted to another institution for the purposes of obtaining another qualification.

11. Possible limitations of the study

The study was confined to Namibian secondary schools in the Omusati Region and focused specifically on factors related to assessment strategies for Oshindonga First Language. NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language teachers, the Oshindonga Regional

Education Official, and Heads of Departments for Languages formed part of the study participants.

The study adopted a purely qualitative research approach, and all its elements formed part of the investigation. The study may have been limited by the shortage of recent literature on the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language in Namibia. This lack of literature may have affected the study's contextualisation.

12. Chapter division

The study is presented in five chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Orientation

Chapter One introduced the study, providing background information, the problem statement, research questions, sub-questions, and the aims and objectives. It outlined the research methodology and participants, discussed key concepts, and described measures to ensure trustworthiness and adherence to ethical considerations.

Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

Chapter Two reviews the literature on assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum, addresses the research questions, and situates the study within existing research. The chapter also examines the Personal Practice Assessment Theories, highlighting their relevance to the study.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

Chapter Three details the research design and methodology used to achieve the study's objectives. It discusses the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative approach, and case study type, and describes the research methods, outlining ethical considerations and measures to ensure the research's trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis, and interpretation

Chapter Four presents the thematic analysis of data, interpreted through the Personal Practice Assessment Theories. The findings are evaluated against the theoretical framework and compared with the existing literature to highlight consistencies, divergences, and the unique contributions.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

Chapter Five provides a comprehensive summary of the study, including key findings and conclusions. It identifies areas for future research, offers recommendations based on the results, and highlights the study's significance, implications, and limitations.

13. Chapter conclusion

The discussion above outlined the research proposal for the study entitled: "Exploring the Assessment Strategies Used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Omusati Region Secondary Schools". To inform the study, a preliminary literature review was conducted, drawing on research from local, African, and international communities. This literature was discussed within the theoretical framework of Personal Practice Assessment Theories. The research methodology, which included data collection and analysis strategies, was also detailed. Lastly, the chapter outlined measures to ensure compliance with trustworthiness and ethical considerations in the study.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant to assessment strategies. It examines the theoretical framework guiding the study, key concepts, and foundational literature on language education, curriculum implementation, and assessment practices. The review examines teachers' perspectives on assessment strategies across various global contexts. Furthermore, the chapter examines the availability of Continuous Professional Development programmes and classroom support for teachers in different settings.

2.2 Background to the research

Oshindonga is one of the Oshiwambo dialects, spoken predominantly in Namibia's northern regions. According to Mbenzi (2019), Oshiwambo comprises approximately twelve dialects, including Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Oshikwaluudhi, Oshimbalantu, Oshingandjera, Oshindobodhola, Oshikwambi, Oshihakafima, Oshikwankwa, Oshikolonkadhi, Oshimbandja, and Oshivale. Historically, Oshiwambo existed primarily as an oral language, but the arrival of Finnish missionaries led to its development in written form.

The first group of Finnish missionaries arrived in Owambo on July 9, 1870, to convert the Aawambo people to Christianity. While their primary mission was religious, the lack of written literature in Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama motivated them to develop, standardise, and modernise the language for use in their evangelisation efforts (Mbenzi, 2019). Zimmermann and Hasheela (1998) state that Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama are the only two Oshiwambo dialects with established written forms, largely due to the influence of Finnish missionaries who focused on these dialects, leading to their standardisation and integration into the Namibian Education Curriculum. This, in turn, indicates that, beyond preaching, Finnish missionaries also provided training in various fields, including nursing, carpentry, and education (Mbenzi, 2019).

Despite their prominence, many other Oshiwambo dialects are not officially standardised for use in schools. As a result, learners and teachers who speak some of the dialects not standardised for use in schools often prefer to study Oshindonga First Language, as it is more closely related to their dialects. However, while many learners and teachers opt for Oshindonga, some still struggle with its terminology because it is not their first language and they encounter it primarily in the classroom. Additionally, they struggle to fully grasp

Oshindonga concepts, particularly in vocabulary, syntax, and morphology, which ultimately limits their role to that of a lingua franca (Johannes & Jonas, 2021).

The Namibian education system has undergone significant reforms through the introduction of the NSSCAS curriculum. According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016), the reform aims to promote a knowledge-based society that values creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication through learner-centred education. In line with this vision, the NSSCAS curriculum seeks to equip learners with the competencies required for the 21st century. Nevertheless, based on my observation, the implementation process has presented several challenges for teachers, including the need to familiarise themselves with new content, adapt assessment strategies, and revise evaluation techniques to align with the curriculum's objectives.

To this end, this chapter examines assessment strategies used for languages that are not dominant within their respective contexts. It explores the practices educators use in these contexts, alongside the challenges they face. Furthermore, the literature review highlights the role of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in supporting language teachers across different contexts in implementing effective assessment strategies.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT), developed by Box et al. (2015), guided this study. PPATs emphasise the connection between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and assessment practices. This framework acknowledges that teachers' assessment decisions are influenced by their personal experiences, professional development, and the context in which they work. This study explored the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language classroom in Namibian Secondary schools in the Omusati Region. Box et al. (2015) highlighted the growing significance of classroom assessment, particularly following the publication by Black and Wiliam (2008) titled "Assessment and Classroom Learning."

In the Personal Practice Assessment Theories, assessment strategies are not isolated actions but are deeply connected to the broader teaching and learning process. Effective assessment is therefore an extension of the teacher's pedagogical philosophy, shaped by their knowledge, beliefs, and interpretation of curriculum goals. Teachers use assessment not only to measure learners' performance but also to inform instructional decisions, identify learning gaps, and adapt teaching methods to suit learners' varying

abilities and contexts. As such, teachers act as reflective practitioners who continually evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional and assessment practices. This reflective process enables them to integrate theory with practice, ensuring that assessments support learning rather than merely evaluating it. Ray and Sikdar (2023) argue that the phrase "teaching strategies" refers to the overarching pedagogical ideas and management techniques applied in classroom teaching, describing a teacher's approach to achieving intended outcomes (Al-Ghasab, 2022).

Assessments are crucial to teachers' work, as they provide valuable information about learners' learning progress (Box et al., 2015). By adopting flexible teaching strategies, teachers can use their surroundings, local environments, and other available materials effectively as extensions of their classrooms, both as field sites for exploration and as valuable resources to stimulate school-based coursework and creative thinking. In this way, what had previously been imaginative writing activities in the classroom, involving the creation of imaginative and engaging stories, became grounded in learners' real-life experiences. This approach helps learners to develop creativity and to respond to questions based on what they have heard, seen, or experienced, thereby enabling them to create vivid mental images for their readers.

Piaget proposed that individuals actively build knowledge through their interactions with the world, based on their personal experiences and the theories they form about their environment (Chand, 2024). Box et al. (2015) further emphasise that the involvement of classroom teachers in implementing any type of educational reform is critical. As a result, teachers should take the time to study the new curriculum and understand what is expected of them.

Box et al. (2015) found that teacher dissatisfaction with learner performance could be a strong motivator for adopting new assessment strategies. Additionally, teachers' personal beliefs about assessment significantly influence their classroom assessment decisions (Box et al., 2015).

Assessment should enable learners to build upon existing knowledge and apply acquired skills to solve real-life problems. Nevertheless, Box et al. (2015) observed that many teachers prioritise teaching to the test or rely heavily on external examination papers. This emphasis on low-level factual recall, as demanded by standardised assessments, has shaped teachers' assessment practices and often resulted in the neglect of formative assessment approaches that promote deeper understanding and skill development. Consequently, learners may not acquire the critical and creative competencies necessary

for meaningful language use and future application of knowledge. This perspective aligns with Ray and Sikdar's (2023) assertion that effective teaching depends on well-developed strategies underpinned by strong interaction, communication, and evaluation skills. These competencies are equally fundamental for assessment, as teachers must actively engage learners, interpret their responses, and provide feedback that enhances learning. In the context of Oshindonga First Language instruction, such considerations are particularly significant. Given the linguistic diversity and dialectal variations among learners, teachers are required to implement assessment strategies that move beyond rote memorisation and focus on learners' ability to use Oshindonga effectively and meaningfully, thereby fostering both language proficiency and cultural understanding.

Assessment decisions are shaped not in isolation but through prior experiences, pedagogical philosophies, learners' subject understanding, and other external influences. As Box et al. (2015) note, teachers' assessment theories significantly affect what is assessed, how it is assessed, and how results are interpreted. Assessments are deliberately designed with clear learning outcomes and objectives to ensure alignment with broader educational goals. Teachers also engage in self-reflection to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies, identify areas for improvement, and refine their practices to enhance learning.

Dissatisfaction with learner outcomes often drives innovation in assessment strategies (Box, 2008). PPAT aligns closely with formative assessment, highlighting its critical role in supporting ongoing teaching and learning. William (2018) further underscores the importance of assessment as a feedback tool that enhances both instructional practices and learner achievement. According to Box (2008), teachers continually reflect on lessons to identify areas for improvement and enhance subsequent instruction. When learners do not meet assessment objectives, such as those outlined in the Oshindonga First Language syllabus, teachers are motivated to adapt or replace ineffective strategies with more responsive approaches. For example, if learners struggle with comprehension through traditional methods, a teacher may introduce a video or a traditional song related to the text to build contextual understanding.

This reflective thinking illustrates teachers' professional growth and their commitment to continuous improvement. By adopting formative assessment practices, teachers can monitor learners' progress, identify learning gaps, and adjust instruction in real time. Box et al. (2015) further reinforce the principle that PPAT is not a one-time activity but an

ongoing process that ensures teaching remains adaptive to learners' needs and the learning environment.

Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) emphasise that teachers actively shape their assessment strategies in light of their unique beliefs, experiences, and professional knowledge (Box et al., 2015). These theories acknowledge the contextual nature of assessment, recognising the influence of specific educational environments, subject matter, and learner needs on assessment practices. PPAT hypothesises a strong correlation between teachers' beliefs about learning and assessment and their subsequent decision-making processes and strategies (Box et al., 2015). Furthermore, PPAT emphasises the importance of teacher reflection and a commitment to learner success in continuously refining assessment strategies. Moreover, Box et al. (2015) highlight the significant impact of teachers' beliefs about learners' learning, abilities, character, and enthusiasm on their implementation of learner-centered teaching and formative assessment strategies.

Additionally, Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) offer a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of classroom assessment (Box et al., 2015). By integrating teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practical application, PPAT directly connects to real-world teaching, guiding them to align their assessment strategies with desired learning outcomes. As defined by Chappuis (2009), PPAT encompasses both formal and informal assessment strategies used by teachers and learners to gather evidence that supports improved learning (as cited in Box et al., 2015). This framework emphasises the critical role of teachers as decision-makers, acknowledging their professional expertise and autonomy. The flexibility of PPAT ensures its applicability across various educational settings, making it particularly relevant for research involving Oshindonga First Language learners. Box et al. (2015) emphasise the substantial impact of teachers' personal beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences, and goals on their pedagogical approaches. These deeply held beliefs shape their understanding of teaching and learning, ultimately affecting their classroom assessment practices.

2.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is a foundational element of this study, providing a structured lens for examining the research problem. It outlines the relationships among key constructs, including teaching strategies, assessment practices, and learner outcomes in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. According to Luft et al. (2022), a conceptual

framework allows researchers to present their ideas clearly, making connections between concepts and the study's significance evident. Shikalepo (2020) further notes that it synthesises findings from reviewed literature, thereby establishing a research agenda that enhances understanding of the study's objectives.

In the context of the Oshindonga First Language assessment, the framework is particularly important as it aligns the study's aims with classroom realities. It highlights how teachers' pedagogical experiences, assessment strategies, and learners' linguistic diversity interact to shape learning outcomes, and it helps identify gaps in research within the Namibian NSSCAS curriculum (Shikalepo, 2020). By linking theory to practice, the framework guides data collection and analysis, providing a roadmap for examining how teachers design and implement assessments, interpret learner responses, and adapt strategies to meet learners' needs. Shikalepo (2020) further emphasises that a conceptual framework ensures coherence in the researcher's thinking and situates the study's contributions within the broader scholarly discourse.

Additionally, Ravitch and Riggan (2017) state that a conceptual framework is a vital component of research, illustrating both the significance of the study and the appropriateness of the methods employed to reach the research objectives. It is an essential tool that helps align research problems, methodologies, findings, and contributions (Hughes, 2010). Varpio et al. (2020) agree, asserting that a conceptual framework integrates interrelated constructs to provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This framework is instrumental in systematically and comprehensively addressing the research questions (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017).

In this regard, the conceptual framework functions as a structured plan that ensures the research design is appropriate for addressing the research questions (Kent et al., 2020).

Moreover, Luft et al. (2022) note that constructing a conceptual framework requires researchers to consider gaps or contradictions identified in the literature. Addressing these areas strengthens the study's justification by demonstrating how it will fill existing gaps, resolve inconsistencies, or introduce new directions for inquiry. Consequently, the conceptual framework plays a critical role in identifying the knowledge gaps the study seeks to address, thereby reinforcing the need to undertake the investigation (Antunes et al., 2021).

In addition, the conceptual framework informs the careful selection of data collection and analysis methods, ensuring alignment between the research questions, methodological

choices, and theoretical foundations (Kent et al., 2020). This study was underpinned by the following concepts:

2.4.1 Assessment

Othman et al. (2024) define assessment as the process of evaluating learners' understanding, abilities, and personalities through the systematic collection and analysis of information. Teachers who appreciate the significance of formative assessment are more likely to offer useful feedback, thereby enhancing learners' outcomes (Othman, 2019). Nonetheless, researchers emphasise the need to examine the challenges teachers face in implementing assessments effectively (Othman et al., 2024).

External factors such as educational policy changes, curriculum reforms, and professional development programmes also shape teachers' theories (Ghafri et al., 2021). Teachers who are well informed about curriculum reforms and their practical implications are better positioned to apply appropriate assessment strategies that enhance learning. To achieve this, workshops and in-service training are essential, as they provide teachers with opportunities to exchange ideas and refine their assessment approaches.

2.4.2 Assessment strategies

Assessment strategies refer to the approaches used to evaluate learners' knowledge, achievement, and progress. Teachers who regard assessment as integral to the learning process are more likely to use it to inform teaching strategies and adapt teaching to learners' needs (Othman et al., 2024). Those who adopt Assessment for Learning (AfL) employ methods that offer valuable feedback and inform teaching practices. In recent years, emphasis has shifted from summative to formative assessment, which promotes learner engagement and self-reflection to support learning and development (Buwono & Purbani, 2020). Teachers' theories about assessment, therefore, play a critical role in shaping classroom practice, influencing pedagogy, learner interactions, classroom dynamics, and the choice of assessment methods.

2.4.3 NSSCAS curriculum

The Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) Curriculum provides a foundation for pursuing higher education in Oshindonga First Language-related fields, such as linguistics, language education, and African Studies (MoEAC, 2019). The NSSCAS curriculum is designed to provide a challenging, globally competitive education within the Namibian landscape. The MoEAC (2016) defines curriculum as a

guiding policy for teaching, learning, and assessment that provides direction for educational processes. Josua et al. (2022) argue that the revised Curriculum for Basic Education was developed to address the shortcomings of previous curricula and to meet the challenges and needs of Namibian society.

Josua et al. (2022) further highlight that a shortage of both material and human resources in schools poses a significant challenge to implementing curriculum change. Similarly, Nyamida (2020), in a study conducted in Nigeria, found that inadequate curricular frameworks, systemic inequalities, and resource and capability disparities hinder curriculum transformation.

Financial resources also play a crucial role in implementing the curriculum. Josua et al. (2022) further noted that funding is essential for acquiring educational materials, supporting training programs, maintaining infrastructure, and providing teaching aids. However, a lack of financial resources can negatively affect institutional agency and culture. Moreover, inadequate funding can hinder effective teaching and learning, potentially resulting in poor outcomes.

2.4.4 Learning outcomes

It describes what learners should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a learning period. Learning outcomes define the knowledge and skills learners should acquire upon completing a course or unit (MoEAC, 2019). According to Harefa et al. (2023), learning outcomes reflect learners' understanding of the material and provide clear guidance for both teachers and learners regarding expected achievement levels. These outcomes can be assessed through various methods, including tests, class activities, and observations.

2.4.5 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) refers to structured training initiatives designed to equip in-service teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and effectively implement changes introduced in the revised curriculum. Such programs are intended to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence, refine their instructional strategies, and strengthen their capacity to conduct effective assessment of learners.

Nzarirwehi and Atuhumuze (2019) state that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is an important aspect of professional development, aimed at enhancing teachers' competencies. Fairman et al. (2022) further emphasise the importance of ongoing

professional development in maintaining and expanding teachers' knowledge, acknowledging the limitations of initial teacher training programmes.

The implementation of the NSSCAS curriculum required training for teachers in innovative teaching and assessment strategies, particularly for those who had completed their studies in the 1990s and for new entrants to the profession. Professional development programs that enhanced teachers' knowledge and training in assessment contributed to shifts in their assessment beliefs and strategies (Legarre, 2022). This training enabled teachers to refresh their knowledge and adapt to contemporary teaching methods, ultimately equipping learners with the necessary skills for success in line with the NSSCAS assessment objectives.

2.5. Curriculum reform and its impact on assessment

The National Curriculum for Basic Education (2016) succeeded the 2010 curriculum and builds upon the foundational principles established in 1993 by the Ministry of Education. As noted by Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021), curriculum reform aims to expand learners' knowledge and skills, foster positive values and attitudes, and prepare them for both higher education and the challenges of adulthood. NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language plays a pivotal role in this process, preparing learners for tertiary studies and expanding their knowledge of the subject. This necessitates a significant increase in the demands for cognitive, personal, and social development. Learners are expected to take greater ownership of their learning and cultivate strong work ethics and effective study habits.

Amukete (2020) emphasises that the curriculum serves as the foundation of any education system. However, if teachers do not fully understand and effectively implement the curriculum, it can lead to inconsistent delivery. Variations in interpretation among teachers can significantly impact the effectiveness of the educational process and potentially compromise the achievement of national education goals. Comprehensive teacher support is essential to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum.

These limitations can significantly hinder effective teaching and negatively influence learner learning. Ajani (2020) emphasises the need for robust support systems, including guidance in lesson planning, assessment strategies, collaboration, and professional growth opportunities. Mentoring and regular professional development programs can play a crucial role in providing this support, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and enhanced learner achievement.

This study argues that the well-being of first-year learners in the context of Open Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) is influenced by various interconnected dimensions. Therefore, addressing these dimensions is imperative for developing effective learner support strategies that can be integrated into the B.Ed. curriculum. By recognising the challenges associated with different aspects of well-being, lecturers and institutions operating within an ODeL framework can enhance learner support and ultimately enhance overall learner success.

2.6 Literature review:

2.6.1 Teachers' perceptions of assessment strategies in different contexts

This section examines teachers' perceptions of assessment, their understanding of assessment purposes, their views on formative and summative assessment strategies, the influence of teachers' assessment literacy, and the challenges that shape how assessment is understood and implemented across different educational contexts.

Research conducted globally highlights a complex relationship between teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and the implementation of assessment strategies. Othman et al. (2024) suggest that teachers who recognise the importance of assessment as a learning tool are more likely to use it effectively to address their learners' specific learning needs. This finding underscores the idea that teachers' perceptions of assessment shape the selection and application of assessment strategies in classroom practice.

Studies further indicate that teachers' understanding of the purpose of assessment influences whether assessment is used primarily for grading or for supporting learning. In Bangladesh, Alam (2024) observed that the traditional assessment system largely prioritised examinations and grades, with limited emphasis on feedback that supports learning. To address this limitation, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the School-Based Assessment (SBA) as a formative strategy to promote a learner-centred approach. The SBA enables teachers to monitor learners' progress continuously and provide timely, constructive feedback to enhance learning outcomes and foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Rahman et al., 2021). These reforms reflect a shift in teachers' perceptions towards viewing assessment as an integral part of the learning process rather than merely a summative judgment.

Teachers' perceptions of formative and summative assessment strategies also vary across contexts. In China, Gan et al. (2017) reported that government-led reforms have encouraged a move away from assessment systems that rely heavily on theoretical knowledge and high-stakes examinations. Instead, greater emphasis has been placed on formative and authentic assessment methods that promote deeper learning and skill development. Similarly, in Ghana, Asare (2020) found that positive teacher perceptions are strongly associated with the effective implementation of formative assessment strategies. However, limited teacher knowledge was identified as a major constraint to integrating formative assessment into everyday classroom practice.

In contrast, studies from the Middle East reveal a persistent reliance on summative examinations. Yassin and Abdulgalil Abugohar (2022) and Abu Musa and Islam (2020) report that despite policy efforts to promote formative assessment, the dominance of summative testing continues to undermine its effectiveness. Teachers often focus on content knowledge and memorisation, limiting opportunities for critical thinking and active learner engagement. Inadequate teacher training and resistance to curriculum reforms further compound these challenges. Alsubaihi (2021) also observed that teachers' perceptions vary significantly by gender, training, and subject area, with female teachers and those with relevant training demonstrating more positive attitudes towards formative assessment.

Empirical evidence further suggests that teachers' conceptions of assessment are shaped by a range of personal and professional factors. For instance, Mahasneh and Al-Zou'bi (2021) note that teachers' perceptions of the purposes and usefulness of assessment are influenced by variables such as years of teaching experience, professional assessment training, age, and gender. In a study conducted in Turkey, Yetkin (2018) investigated prospective English teachers' perceptions of assessment conceptions and found positive correlations between improvement-oriented conceptions and notions of school and learner accountability. However, no statistically significant differences were found in these conceptions based on gender, age, or teaching experience. Similarly, Izci and Caliskan (2017) reported that teachers who had attended comprehensive assessment courses held more positive conceptions of assessment, highlighting the role of formal training in shaping favourable attitudes towards assessment practices.

Across regions, teachers' assessment literacy emerged as a key factor influencing their perceptions of assessment strategies. Asare (2020) notes that insufficient teacher

knowledge constrains the meaningful use of formative assessment, while Kanjee and Craft (2012) similarly argue that some teachers lack the expertise required to apply assessment strategies effectively. These findings suggest that limited assessment literacy not only affects classroom practices but also shapes teachers' beliefs about the value and feasibility of formative approaches. Common challenges influencing teachers' perceptions include inadequate training, overcrowded classrooms, resistance to curriculum reforms, and heavy workloads (Yassin & Abdulgalil Abugohar, 2022; Segooa & Molise, 2023).

In the Namibian context, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2016) highlights that evidence from both informal and formal continuous assessments should guide teachers in deciding when to adjust teaching methods and learning materials to address learners' individual progress and needs. This underscores the importance of teachers being knowledgeable about different assessment approaches so that they can apply them effectively to support teaching and learning. The MoEAC (2016) further identifies formative and summative assessment as the two principal modes of assessment used in Namibian schools. It states that learners should be assessed using both methods to determine the extent to which they attain subject competencies in knowledge, skills, and attitudes (MoEAC, 2016). This indicates that assessment in Namibia is designed to serve both formative and summative functions.

2.6.2 Classroom practices used in the implementation of formative assessment

This section discusses formative assessment as a classroom practice in teaching and learning, common formative assessment strategies used by teachers, teacher–learner interactions, the role of feedback, learner involvement in assessment, and challenges affecting classroom implementation. Overall, these aspects are particularly relevant for understanding how formative assessment is practised in Namibian secondary school classrooms, including Oshindonga First Language classrooms.

Formative assessment is widely recognised as a key component of effective teaching and learning because it enables teachers to monitor learners' progress and provide feedback that supports learning. For example, Rahman et al. (2021) describe formative assessment within the School-Based Assessment (SBA) framework in Bangladesh as a continuous process in which teachers collect evidence of learning, give feedback, and adjust instruction to meet learners' needs. Similarly, Gan et al. (2017) report an increase

in the use of formative and authentic assessment practices in China to promote deeper learning and skill development. Together, these international perspectives highlight formative assessment as an ongoing classroom activity that informs teaching and supports learner progress.

In terms of classroom strategies, common formative assessment practices across different contexts include continuous monitoring of learners' progress, the use of authentic tasks, and competency-based assessment activities. For instance, in Tanzania, Rubeba and Ali (2024) noted a shift from content-based to competency-based assessment, with a greater focus on skills such as reflective judgement, teamwork, and creativity. Likewise, in Zambia, the introduction of School-Based Assessments marked a move towards more holistic practices that emphasise learners' competencies and higher-order thinking skills (Bwembya, 2024). As a result, these practices illustrate how formative assessment is used in classrooms to support skill development and meaningful learning.

Moreover, teacher–learner interaction plays a central role in formative assessment. Through questioning, discussion, and observation, teachers can identify learners' strengths and weaknesses and adjust instruction accordingly. In this regard, Mtshweni (2020) observes that teachers in South Africa use formative assessment not only to support academic growth but also to promote language development by monitoring learners' progress and identifying individual learning needs. Therefore, this interactive use of formative assessment is particularly relevant in language classrooms, where continuous feedback and guided support are essential for learner development.

Furthermore, feedback is a core feature of formative assessment. Rahman et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of timely and constructive feedback in supporting learning and improving learners' outcomes. Similarly, Mtshweni (2020) notes that formative assessment allows teachers to recognise learners' strengths and weaknesses and to plan appropriate instructional support. In classroom practice, feedback helps learners to understand their progress and areas for improvement, thereby strengthening the learning process.

In addition, learners' involvement is central to learner-centred formative assessment. The SBA framework in Bangladesh and competency-based reforms in Tanzania and Zambia encourage active learners' engagement, critical thinking, and reflection as part of the assessment process (Rahman et al., 2021; Rubeba & Ali, 2024; Bwembya, 2024). Similarly, such practices are relevant to Namibian classrooms, where learner participation

and reflection are important for developing language competence and independent learning skills (Kayoko, 2019).

However, despite these positive practices, teachers face several challenges in implementing formative assessment effectively. These challenges include overcrowded classrooms, limited training, resistance to continuous assessment, and pressure from examination-oriented systems (Etienne, 2007, as cited in Bwembya, 2024; Yassin & Abdulgalil Abugohar, 2022). Likewise, these constraints also affect classroom practices in Namibia, where large class sizes and heavy assessment demands can limit the consistent use of formative strategies (Josua et al., 2021).

Finally, in the Namibian secondary school context, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2016) emphasises regular formative assessment through both informal and formal classroom activities. Specifically, teachers are expected to monitor learners' cognitive, physical, and social development to plan appropriate teaching support and learning interventions. This approach positions formative assessment as an ongoing classroom practice that guides teaching decisions and supports learners who experience learning barriers. In Oshindonga First Language classrooms, for example, such practices may include questioning, class discussions, short written tasks, oral presentations, and continuous feedback. By gathering evidence of learning and adjusting lesson plans, teachers use formative assessment to enhance learners' language development and promote meaningful classroom engagement (MoEAC, 2016).

2.6.3 Challenges in implementing assessment strategies in secondary and language education

This section focuses on the nature of challenges in implementing assessment strategies, including curriculum-related challenges, assessment literacy and professional development challenges, classroom-level challenges, learner-related challenges, and institutional and administrative constraints.

The literature consistently reports a range of challenges that hinder the effective implementation of assessment strategies in secondary and language education. One of the most pervasive challenges is the dominance of summative examinations, which often leads teachers to prioritise content coverage and memorisation over meaningful learning and skill development (Alam, 2024; Yassin & Abdulgalil Abugohar, 2022).

Curriculum-related challenges are also evident, particularly in contexts undergoing educational reform. In Tanzania and Zambia, the shift towards competency-based assessment has required teachers to adopt new approaches to teaching and assessment (Rubeba & Ali, 2024; Bwembya, 2024). However, misalignment between curriculum goals and classroom practices, coupled with limited guidance and support, has constrained the effective implementation of these reforms.

Assessment literacy and professional development challenges further complicate the situation. Asare (2020) and Kanjee and Craft (2012) both report that limited teacher knowledge and expertise restrict the meaningful use of formative assessment strategies. Similarly, Yassin and Abdulgalil Abugohar (2022) note that inadequate training undermines teachers' capacity to implement curriculum reforms effectively.

At the classroom level, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, heavy teaching loads, and limited time for feedback and individualised support are widely reported (Etienne, 2007, as cited in Bwembya, 2024; Yassin & Abdulgalil Abugohar, 2022). Learner-related challenges, including diverse abilities and varying levels of motivation, further complicate assessment practices, particularly in large and resource-constrained classrooms.

Institutional and administrative challenges also play a significant role. In Namibia, limited access to teaching and learning resources, weak support structures, and inadequate professional development opportunities hinder teachers' ability to implement effective assessment strategies (Josua et al., 2022; Kanjee & Craft, 2012). These systemic constraints highlight the need for coordinated policy and institutional support to strengthen assessment practices.

2.6.4 Continuous professional development and classroom support for improving teachers' assessment practices

This section examines Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a key strategy for improving teachers' assessment practices, with particular emphasis on formal CPD programmes, school-based and classroom-level support structures, and challenges affecting CPD and support provision. Overall, the discussion highlights how sustained professional learning and structured support can strengthen teachers' capacity to implement effective assessment practices.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognised as a critical mechanism for improving teachers' assessment practices. For example, Asare (2020) recommends professional development initiatives, including workshops and in-service training, to address gaps in teachers' knowledge of formative assessment. Similarly, Yassin and Abdulgalil Abugohar (2022) argue that inadequate training undermines teachers' ability to implement curriculum reforms and adopt innovative assessment strategies. Therefore, CPD plays an essential role in equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve classroom assessment.

Moreover, the role of CPD in enhancing assessment practices is supported by evidence showing that improved teacher knowledge is associated with more effective use of formative assessment strategies. Asare (2020) found that limited teacher knowledge constrained the meaningful integration of formative assessment into daily lessons. Consequently, this suggests that targeted and ongoing professional development can significantly enhance classroom assessment practices.

In addition, although formal CPD programmes related to assessment are recommended in many contexts, access to such programmes remains limited. Kanjee and Craft (2012) note that professional support in assessment remains insufficient in some education systems. In the African context in particular, workshops, conferences, and in-service training are often proposed as key strategies for strengthening teachers' assessment literacy (Asare, 2020). However, without consistent access to such programmes, many teachers continue to struggle to improve their assessment practices.

Furthermore, school-based and classroom-level support structures are also important for sustaining improvements in assessment practices. The introduction of School-Based Assessments in Zambia and Bangladesh illustrates the potential of institutional support to promote formative assessment practices (Bwembya, 2024; Rahman et al., 2021). Nevertheless, without adequate training and ongoing support, the impact of such reforms may be limited. Thus, CPD initiatives need to be complemented by mentoring, coaching, and continuous classroom-based support.

Despite the recognised importance of CPD, several challenges continue to limit its effectiveness. These include limited access to training opportunities, insufficient funding, and gaps between policy intentions and classroom realities. As a result, these constraints highlight the need for systematic and sustained professional development initiatives that are closely aligned with curriculum reforms and everyday classroom practice.

Finally, in the Namibian context, Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021) argue that all educational changes, including curriculum reforms at all levels, require teachers to expand their knowledge and skills. They emphasise that professional development is most effective when it is continuous and includes well-planned learning programmes, supported by classroom observation and constructive feedback. Otherwise, the weak implementation of CPD negatively affects curriculum effectiveness. In practice, many teachers lack sufficient training and are therefore unable to apply the curriculum successfully. This concern is reinforced by the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020 (MoEAC, 2020), which underscores the importance of supporting teacher excellence through systematic training and collaboration within and across schools. Similarly, Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021) note that insufficient training during curriculum implementation limits teachers' ability to adapt assessment strategies to diverse classroom contexts. Furthermore, Haufiku et al. (2022) stress the need for teachers to receive timely guidance from curriculum designers and subject experts in order to perform their roles effectively, an expectation that was not met in many of the schools that participated in their study.

2.6.5 Strategies for improving assessment practices to enhance language learning outcomes

This section discusses key strategies to improve assessment practices and enhance language learning outcomes. These strategies include aligning assessment with learning outcomes and curriculum goals, strengthening formative assessment practices, improving feedback, using diverse assessment methods, enhancing teachers' assessment literacy and professional support, and strengthening policy and institutional support for assessment improvement.

Improving assessment practices is essential for enhancing language learning outcomes, particularly in contexts where assessment has traditionally focused on examinations and grades. For instance, Alam (2018) highlights the limitations of exam-oriented systems, which often fail to provide meaningful feedback that supports learning. As a result, formative and learner-centred approaches, such as School-Based Assessment, have been introduced to promote continuous assessment and deeper learning (Rahman et al., 2021). These approaches shift the focus from testing performance to supporting ongoing language development.

Moreover, aligning assessment with curriculum goals and learning outcomes is a key strategy for improving assessment practices. Competency-based reforms in Tanzania

and Zambia emphasise the development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, reflecting a broader shift towards holistic education (Rubeba & Ali, 2024; Bwembya, 2024). In this way, assessment becomes a tool for supporting meaningful learning rather than merely measuring achievement. Such alignment ensures that language assessments reflect the skills and competencies learners are expected to develop.

In addition, strengthening formative assessment practices is another important strategy. The use of authentic tasks, continuous monitoring, and constructive feedback has been shown to enhance learning and support language skill development (Gan et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2021). In particular, improving feedback practices is crucial for supporting language development, as feedback enables learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses and make meaningful improvements (Mtshweni, 2020). Therefore, effective feedback helps learners to take greater responsibility for their learning and to improve their language performance over time.

Furthermore, using diverse assessment methods can contribute to more inclusive and effective language learning. Segooa and Molise (2023) emphasise that a range of assessment methods allows teachers to create supportive learning environments that benefit all learners. However, the effective use of diverse assessment strategies depends on teachers' assessment literacy and access to professional support (Asare, 2020; Kanjee & Craft, 2012). Consequently, enhancing teachers' assessment knowledge and skills is essential for ensuring that assessment practices are applied appropriately and consistently in language classrooms.

Finally, policy and institutional support play a critical role in sustaining improvements in assessment practices. The introduction of School-Based Assessments and competency-based reforms illustrates the importance of systemic support for formative assessment (Rahman et al., 2021; Bwembya, 2024). By addressing systemic challenges and drawing on successful international approaches, education systems can strengthen their assessment frameworks, improve language learning outcomes, and equip learners with the skills needed for the 21st century.

In the Namibian context, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2016) promotes learner-centred teaching and assessment approaches that support language development and meaningful learning. The policy emphasises that assessment should be aligned with curriculum objectives and used to support learning rather than to drive teaching and examination practices. Specifically, the basic competencies outlined in the

syllabuses state the knowledge and skills that learners must demonstrate and that should be assessed as part of the teaching–learning process (MoEAC, 2016). Thus, assessment in Namibia is intended to support learning and language development by providing ongoing feedback and guiding instructional decisions.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed and synthesised literature relevant to assessment strategies in language education. It examined the historical and linguistic background of Oshindonga, curriculum reforms in Namibia, and the theoretical underpinnings guiding assessment practices, notably the Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT). The chapter further explored key concepts related to assessment, assessment strategies, learning outcomes, and Continuous Professional Development, highlighting their interrelated roles in effective teaching and learning.

In addition, the chapter analysed international and African perspectives on assessment practices, drawing on experiences from countries such as Bangladesh, China, Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania, and South Africa, and compared these with the Namibian context. The review revealed common challenges, including limited teacher training, resource constraints, and resistance to curriculum reforms, and highlighted the growing emphasis on formative and competency-based assessment approaches. Overall, the literature underscored the importance of teacher beliefs, professional development, and contextual factors in shaping assessment practices.

The insights gained from the literature informed the research design, justified the use of the PPAT framework, and guided the investigation into teachers' assessment strategies, thereby setting the stage for the methodology and empirical analysis presented in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore the assessment strategies used by teachers in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) Curriculum in secondary schools in the Omusati Region, Namibia. This chapter provides an overview of the exploratory research design, the interpretivist paradigm, the qualitative approach, the case-study type, and the sampling techniques used in this study. The data collection methods, which include semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, are discussed along with their relevance to the study. Additionally, the chapter presents measures of trustworthiness and outlines ethical consideration issues. Lastly, the limitations of this study are highlighted. This study was guided by the following questions:

- 3.1.1** How do teachers perceive the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?
- 3.1.2** What practices do Oshindonga First Language teachers use in the implementation of formative assessment during teaching and learning?
- 3.1.3** What are the challenges faced by the Oshindonga teachers in the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?
- 3.1.4** Which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and classroom support are provided to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies?
- 3.1.5** How can assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum be improved to promote effective language learning outcomes?

The following figure (Figure 3.1) shows a diagrammatic overview of Chapter Three.

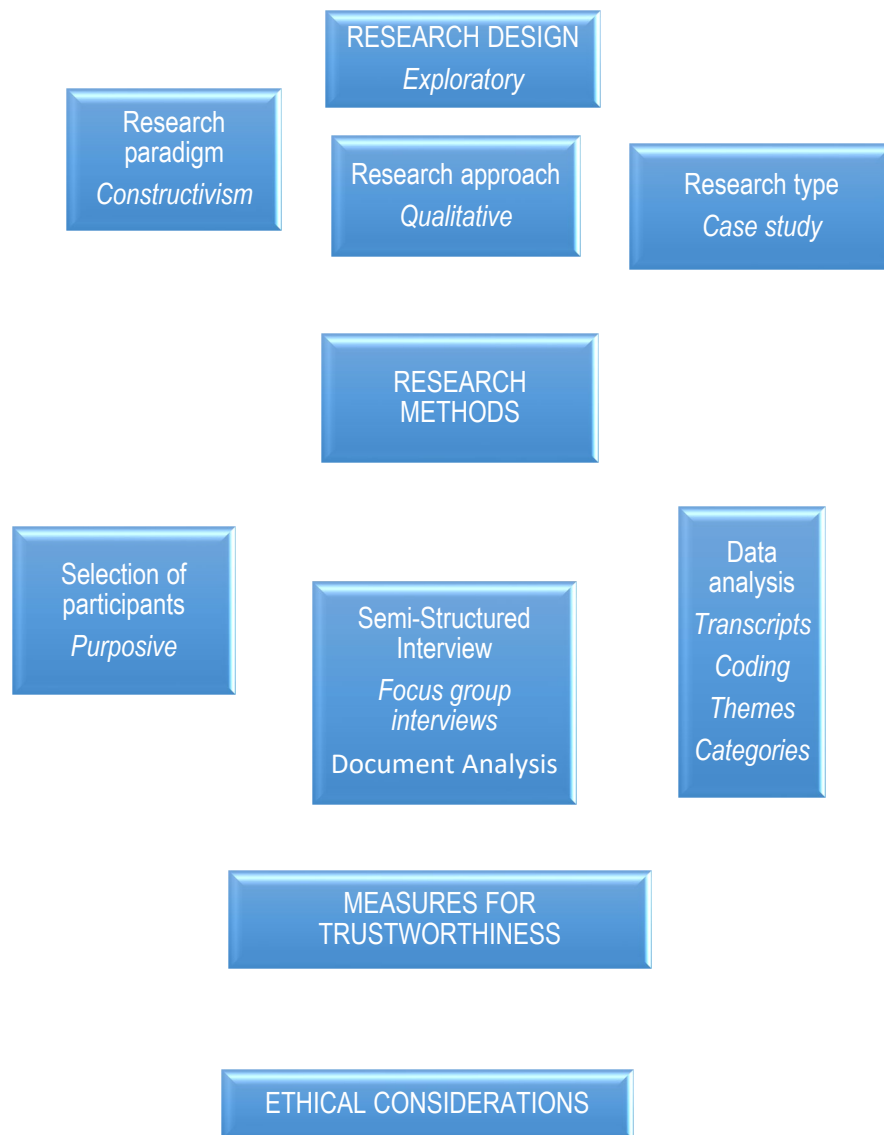


Figure 3.1: A diagrammatic overview of Chapter 3

3.2 Research design

Bertram and Christiansen (2020) define research design as a systematic plan that guides how the researcher will collect and analyse data to answer the research questions based on the evidence obtained. According to Creswell (2014), research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific directions for conducting a study.

3.2.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of beliefs that directs how a study should be carried out. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define a paradigm as a worldview that influences how

researchers interpret and give meaning to data. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) also describe paradigms as human constructions that shape how meaning is derived from research findings. Similarly, Khatri (2020) defines a paradigm as a set of beliefs or a framework that guides research and practice. Additionally, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) note that a paradigm reflects the researcher's values and assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation and guides all stages of the research process, including the formulation of the problem, research questions, data collection, and analysis.

A research paradigm is characterised by four philosophical assumptions. The ontological assumption concerns the nature of reality, specifically whether reality is viewed as a single entity or multiple entities. In the context of this study, using the interpretivist paradigm, the reality of Oshidonga teachers' assessment practices was explored through interactions with them (subject teachers, Heads of Departments, and a Regional Education Official). The epistemological assumption focuses on how knowledge is created and what counts as valid knowledge. This was observed through teachers' daily assessment practices in teaching Oshidonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. The axiological assumption concerns the role of the researcher's values in shaping the research process. Finally, the methodological assumption relates to the strategies and procedures used to gather and analyse data (Khatri, 2020). In the context of this study, this entailed three methods used to generate data: semi-structured interviews with HODs and a Regional Education Official, focus group interviews with teachers, and document analysis.

This study was guided by the interpretivist (constructivist) paradigm, which assumes that reality is subjective and socially constructed through interaction. The paradigm was suitable for this qualitative study because it focuses on understanding the meanings and experiences of teachers and learners regarding assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. It allowed me to explore participants' perceptions and experiences in their natural settings. As Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain, the interpretivist paradigm promotes understanding phenomena from the participants' viewpoints, enabling the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants.

In conducting this study, the interpretivist paradigm guided the formulation of open-ended, exploratory research questions to capture teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with assessment practices. Rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses, the study sought to understand how

Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers interpret assessment strategies in their everyday classroom contexts. The paradigm also informed the choice of qualitative data collection methods, specifically interviews and classroom observations, as these methods allowed participants to express their views in their own words and enabled me to observe assessment practices as they naturally occurred. This aligns with the interpretivist assumption that knowledge is generated through interaction between the researcher and participants within a real-life context (Maree, 2019).

Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm guided the data analysis process, which focused on identifying patterns, themes, and meanings emerging from participants' narratives and observed practices. I interpreted the data inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the participants' accounts rather than imposing predetermined categories. In this way, meaning was co-constructed through continuous engagement with the data and reflection on participants' perspectives. The interpretivist paradigm was reflected in my acknowledgment that personal values, experiences, and background could influence the research process. To address this, reflexivity was practised throughout the study by continuously reflecting on how my assumptions might shape data interpretation and by striving to represent participants' views as accurately and fairly as possible.

De Vos et al. (2020) affirm that humans constantly interpret, make sense of, and assign meaning to their daily actions. This approach enabled me to understand the context in which the phenomenon occurs and to interpret its meaning within the social and cultural framework of the natural setting. Maree (2019) further explains that the primary aim of interpretivist research is to analyse a particular situation to gain insight into how a specific group of people perceives their circumstances or experiences. Similarly, Bertram and Christiansen (2020) highlight that interpretivist research seeks to describe and comprehend how individuals make sense of their world and attribute meaning to their actions. In this study, this was achieved through direct engagement with Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers in their school environments and through interpreting their accounts of assessment practices and support structures.

This study, therefore, explored the practices and perspectives of Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers, as well as identified the support and guidance available to enhance assessment strategies during teaching and learning in the Omusati Region, Namibian secondary schools, using an interpretivist lens that prioritised participants' meanings, experiences, and contextual realities.

3.2.2 Research approach

A research approach is a general plan or strategy that guides the conduct of a study to address its research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which is suitable for exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they attach to their practices. According to De Vos et al. (2020), qualitative research aims to understand people's views by exploring their narratives and lived experiences. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) emphasise that it enables participants to share rich and detailed accounts of their contexts and actions.

The qualitative approach aligns with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning this study, as it focuses on understanding reality through participants' perspectives. This approach enabled me to gain deep insights into how teachers implement assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level, as well as the challenges they face and the resources they use. As Maree (2019) explains, qualitative research provides opportunities to understand how individuals construct meaning around their experiences, attitudes, and practices. Hence, in this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group interviews. Using this approach allowed me to explore factors influencing learners' performance and to interpret teachers' responses within the framework of Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) by Box et al. (2015). This provided a structured lens for analysing how teachers' beliefs and experiences shape their assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language classrooms.

3.2.3 Research Type: Case study

A case study is a research type that focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context (Schoch, 2020). According to Yin (2018), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary issue within its natural setting, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. In a similar vein, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) describe a case study as a method that enables in-depth exploration of a social phenomenon, providing a rich, detailed understanding of complex issues. Furthermore, Bertram and Christiansen (2020) explain that a case study involves a systematic and detailed examination of a specific instance or unit, such as a school, community, or organisation, in order to understand broader principles or patterns that may emerge from it.

In addition, case studies possess several key characteristics that make them suitable for educational research. Firstly, they focus on a bounded system, meaning that the study investigates a clearly defined case within specific parameters such as a location, period, or group of participants. In this study, the clearly defined case is the teaching and assessment practices of Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers in selected secondary schools in the Omusati Region, Namibia. The case is bounded by geographical location (Omusati Region), subject area (Oshindonga First Language), educational level (NSSCAS Advanced Subsidiary), and the group of participants involved (teachers, Heads of Departments, and a Regional Education Official).

Secondly, case studies emphasise contextual understanding by exploring how and why particular events or practices occur in their natural settings. In this study, focus group interviews were conducted at the Omusati Regional Office, where the teachers used to gather whenever there was a workshop in the region, which they were familiar with. Semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs) were conducted at their respective schools in the Omusati Region, as these are the contexts in which they supervise curriculum implementation and assessment practices. This enabled the researcher to understand assessment strategies within the real organisational and instructional contexts in which they are applied.

Thirdly, case studies rely on multiple sources of evidence; hence, this study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive and credible account of the phenomenon. The documents used for document analysis were obtained from participating schools and the regional education office and included tests administered to learners, learners' workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, Oshindonga First Language school past examination question papers, and Heads of Departments' language monitoring files. These documents provided concrete evidence of how assessment strategies are planned, implemented, and moderated in practice.

Lastly, case studies aim for depth rather than breadth, emphasising detailed understanding over generalisation (Yin, 2018; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). Hence, the participants of the study were Oshindonga First Language teachers, their HODs, and a Regional Education Official.

Given these characteristics, this study used a case study design, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language at

the NSSCAS level. This design aligns well with the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on understanding participants' meanings, beliefs, and experiences within their real-life contexts. As Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) observe, case studies can be exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive, making them particularly useful for investigating educational practices in their natural settings.

Moreover, the selected case for this research focuses on Oshindonga First Language teaching and assessment practices in the Omusati Region. This area provides a distinctive setting because most teachers and learners are not native Oshindonga speakers but use the language due to its closeness to related dialects such as Oshimbalantu, Oshikwambi, Oshingandjera, and Oshimbadja. Consequently, this context presents a unique opportunity to examine how teachers interpret, adapt, and apply assessment strategies in linguistically diverse environments. By examining this bounded case in depth, a holistic understanding is gained of how assessment strategies are implemented and experienced within Oshindonga First Language classrooms at the NSSCAS level.

The study's case, therefore, consists of Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs), and the Regional Education Official who possesses expertise in Oshindonga First Language at the Advanced Subsidiary level and has experience applying and supervising various assessment strategies in teaching and learning in secondary schools within the Omusati Region. Together, these participants and data sources constitute a single, bounded case that enables an in-depth, context-sensitive understanding of assessment practices and support structures in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level.

3.3 Research methods

Research methods refer to the systematic techniques, strategies, and procedures that a researcher uses to collect, analyse, and interpret data to address research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the term "research methodology" is broad, encompassing the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures employed in a well-planned study to address a specific problem. The authors explain that methodology provides a systematic framework for conducting research, outlining how the study identifies research problems, states its underlying assumptions, and addresses potential limitations.

3.3.1 Selection of participants and sampling methods

Qualitative research seeks to comprehend lived experiences and observed phenomena within specific contexts, engaging intentionally selected individuals (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020), “a purposive sample is a subset of a population that is selected to research the population without having to collect data from its entirety.” They further explain that purposive sampling involves making deliberate choices about which individuals, groups, or items to include in the sample. I used purposive sampling to choose my research participants.

The NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language subject is offered in 12 registered secondary schools in the Omusati Region. However, this study focused on six of these schools. The sample consists of NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language teachers, Heads of Department (HODs) for Languages, and the Regional Education Official for Oshindonga First Language in the region, who is overseeing the implementation of the NSSCAS curriculum. Participants were selected based on the 2024 Omusati region NSSCAS rank order of schools per subject document provided by the MoEAC-DNEA in Namibia. This ensured representation across varying school performance levels: two teachers, each from two top-performing schools; two teachers, each from two middle-performing schools; and two teachers, each from two lower-performing schools. Additionally, the study included three HODs for Languages, responsible for monitoring NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language implementation and performance within the selected schools, who were also included. Finally, the sole Oshindonga First Language Regional Education Official for the Omusati Region, as the key official responsible for ensuring that Oshindonga teachers receive the necessary guidance to enhance learners’ performance, participated in the study.

In total, this study had ten participants.

Table 3.3: Demographic and professional profile of Oshindonga teacher participants

School	Participant ID (Part)	Qualification	Years of Oshindonga NSSCAS Teaching Experience	Role in the Study
School 1	A	Master's in Inclusive ED	4 years	Teacher
School 2	B	B. Ed. (Honours)	1 Year	Teacher
School 3	C	B. Ed. (Honours)	3 Years	Teacher

School 4	D	B. Ed. (Honours)	3 Years	Teacher
School 5	E	B. Ed. (Honours)	1 Year	Teacher
School 6	F	HED and B. Ed. (Honours)	4 Years	Teacher
School 7	G	B. Ed. (Honours)	None	HOD
School 8	I	B. Ed. (Honours)	4 years	HOD
School 9	H	Master's in Education	None	HOD
School 10	K	B. Ed. (Secondary Honours)	None	Regional Education Official

Figure 3.3.1 Teachers' teaching experience (Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS)

3.3.2 Data collection

According to Kabir (2016), data collection methods encompass the abilities, perspectives, and tools used to gather and measure variables of interest in a study. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2020) emphasise that the choice of an appropriate data analysis method should correspond with the selected data collection approach. In this study, rich data were obtained through three methods: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. These methods were carefully designed to safeguard participant privacy while providing in-depth insights into the phenomena under investigation. The use of multiple data collection tools facilitated triangulation, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of the subject and enabling the researcher to capture a substantive reality of the phenomenon (Maree, 2019).

The following section details the methods used, the rationale for selecting these tools, and their application within the study.

3.3.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection method that integrates a set of predetermined questions with the flexibility to explore new ideas that emerge during the discussion. Naz et al. (2022) explain that semi-structured interviews primarily use open-ended questions that encourage participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives in their own words. Similarly, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) note that this type of interview is guided by an interview schedule while allowing the researcher to ask additional questions based on participants' responses. Unlike structured interviews, which follow a rigid sequence of fixed questions, or unstructured interviews, which take

the form of informal conversations, semi-structured interviews offer a balance between consistency and adaptability. This flexibility enables a deeper and more meaningful exploration of participants' experiences while keeping the discussion aligned with the research objectives.

This study employed semi-structured interviews because they facilitate clarification and allow for follow-up questions, ensuring that participants' meanings and perspectives are fully understood. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) highlight that one of the main strengths of interviews lies in the researcher's ability to simplify and clarify questions for participants. Similarly, De Vos et al. (2020) emphasise that semi-structured interviews create opportunities for interactive dialogue, making them effective for gathering detailed and context-rich data. Compared to other interview types, this method was considered most appropriate because it accommodates diverse responses, encourages participants to express themselves freely, and allows the researcher to explore complex issues in greater depth.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool for interviewing the Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Regional Education Official. They were used to gain insight into participants' unique perspectives on various aspects of assessment strategies in Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms. Specifically, the interviews explored teachers' use of formative assessment, the challenges they face in its implementation, possible solutions, and the type of Continuous Professional Development training they have received for the new NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum.

Semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs) were conducted at their respective schools to ensure a familiar and comfortable environment conducive to open discussion, while the interview with the Regional Education Official was conducted at the Omusati Regional Offices to allow access to official records, ensure administrative convenience, and accommodate the official's work schedule. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes, allowing sufficient time for in-depth exploration of key research themes while minimising participant fatigue. As De Vos et al. (2020) advise, interviews should not exceed one hour to prevent exhaustion for both the researcher and participants.

To maintain confidentiality and ethical integrity, all interviews were conducted in private rooms within the school premises. With participants' informed consent, a voice recorder

was used to accurately capture discussions, thereby enhancing data reliability and supporting detailed transcription during analysis. The semi-structured interviews thus provided rich, descriptive insights into participants' assessment practices and beliefs, while allowing flexibility in follow-up questions and probing responses to deepen understanding.

3.3.2.2 Focus group interview

A focus group interview is a qualitative research method that involves bringing together a small group of participants to discuss a specific topic in a structured yet flexible manner. According to Baral et al. (2016), focus group interviews unite individuals who share similar backgrounds or experiences to explore a topic of mutual interest. Similarly, Van Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017) describe focus group interviews as an interactive technique that enables participants to engage collectively in an in-depth conversation guided by a moderator. In the same vein, Yulianti and Sulistyawati (2021) define a focus group interview as a systematic and directed exchange on a particular issue or problem.

Focus group interviews are characterised by open dialogue, interaction among participants, and the exchange of ideas within a supportive environment. Unlike individual interviews, which emphasise personal perspectives, focus groups encourage participants to respond to and build upon one another's contributions, thereby generating new insights through discussion and debate (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021).

In this study, focus group interviews were employed to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' shared experiences and perceptions regarding assessment strategies in the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum. This method was particularly well-suited to fostering collaboration among teachers, enabling them to reflect collectively on their practices, challenges, and assessment approaches (Baral et al., 2016). The session was organised after school hours at the Omusati Directorate of Education offices to ensure convenience and maximise participation. A group of six teachers was purposefully selected, as this number enabled meaningful interaction while ensuring each participant had the opportunity to contribute. Overall, the focus group served as an effective method for collecting rich, detailed qualitative data through group dynamics and collective (Baral et al., 2016).

3.3.2.3 Document analysis

Armstrong (2021) describes document analysis as a systematic process of reviewing and evaluating printed or electronic materials. As with other qualitative analytical methods, it requires the careful examination and interpretation of documents to generate meaning, enhance understanding, and build empirical knowledge. Morgan (2022) similarly defines document analysis as the systematic interpretation of existing documents to extract information relevant to a study, while De Vos et al. (2020) highlight the need to consider both the content and the deeper contextual meanings embedded within these materials. Bowen (2009) further notes that this method enables researchers to gain insight into a phenomenon by interpreting written evidence. Document analysis typically draws on materials such as official reports, lesson plans, and learners' work that are produced independently of the research, offering relatively unbiased data sources (Armstrong, 2021). It is also cost-effective and unobtrusive, allowing researchers to gather data without influencing participants' behaviour (De Vos et al., 2020).

In this study, document analysis was used as a supplementary method to support and verify data from interviews and focus group interviews. The documents examined included tests administered to learners, learners' workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, Oshindonga First Language school past examination question papers, and Heads of Departments' language monitoring files. Reviewing these documents enabled me to explore the assessment strategies employed in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms and how these practices were reflected in day-to-day teaching.

3.3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a key process in qualitative research, serving to organise, analyse, interpret, and present data in a non-numeric format (Lester et al., 2020). According to Waeraas (2022), thematic analysis is one strategy that involves a systematic review of data to identify patterns and relationships within words, phrases, and sentences. Braun and Clarke (2019) define thematic analysis as a method for recognising, investigating, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. Additionally, Creswell (2013, as cited in Peel, 2020) notes that qualitative researchers employ thematic analysis and interpretation to produce rich, descriptive accounts of their findings, supported by participants' own words.

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to analyse data from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and printed and electronic documents. Those

documents include the learner's assessed activities, workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, past examination question papers, and the Head of Department's (HOD) Language Monitoring Files. These sources contributed historical and contextual depth to the study's findings.

The data analysis addressed the study's research questions by employing multiple data collection methods, as stated above, thereby uncovering participants' experiences, opinions, and realities. According to Peel (2020), thematic analysis requires researchers to actively and systematically identify and interpret patterns within qualitative data. This approach demands a deliberate, reflective, and thorough analysis while acknowledging the philosophical assumptions underlying the research. These assumptions shape the selection of data collection and analysis methods. Thematic analysis in this study followed the stepwise approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). Step 1 involved transcribing audio recordings into written text. In Step 2, I familiarised myself with the data by reviewing transcripts and connecting them to the field notes. Step 3 focused on generating initial codes by assigning numerical or categorical labels to different parts of the data as I saw fit. Step 4 involved identifying and organising themes by searching for patterns and relationships across the dataset. This required iterative reading and re-reading of the data to ensure consistency. Step 5 entailed writing a narrative report of the findings, incorporating participants' direct quotations to provide depth, meaning, and authenticity to the analysis (Humble & Mozelius, 2022).

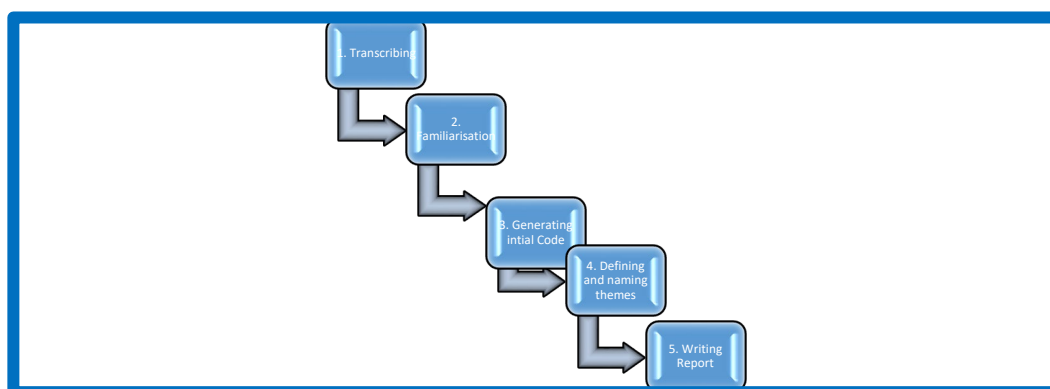


Figure 3.7: Thematic analysis in this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2019) stepwise approach

This study employed thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), to analyse qualitative data gathered from the participants. This method was chosen for its flexibility and suitability for interpreting meanings and experiences, which align with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning this research.

The six phases were followed as outlined below:

1. Familiarisation with the data

The initial step involved engaging myself with the raw data. I manually transcribed all semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews data verbatim. I subsequently read the transcripts several times to become thoroughly familiar with their content. Initial notes were made to capture key ideas, concepts, and recurring patterns appropriate to the research questions. Document analysis was also conducted by reviewing the initial familiarisation with the emerging ideas.

2. Generating initial codes

Following familiarisation, I coded the entire dataset analytically. This process involved identifying and labelling significant or recurring codes across multiple participants. Codes were developed inductively but remained guided by questions posed to participants that aligned with the five research questions. The coding was conducted manually using a colour-coding technique on printed transcripts.

3. Searching for themes

As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, there are no strict rules governing what qualifies as a theme; rather, a theme represents a pattern that captures something meaningful or significant in relation to the data and the research question. In this study, the thematic analysis involved a systematic review of interview transcripts, focus group interviews, and document analysis notes to identify recurring ideas and key issues. The process began with reading and rereading the data to familiarise myself with the content, followed by generating initial codes. such as *“use of formative assessment,” “lack of training,” “language diversity,”* and *“resource constraints.”* These codes were then reviewed and collated into broader patterns of meaning.

For instance, codes relating to *“lack of training,” “difficulty in interpreting assessment criteria,”* and *“inconsistencies in marking”* were combined to form a broader theme titled *“Improvement in the offering of Professional Development and Support, focusing on assessment.”* These themes reflected participants’ shared experiences and perceptions concerning assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms.

4. Reviewing themes

I subsequently reviewed and refined the initial themes to ensure they were coherent, internally consistent, and firmly supported by the data. This stage involved verifying that

the themes accurately reflected the essence of participants' narratives and remained aligned with the research questions. In some cases, themes were divided for greater clarity, while others were merged to reduce redundancy. Through this iterative process, each theme was confirmed as both distinct and sufficiently grounded in the dataset.

5. Defining and naming themes

After finalising the themes, each was carefully defined and assigned a name that reflected its core meaning and relevance to the study's focus on assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms. This stage involved writing detailed descriptions of each theme, clarifying what it revealed about teachers' practices, challenges, and perceptions regarding assessment. Concise and meaningful titles were selected to encapsulate the essence of each theme. For instance, the theme "*Importance of Feedback on Assessment Tasks*" highlighted how teachers used feedback to guide Learners' progress and improve performance, while "*Enhancing Teacher Support and Curriculum Understanding*" reflected the participants' need for continuous professional development and clearer guidance on assessment objectives. Another theme, "*Challenges in Implementing Assessment Strategies*," highlighted issues including limited teaching resources, time constraints, and linguistic diversity in classrooms. Each theme was reviewed in relation to the study's research questions to ensure alignment and coherence, demonstrating how teachers' experiences and insights contributed to understanding the assessment practices used in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level.

6. Producing the report

In this final phase, the themes were woven into a coherent narrative to address the research questions. Each theme is elaborated upon in Section 4.4, accompanied by direct participant quotations that illustrate its relevance and preserve the authenticity of their voices. Although some quotes were currently long, they were shortened during the final write-up to maintain focus and readability.

3.4 Measures for trustworthiness in qualitative studies

Trustworthiness was a key consideration throughout this study, which explored the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) curriculum in Omusati Region Secondary Schools, in Namibia. Given that the primary objective of this research is to examine the assessment strategies used by teachers in Oshindonga classrooms, trustworthiness was maintained throughout the

study. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021), trustworthiness in qualitative research consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These elements serve as the qualitative equivalent of validity and reliability in quantitative research, ensuring the study's scientific consistency. Similarly, Bertram and Christiansen (2020) highlight that trustworthiness reflects the study's comprehensiveness and reliability, and that this is reinforced by detailed data descriptions.

Trustworthiness was maintained throughout the research process, including preparation, organisation, data collection, and reporting. In the preparation phase, trustworthiness involved selecting a suitable research problem, defining the research setting, and identifying appropriate data sources. At this stage, suitable sampling techniques, data collection methods, and analysis approaches were selected. During the organisation phase, the study's conceptual framework was developed. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) emphasise that trustworthiness is vital for research quality, ensuring consistency and integrity while establishing credibility among both the research community and the broader audience.

This study ensured trustworthiness by accurately identifying Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS schools, identifying the challenges faced by teachers, and examining how Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Regional Education Official assist teachers in overcoming these challenges. In the reporting phase, particular attention was given to the coherence between data collection, analysis, and reporting. The research findings were presented based on key thematic categories that effectively captured the core issues under investigation. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured in the following ways:

3.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which research findings accurately represent participants' lived experiences and the phenomenon under study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020). In this study, credibility was enhanced through multiple well-established strategies in qualitative research. Firstly, triangulation was ensured by collecting data through three complementary methods: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. These methods enabled cross-verification of information, thereby reducing the risk of bias and ensuring a more comprehensive representation of participants' experiences (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021).

Secondly, member checking was conducted to confirm that the transcribed data accurately reflected participants' intended meanings. After transcription, the interview and focus group data were shared with participants, who were given the opportunity to clarify, expand, or correct their responses. This process ensured that the findings genuinely represented the participants' perspectives, as recommended by Maree (2019).

Thirdly, prolonged engagement with participants was undertaken to build trust, foster open communication, and gain a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences in applying assessment strategies in Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms. This involved multiple interactions with participants during semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, allowing for richer and more nuanced data collection (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a detailed audit trail was maintained throughout the study, which included field notes, methodological notes, and records of how data were coded, categorised, and thematically analysed. This enabled transparency in the research process, allowing others to trace how the findings and conclusions were derived (Steltenpohl et al., 2018).

Finally, the study ensured credibility through purposeful sampling, selecting participants who were most knowledgeable about the teaching and assessment of Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. For instance, the participants were Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience at the NSSCAS level and who were actively involved in designing, administering, and marking assessment tasks. These teachers were therefore well-positioned to provide informed and reflective accounts of assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms.

Similarly, the Heads of Departments (HODs) selected for this study were responsible for overseeing language subjects, including Oshindonga First Language, and had experience supervising curriculum implementation, assessment practices, and internal moderation at the NSSCAS level. Their leadership roles and professional responsibilities enabled them to offer valuable insights into assessment policies, support structures, and quality assurance processes within schools.

Clear research aims, well-structured questions, and rich, contextually relevant data contributed to the study's trustworthiness. By combining these strategies, such as triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and purposeful sampling, the

study maximised the credibility of its findings and accurately represented the participants' experiences and perspectives.

3.4.2 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings are shaped by participants' experiences and perspectives rather than by the researcher's bias (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). Similarly, Bertram and Christiansen (2020, p. 225) describe it as "the degree to which the analysis of the researcher can be confirmed by someone else, either a different researcher or a reader." In this study, confirmability was achieved through several strategies. First, a detailed audit trail was maintained, including field notes, reflexive journals, transcripts, coding records, and documentation of thematic analysis. These will enable others to trace how the data were collected, analysed, and interpreted, ensuring that findings were grounded in the data rather than the researcher's assumptions (Steltenpohl et al., 2018). Second, triangulation of data sources, using interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, helped cross-verify information, reducing subjective bias and increasing the objectivity of the findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). Third, member checking allowed participants to verify and clarify their responses, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected their perspectives rather than the researcher's preconceptions (Maree, 2019).

By integrating these strategies, the study ensured that its findings were credible, reliable, and confirmable, providing an accurate representation of teachers' experiences and assessment practices in Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms.

3.4.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to other contexts, settings, or situations (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020; Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). In this study, transferability was promoted through rich, contextualised descriptions of the research setting, participants, and research procedures. For example, the study focused on Oshindonga First Language teaching and assessment practices in the Omusati Region, where teachers and learners often use the language despite not being native speakers, drawing on related dialects such as Oshimbalantu, Oshikwambi, Oshingandjera, and Oshimbadja. This detailed contextual description enables readers to determine the extent to which the findings may be applicable to other linguistically diverse settings. Participants included Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs), and Regional Education Officials with relevant

experience in the NSSCAS curriculum. By clearly describing the characteristics and roles of these participants, the study provides sufficient detail for other researchers and practitioners to judge whether similar participant groups exist in their own contexts.

Furthermore, detailed documentation of the data collection and data analysis procedures, including coding and thematic analysis, enhances transferability by allowing other researchers to replicate or adapt these methods in similar educational contexts. As Bertram and Christiansen (2020) note, transferability is strengthened when researchers provide thick descriptions of participants' behaviours, experiences, and opinions. Accordingly, this study offers a detailed and transferable account of teachers' experiences and assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms, enabling readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to other settings.

3.4.4 Dependability

Dependability concerns the consistency and reliability of the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). A dependable study maintains a logical, transparent, and traceable process that allows other researchers to follow and evaluate its methodological steps. Bertram and Christiansen (2020) further note that dependability requires the researcher to document variations in the study and explain any differences from previous research.

In this study, dependability was ensured through a well-documented and systematic process at each stage of the research. All research procedures, from participant selection to data collection and analysis, were clearly recorded. The sampling method was purposive, and justification for selecting participants, such as Oshindonga First Language teachers, Heads of Departments, and an education officer, was provided based on their direct involvement with the NSSCAS curriculum. Detailed participant profiles were included to describe their teaching experience, school type, and role in assessment practices.

During data collection, consistency was maintained by using the same interview questions and focus group guides across participants. All interviews and focus group interviews were conducted in similar environments, either at schools or the regional education office, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Field notes and reflective journals were kept, capturing non-verbal cues, contextual details, and the researcher's analysis.

For data analysis, a clear coding framework was developed to ensure consistency in identifying themes. The process of transcribing, coding, categorising, and interpreting data was systematically documented, supported by tables that illustrated emerging themes and sub-themes. This step-by-step approach allowed for a transparent audit trail showing how raw data were transformed into findings. Furthermore, all ethical and administrative procedures were properly recorded, including approval letters from the Executive Director in the Ministry of Education and from the Omusati Regional Directorate of Education, as well as consent forms from participants.

Collectively, these measures ensured that the research process was coherent, transparent, and replicable, thereby strengthening the dependability.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) define ethics as a commitment to act with integrity and respect, even under challenging circumstances. Similarly, Rana et al. (2021) define ethics as a set of standards, codes, values, and expectations that guide human interactions and daily encounters. Research ethics encompass the principles, rules, and guidelines researchers follow to safeguard participants, organisations, and materials throughout the research process (Rana et al., 2021).

Shults and Wildman (2020) state that research involves studying natural, social, and metaphysical phenomena to enhance human understanding of how the world functions, identify the origins of problems, and develop solutions. In conducting research, ethical considerations must be addressed to prevent potential breaches, such as violations of human rights (De Vos et al., 2020). Maree (2019) emphasises that researchers have an ethical obligation to protect participants from harm to the greatest extent possible, ensure research credibility, and foster public trust. Additionally, De Vos et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of involving participants in project planning before including their names in research reports, to ensure accuracy in spelling and identification details. Consequently, thorough planning is essential in structuring interviews, selecting participants, determining interview topics, and safeguarding both participants and collected data. Informed by these guidelines, I ensured that the following ethical principles were upheld throughout all stages of this study:

3.5.1 Ethical clearance

De Vos et al. (2020) explain that universities, research institutions, and major welfare organisations have ethics committees, commonly referred to as Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs). According to Alston and Bowles (2003), these committees evaluate research proposals against strict guidelines and procedures before approving them to proceed (as cited in De Vos et al., 2020). Hence, in this study, I adhered to the University of South Africa's Policy on Research Ethics (Unisa, 2024) by seeking and obtaining approval from the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee (see Annexure A). The approval letter is attached. The ethical clearance aimed to prevent deceptive practices, such as covert observation, and to protect vulnerable participants, particularly children. As outlined in the approval form, compliance with relevant South African legislation was required, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), and the National Health Act (No. 61 of 2003), where applicable. To address both actual and potential ethical concerns, this qualitative research procedure was guided by the approved ethical proposal and clearance.

3.5.2 Permission from relevant authorities

De Vos et al. (2020) emphasise that obtaining permission from the appropriate authority, such as a town mayor or tribal headman, is not only crucial but also helps inform local communities about the project's objectives. These authorities have the power to grant or deny access to potential research participants.

After receiving ethical approval from the UNISA Research and Ethics Committee, I sought and obtained authorisation from the Executive Director of the Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture in Namibia, as well as from the Director of Education in the Omusati Regional Directorate, in accordance with established guidelines (see Annexure B and Annexure C). This approval enabled the research to access six secondary schools in the Omusati Region, Namibia, from which nine participants were selected for interviews.

Additionally, permission was secured from the school principals of the sampled schools. Hence, researchers who engage with leaders and community members respectfully and professionally are more likely to gain cooperation than those who attempt to force their way in (De Vos et al., 2020).

3.5.3 Informed consent

The participants signed informed consent letters, which are provided and included (see Annexure F). Informed and voluntary consent is recognised as a fundamental ethical

principle in research (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021; Maree, 2019). It serves as an agreement between the participants and me, ensuring mutual understanding and respect.

Informed consent comprises two key elements: *'informed'* and *'consent'*. The *'informed'* aspect requires that participants receive detailed information about the study, including its purpose, research questions, methodology, potential outcomes, and any possible risks or inconveniences. The *'consent'* aspect requires participants to demonstrate an understanding of their rights, including the freedom to participate voluntarily and to withdraw at any stage of the research study.

To uphold ethical standards, participants were thoroughly briefed on the study and provided with informed consent forms that detailed the research objectives, methods, potential risks, and benefits. They were encouraged to ask questions and provided with written summaries to reinforce their understanding, and signed forms were securely stored as evidence of compliance. Where written consent was not possible, oral consent was documented with the ethics committee's prior approval. This approach adhered to UNISA's ethical guidelines, ensuring voluntary participation, preventing unethical practices, and enhancing the credibility of the data collected.

3.5.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

Participants were guaranteed anonymity throughout the study, with all collected data used exclusively for research purposes. Confidentiality was strictly maintained between my participants and me, ensuring that participants' identities were never disclosed. To safeguard their identities, codes or pseudonyms were assigned and used for identification.

Regarding anonymity and confidentiality, Maree (2019), Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021), De Vos et al. (2020), and Bertram and Christiansen (2020) emphasise that researchers often handle sensitive information, underscoring the importance of these aspects. In this study, participants were assured that their personal details, including names, addresses, and workplaces, would not appear in any reports or presentations. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to both schools and participants. Schools were labelled "School 1," "School 2," "School 3," and so forth, while participants were referred to as "Participant A" through "Participant K." Only these pseudonyms appeared in research documents and reports. Participants were informed of this process during the consent stage, with emphasis on their right to confidentiality and secure data handling,

and reassured that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the study, including in the final reporting of results.

All data, including interview recordings and notes, were securely stored and accessible only to my supervisor and I. Confidentiality measures were maintained throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting, encouraging participants to share their experiences openly. By implementing these safeguard measures, the study adhered to established ethical standards, fostered trust, and enhanced the integrity of the findings. Additional precautions concerning data storage, publication, and disposal were taken in line with UNISA's ethical guidelines to ensure the responsible handling of all information, recognising that breaches of confidentiality could violate individual rights and potentially cause harm.

3.6 Delimitations of the study

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) emphasised that decisions made by researchers at various stages of the research process help define the study's delimitations. These delimitations, often referred to as parameters or boundaries, are essential for maintaining a clear focus on specific concepts, theories, literature, and methodologies. Establishing these boundaries ensures that the research remains structured, targeted, and well-defined. Similarly, Cresswell and Cresswell (2018) highlighted that every study is subject to specific limitations and boundaries, which may be geographical, sociocultural, intellectual, racial, temporal, conceptual, or political in nature. These constraints help define the scope of the study by setting clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring clarity and manageability.

This study focused specifically on Namibian secondary schools in the Omusati Region, examining factors related to assessment strategies for Oshindonga First Language. Participants included NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs) for Languages, and the Omusati Regional Education official.

I followed a purely qualitative approach, incorporating all relevant qualitative elements. However, a potential limitation of this study is the limited availability of recent literature on the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language in Namibia. This gap in the literature may affect the study's contextualization.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, which outlined the research paradigm, approach, and type that guided the study. It also outlined the selection of participants, which included the target population and sampling methods. Additionally, it examined the instruments used for data collection and the type of data analysis employed. Measures to enhance the study's trustworthiness and ensure ethical compliance were also discussed. Lastly, the chapter established the study's scope through delimitations, emphasising its focus on Namibian secondary schools in the Omusati region, specifically investigating factors related to assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at NSSCAS Level. The next chapter presents data findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses, and interprets the data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the three Heads of Department (HODs) at their respective schools and the Regional Education Official responsible for monitoring Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers. The interview with the Regional Education Official took place at the Omusati Regional Office. A focus group interview was also held with six NSSCAS Oshindonga teachers at the Omusati Regional Office, allowing participants to engage collaboratively. Document analysis was done at the selected schools to supplement and contextualise the interview data.

The findings are discussed thematically in relation to the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum, drawing on data from six secondary schools, insights from the three HODs, and the Regional Education Official. To ensure confidentiality, the schools and the Omusati Regional Office were assigned pseudonyms (Schools 1 to 10), and participants were identified alphabetically (e.g., Participant A).

The data are presented thematically, aligning with the five primary research questions that guided this study. Themes were identified through careful analysis of interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis, capturing both shared and divergent perspectives among participants. By integrating multiple data sources, the analysis provides a comprehensive and nuanced view of classroom assessment practices across the selected schools in the Omusati Region.

4.2 Research questions

- 1 How do teachers perceive the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?
- 2 What practices do Oshindonga First Language teachers use in the implementation of formative assessment during teaching and learning?
- 3 What are the challenges faced by the Oshindonga teachers in the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?

- 4 Which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and classroom support are provided to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies?
- 5 How can assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum be improved to promote effective language learning outcomes?

Research findings from both focus group interviews with Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers and semi-structured interviews with the HODs and the Regional Education Official from the Omusati Regional Educational Directorate are organised according to the research questions and aligned to the relevant themes.

4.4 Demographic data of participants

This section presents demographic details of the participants, who comprised teachers, Heads of Departments (HODs), and the Regional Education Official from the Omusati Directorate, who participated in this study. These participants were selected based on the *Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS – Rank Order of Schools per-Subject* document provided by the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA), specifically those within the Omusati Region. Furthermore, the teachers' dialects were investigated to deepen understanding of how linguistic variation may have influenced learners' performance in Oshindonga First Language, thereby enriching the study's findings. This section, therefore, outlines the participants' diverse demographic backgrounds.

4.5 Coding of participants (Teachers)

Table 4.5.1: Demographic and professional profile of Oshindonga teacher participants

School	Participant ID (Part)	Qualification	Years of Oshindonga NSSCAS Teaching Experience	Role in the Study
School 1	A	Master's in Inclusive ED	4 years	Teacher
School 2	B	B. Ed (Honours)	1 Year	Teacher
School 3	C	B. Ed (Honours)	3 Years	Teacher
School 4	D	B. Ed (Honours)	3 Years	Teacher
School 5	E	B. Ed (Honours)	1 Year	Teacher
School 6	F	HED and B. Ed (Honours)	4 Years	Teacher

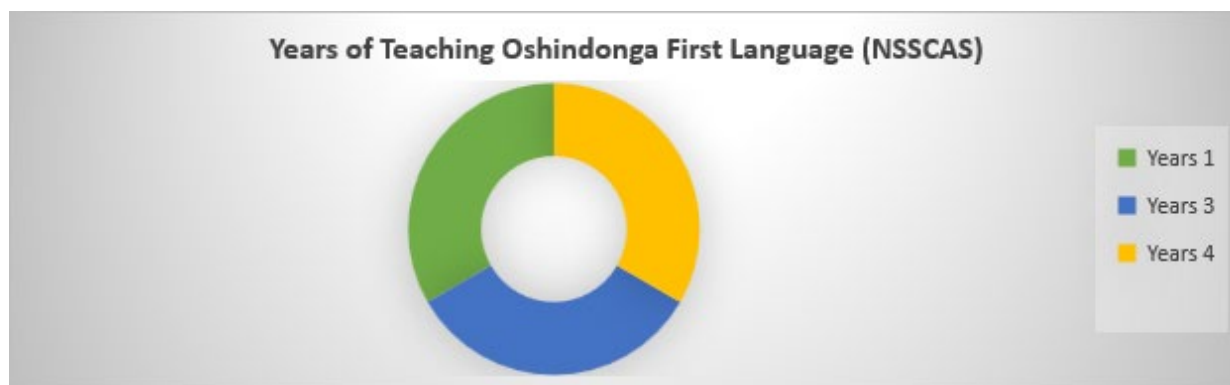


Figure 4.5.2 Teachers' teaching experience (Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS)

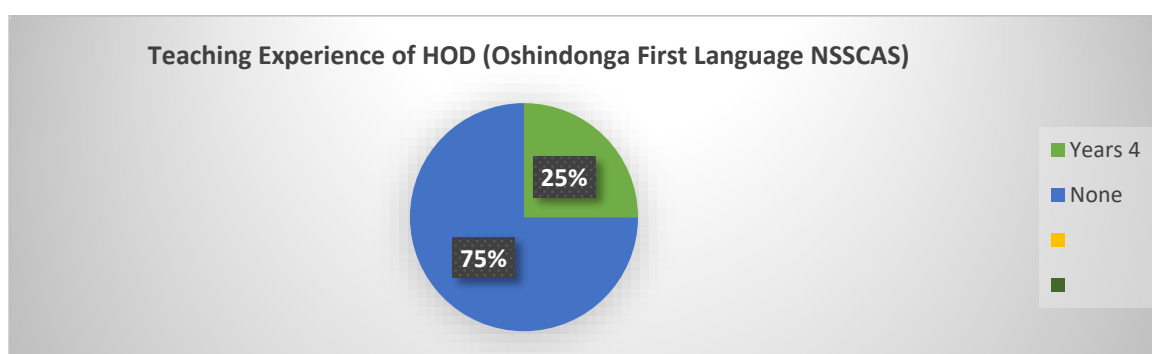
Interpretation:

Figure 4.5.2 illustrates the teaching experiences of the six participants. Two teachers had four years of experience, two had three years, and two had one year. This indicates that while some schools employ experienced teachers, others rely on relatively novice educators.

4.5.3 Coding of participants (Heads of Departments and a Regional Education Official)

School	Participant ID (Part)	Qualification	Years of Oshindonga NSSCAS Teaching Experience	Role in the Study
School 7	G	B Ed. (Honours)	None	HOD
School 8	I	B Ed. (Honours)	4 Years	HOD
School 9	J	B Ed. (Honours)	None	HOD
School 10	K	B Ed. (Honours)	None	Regional Education Official

Figure 4.5.4: HODs' Teaching Experience (Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS)



Interpretation

Only one HOD had direct experience teaching Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. The remaining HODs had not taught the subject at this level but were still responsible for overseeing its implementation.

4.6 Thematic analysis and presentation of findings

Below are the themes that emerged from the study, aligned to the research questions.

Table 4.3.1 Summary of the main themes and sub-themes

Research Questions	Themes
<p>Research question 1</p> <p>How do teachers perceive the assessment strategies used in</p>	<p>Themes</p> <p>1. Teachers' perceptions of the use of previous examination question papers as an assessment strategy</p>

<p>Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Perceived effectiveness of assessment objectives in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners 3. Perceived role of feedback in improving learner performance 4. Teachers' perceptions of the examiner's report as an assessment and feedback tool
<p>Research Question 2</p> <p>What practices do Oshindonga First Language teachers use in the implementation of formative assessment during teaching and learning?</p>	<p>Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Prioritisation of English in teaching Oshindonga First Language 2. Dialectal interference in Oshindonga Language learning 3. Contextualisation of learning activities
<p>Research Question 3</p> <p>What are the challenges faced by the Oshindonga teachers in the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?</p>	<p>Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overcrowded classrooms 2. Minimal content-based workshops in the region 3. Inadequate support from the Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Omusati Regional Office
<p>Research Question 4</p> <p>Which Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs and classroom support are provided to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies?</p>	<p>Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional-based training workshops 2. Minimal Support within and outside the school
<p>Research Question 5</p>	<p>Themes</p>

<p>How can assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum be improved to promote effective language learning outcomes?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeted Professional Development and Sustained Support 2. Providing more resources to strengthen the use of effective assessment strategies 3. Teacher's Reflective Practice 4. Improving Marker Selection for Fair and Effective Assessment
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4.7 Presentation of themes that emerged per research question

This section presents the themes that emerged from the study, organised around the research questions that guided it. Drawing on data collected from teachers during the focus group interviews and the semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs), and the Regional Education Official. The analysis highlights the themes that emerged, providing an understanding of the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum at the secondary school level in the Omusati Region, Namibia. By aligning the findings with each research question, this section aims to illustrate teachers' perceptions of assessment, their practices, the challenges they encounter, the support available to them, and what they think could be improved. These themes have broader implications for educational policy, classroom practice, and future scholarly research.

Assessment strategies are an important component of the teaching and learning of any subject. Thus, I needed to gather teachers' views on the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms. To obtain information on Research Question 1, participants were asked about the assessment methods they commonly use in their Oshindonga First Language classes and the reasons for those methods.

4.8 Themes

The following are themes generated from the data collected:

4.8.1 Teachers' perceptions of the use of previous examination question papers as an assessment strategy

In this study, the research question explored teachers' perceptions of the assessment strategies they use in Oshindonga as a First Language at the NSSCAS level. This theme is significant because it underscores the various assessment strategies teachers use to support the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's curriculum objectives in Namibia, as well as their perceptions of those strategies.

The findings from the focus group interviews with teachers revealed that most teachers use past national examination question papers as a primary assessment strategy for learners in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. The previous papers serve as tools for assessing learners' understanding of various linguistic features, such as figurative language. Additionally, teachers use the question papers to teach and assess language features and comprehension skills.

It also became evident during focus group interviews that teachers believe using past national examination papers helps learners become familiar with the examination question paper format, which is a summative assessment.

Participant B supported this by saying:

"I give them the passage from the old question papers to read and give them a question to answer based on that specific passage."

Similarly, **Participant C** shared the same view by saying:

"I commonly use formative assessment because, in most cases, I would say I teach the question paper. I usually follow the syllabus and the question paper to familiarise Learners with the format of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language exam. For example, if I want to teach persuasive writing, I select a text from a past question paper that I am certain is persuasive. We read the text together, analyse its content, and discuss its language features, such as style and other linguistic elements. After that, I ask them questions like, 'If the question asks about this, how do you interpret it?' Then, they explain based on their understanding."

Likewise, **Participant E** shared a similar perspective, saying,

“I give them a formal test as well. As you know, the NSSCAS curriculum is difficult, so I looked at previous question papers and use it. First, I usually start with the basics. You really need to see if the language used, such as figurative language (Elaka lopafano), which the question asked related to what the learners selected, and then see if they understand it. If I find that they know what the figurative language or the expressions are, that is when I start going into details about how the expected answer should be.”

In exploring effective assessment practices for the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum, participants’ responses indicated that teachers use past national examination question papers as an assessment strategy to improve learners’ performance in Oshindonga First Language in the Omusati Region. Teachers frequently rely on these question papers not only to guide their teaching but mainly as a tool for assessing learners’ understanding of various linguistic components. Through this strategy, they focus on developing learners’ comprehension and interpretation skills, as well as their grasp of language features such as figurative language.

Moreover, it became apparent during the focus group interviews that teachers perceive the use of past examination papers as a way to familiarise learners with the structure and demands of the final examination. This familiarity is believed to reduce anxiety and better prepare learners for what to expect in the actual exam.

Therefore, it can be concluded that past examination question papers serve a dual purpose: they function both as a teaching aid and as a formative assessment tool. This strategy is widely perceived by teachers as effective in enhancing learners’ academic readiness and performance in the Oshindonga First Language subject.

4.8.2 Perceived effectiveness of assessment objectives in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners

This theme explored the perceived effectiveness of assessment objectives in aligning with the Oshindonga First Language syllabus for learners. Ensuring alignment between assessment strategies and curriculum objectives is crucial, as it allows assessment practices to support learners’ progress and achievements, while also guiding instructional planning and delivery. So, the teachers viewed this as an important feature in the assessment strategy.

The findings from the focus group interviews with the teachers reveal that all participants place strong emphasis on the explicit use of assessment objectives from the syllabus as assessment strategies. Teachers ensure that learners have access to these Assessment Objectives (AOs), for instance, by pasting them into their summary books. Teachers regularly refer to the AOs when planning lessons and tasks and encourage learners to revisit them to fully understand what is expected.

The findings also showed that teachers frequently consult the syllabus for planning content and when selecting passages, tasks, and guiding questions.

Participant F supported the views by saying:

“The first thing I do, based on the assessment objectives, is ensure that I clearly explain to my learners what I expect from them. When introducing a new topic, I tell them what I want them to achieve by the end of the lesson, based on the AOs. I may ask them to analyse the language or identify and interpret the use of language in a given passage.”

Participant A added by saying:

“I have made copies of the assessment objectives as they appear in the syllabus and ask learners to paste them into their notebooks. When I set assessment tasks, I remind them to refer to the AOs to understand what is expected of them by the end of the lesson or task.”

Participant E also supported this by saying:

“I provide an example based on the same passage we have read, one that I am certain is correct and aligns with the assessment objectives from the syllabus. We also analyse the question by underlining all the key points. Then, we read the passage again, underlining all the language features and stylistic elements used by the author that directly answer the question.”

Participant B shared similar views by saying:

“We make copies of the Oshindonga NSSCAS assessment objectives from the syllabus and give them to all learners to paste into their notebooks. If there is a specific assessment objective that needs to be linked to a task, they can easily refer to it since they already have it to hand. Based on that, I might ask them to identify linguistic devices or appropriate language used in the text.”

The focus group interview revealed that teachers emphasise the importance of pre-testing assessment tasks to ensure they align with the syllabus assessment objectives.

To ensure assessment tasks align with syllabus objectives, **Participant A** added:

“I try to answer the questions I have prepared for learners before I go to class. That way, I can be sure that both the task and the passage I have selected align with the assessment objectives in the syllabus. I also prepare a mark scheme to accompany the assessment task, ensuring that it covers all features outlined by the assessment objectives.”

The findings from the semi-structured interviews with the Heads of Departments (HODs) and Regional Education Officials further revealed that participants acknowledged the importance of designing assessment tasks that reflect the demands of the syllabus, particularly the emphasis on extended writing and on connecting written responses to passages learners have read. Moreover, the findings revealed that although some learners can begin their essays effectively, they often lose interest or focus as they progress. This pattern highlights the need for consistent writing practice throughout the term to help build both writing stamina and sustained learner engagement.

Participant J supports this view by explaining:

“The assessment that the teachers are giving works hand in hand with the syllabus because it requires learners to write more, understand what they have read, and ensure that their written work is based on the passage read and connected to the assessment objectives in the syllabus. I think this is helping our learners because most of them are too lazy to write. We pick this up when we are marking Paper 2, for example. You will find a learner who has started their essay well, but towards the end, it becomes clear that they have lost interest somewhere, somehow. This means doing more writing throughout the semester helps train them, which supports my earlier comments. Learners need materials such as magazines and newspapers to provide sufficient background information for their writing. These learners are expected to justify their answers by giving reasons and supporting them with references from the passage.”

Participant G also confirmed this by stating:

“Yes, I believe they are well aligned. Most learners demonstrate a good understanding of the material, and their performance shows that the objectives and competencies outlined in the curriculum are being met. This tells me that the assessment strategies we use effectively measure the learning outcomes we aim for.”

Furthermore, the HODs emphasised that the syllabus outlines a range of competencies and objectives that should not be taught in isolation. Instead, they advocated an integrated approach to language instruction, in which elements such as punctuation, paragraphing, and sentence structure are taught together. According to the participant, this makes the teaching and learning process more efficient and effective, as learners are better able to make meaningful connections across language skills. This also helps in assessing learners.

Moreover, the HODs highlighted the importance of structured school planning in supporting curriculum alignment. At their school, a well-organised internal plan ensures that teachers remain focused on the syllabus objectives. Teachers operate within a collaborative environment, engaging in joint lesson planning and assessment mapping. This collaborative approach not only promotes professional development among teachers but also ensures that assessment tasks are consistently aligned with the NSSCAS syllabus objectives.

Participant I confirmed this by stating:

“In my opinion and understanding, the syllabus contains various assessment objectives that should not be taught in isolation. We need to integrate the lesson objectives for effective language teaching. For example, when teaching punctuation, we should also incorporate paragraphing and sentence structures. Integrating these elements makes the learning process more efficient and effective.”

At our school, we have a structured plan to ensure our teachers remain aligned with the syllabus. The internal school plan corresponds with the curriculum, and teachers work together in a collaborative environment. They engage in joint planning and mapping of assessments. This helps my teachers to learn from each other and ensure that assessment tasks are aligned to the assessment objectives in the syllabus.”

The study's findings reveal that all participants recognise the importance of aligning lesson aims with the assessment objectives outlined in the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language syllabus. Teachers reported consistently using the syllabus as a guiding framework when planning lessons, selecting reading passages, and designing assessment tasks. This alignment ensures that both teaching and assessment remain focused on the intended learning outcomes and curriculum expectations.

Teachers explained that they make assessment objectives accessible to learners by displaying them in classrooms or pasting them into learners' notebooks and summary

books. This practice helps learners internalise what is expected of them and better understand how their performance will be evaluated. Teachers also emphasised that assessment tasks should directly reflect specific objectives, particularly those targeting language comprehension, text analysis, and interpretation of the author's intent. To achieve this, they design questions, model answers, and marking rubrics that correspond to the syllabus requirements.

These findings suggest that teachers' use of assessment objectives functions as a planning tool that informs the selection and design of assessment tasks. By aligning assessment tasks, which include classroom activities and tests, with the syllabus, teachers ensure validity and consistency between what is taught and what is assessed. Furthermore, their efforts to communicate assessment objectives to learners enhance learners' awareness of learning goals, performance expectations, and what learners should focus on when learning, which is a critical step in fostering assessment for learning. Therefore, teachers perceive the use of assessment objectives in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners as effective.

4.8.3 Perceived role of feedback in improving learner performance

This theme explores the perceived role of feedback in improving learner performance during assessment to enhance both teaching and learning. In learner-centred classrooms, feedback plays a key role, helping teachers gather clear, accurate information about how learners are performing in relation to the basic competencies. It is also an important part of formative assessment.

Another key aspect that emerged from the data is the importance of timely and constructive feedback. The HODs underscored that feedback should be provided promptly to be effective. In this regard, Heads of Departments (HODs) adopt a time-on-task approach, frequently visiting classrooms and checking learners' books to monitor the presence of feedback in the form of corrections. These visits are sometimes conducted without prior notice to teachers. This practice, along with the requirement to document all assessment tasks and learner corrections, holds teachers accountable while also motivating them.

Furthermore, teachers use assessment not only to assess performance but also as a tool to encourage learners to correct their mistakes and reflect on their learning. Feedback

significantly improves learners' understanding and achievement in any subject, but in this context, in Oshindonga First Language.

Participant A from the focus group interview also supported this view by stating:

This assessment task feedback provides learners with the information they need on their performance. So, I will make sure the feedback guides them on areas for improvement. In addition, I motivate them to correct each assessment task so they know where they went wrong, enabling them to improve on their next task as it should be. I will, for example, read out the highest marks achieved by learners who performed well, along with their answers, to motivate other learners. On the other hand, sometimes, I can ask that learner to go in front of the class and give them their answers. When we are done with the explanation of their assessment task and the feedback given, I will then ask all the learners to correct the assessment task based on our discussion."

Additionally, the focus group interview revealed that some participants offered feedback paragraph by paragraph, an effective strategy for addressing specific issues, such as the lack of correlation between the identified language and style and the author's intended meaning in the selected passage.

Participant D shared her view on this by stating:

I give my learners feedback paragraph by paragraph. Sometimes, you may find that a learner identifies the language used by the author based on the question, but their explanation does not align with the author's intention. In such cases, I provide comments like, 'Yes, you have selected the correct language usage, but the reason given does not correspond with the author's intention.' This helps them realise that, for their answers to be correct, they need to align them with the author's intention and the question.

If I notice that the language usage they have identified from the passage correctly answers the question, I ask one of the learners to explain to the class how the selected language addresses the question and how it corresponds with the author's intention. Afterward, I encourage the whole class to comment on the given explanation, discussing whether they agree or disagree with their classmate. By using this strategy, learners gain a deeper understanding and improve their reasoning skills to meet the NSSCAS curriculum's expectations.

Participant D confirmed this by saying:

Based on their level of understanding, I then select another example of language usage from the passage and ask them once again to explain why the author used it. This helps ensure that they fully grasp what is expected of them concerning both the question and the passage.

This focus group participant emphasised the gap between the learner's work and the expected standards, clearly highlighting discrepancies to support understanding. Their feedback also aims to encourage learners to learn from their mistakes.

Participant F stated:

I make sure that when I give feedback, it clearly shows learners the difference between the examples I provided and their work. The feedback also guides them by highlighting where they went wrong in their exercises, helping them avoid repeating the same mistakes in future activities.

For example, consider a question about the author's style, such as when a learner is asked to identify the language and style used to convey the beauty of Namibia. Here, the learner is expected to select language and stylistic elements that emphasise the beauty of Namibia, as indicated by the question. It is possible that the author used rich and engaging language to make their work interesting, but if it does not highlight the beauty of Namibia, it does not answer the question. In my feedback, which I write in their books, learners will realise that they made a mistake by identifying any language feature from the passage without considering whether it directly addresses the question.

Participant J supported this view by explaining:

We have things such as time on task. This means that when you assign a task to learners, you must give feedback within that week. I also go there, not for assessment, but to see whether these learners have received feedback. Sometimes I just go and ask the learners to hand me their books to see for myself whether their activities were corrected or not. I have motivated my teachers to ensure they give feedback to learners every week, and learners must write corrections for everything they got wrong. The teachers also need to record all assigned activities, including tests, and ensure that all corrections are marked. Sometimes I sign these books without the teachers' knowledge."

In addition, the HODs stressed that effective feedback is a crucial component in supporting learners' academic progress and improving subject performance. In recognition of this, they have indicated that they have established a structured plan to

ensure all teachers remain aligned with the syllabus and provide timely, consistent, and constructive feedback.

Participant I confirmed this by saying:

We have a structured plan in place to ensure our teachers remain aligned with the syllabus. The internal school plan corresponds with the curriculum, and teachers work together in a collaborative environment. They engage in joint planning and mapping of assessments. These collaborative efforts help align assessment feedback with the curriculum's goals. Teachers also follow a standardised assessment plan that ensures all teachers provide learners with feedback on time to improve performance in the subject and maintain consistency. We also encourage teachers to ensure that the feedback they provide is constructive and directly addresses the assessment task, to support learners' improvement."

The discussion above revealed that teachers emphasise the importance of providing meaningful feedback to learners by giving them the information they need about their performance to enhance their learning. For instance, a teacher gives learners feedback paragraph by paragraph. This is done to ensure that learners understand that the language they identify in the author's text is based on the question and that their explanation should align with the author's intention.

Participants explained that feedback is most effective when it is clear, specific, and timely. For instance, they encourage learners to correct their mistakes after tasks have been marked, and some even read out high-achieving learners' responses to motivate the rest of the class. This practice helps learners understand where they went wrong and how to improve. Teachers also provide detailed, paragraph-by-paragraph feedback, especially when responses do not align with the author's intended meaning. In addition, teachers provide correct responses as examples, underline key features in passages, and encourage learners to justify their answers.

Lastly, teachers use feedback to highlight the gap between learners' responses and the expected standards. By pointing out specific errors and offering examples of improved answers, teachers guide learners to avoid repeating the same mistakes and help learners' progress in their understanding of the subject.

The findings reveal that feedback on assessment tasks is a crucial tool for improving both teaching strategies and learner outcomes. School leaders, particularly Heads of

Department, play an active role in promoting the timely use of feedback by setting clear expectations, monitoring its implementation, and motivating teachers through structured accountability practices. There is a strong emphasis on providing feedback within a specific timeframe, typically within a week, to ensure that learners engage with corrections while the content remains fresh in their minds. This timely feedback, coupled with the expectation that learners complete their corrections, fosters continuous improvement and reinforces the learning process. Moreover, schools have put in place structured, collaborative planning systems aligned with the syllabus. This approach supports teachers in delivering feedback that directly addresses learners' assessment tasks, thereby promoting continuous improvement and maintaining high standards across the subject.

Finally, feedback is not a last step, but rather an ongoing process that informs and shapes teaching. This reflects a learner-centred approach, in which feedback serves as both a diagnostic and a developmental tool to support academic progress. Separately from the above-mentioned strategies, their strengths and limitations, the literature reviewed in this section indicates that feedback is seen as the 'heart' and the primary component with the strongest influence on learning as teachers implement formative assessment in their classroom practices.

4.8.4 Teachers' perceptions of the examiner's report as an assessment and feedback tool

The theme revealed that the official examiner reports were identified as an assessment tool to enhance teaching and assessment practices, thereby helping teachers improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Participant J confirmed this by stating:

"When we resumed school this year, I called all the teachers who attended national marking in my department for a meeting, in order to put their marking experience on paper while it was still early, and while we were still waiting for the official examiner reports, which give us guidance to help our learners with the assessment process. This was to assist those who did not have the opportunity to participate in the marking process."

Participant G also confirmed this by stating:

I encourage teachers to carefully study the examiners' reports from the final exams. These reports outline what is expected of learners and highlight common mistakes to avoid. By using this feedback, teachers can better guide their candidates in improving and adjust their teaching strategies to address those areas. It's a practical way to close the gap between teaching and assessment."

Furthermore, the HODs noted that the resources currently in use are beneficial and that their understanding was enhanced through the training received during the marking session. The examiners' report was also acknowledged as a valuable and reliable source of information for supporting assessment practices.

Participant I supported this by saying:

"The official examiners' reports also guide us well. We just have to read it with understanding to be able to apply the same technique as guided to better support learners."

The findings revealed that teachers frequently rely on examiners' reports as an important assessment tool to enhance teaching and assessment practices. These reports provide detailed feedback on learners' performance in national examinations, highlighting common strengths, weaknesses, and misconceptions. Teachers use this information to reflect on their own instructional methods, identify areas that require more emphasis, and adjust their assessment strategies accordingly.

Participants explained that examiners' reports help them understand learners' performance relative to national standards and expectations. By analysing examiners' comments and recommendations, teachers can guide learners more effectively in preparing for future assessments. Furthermore, the reports serve as a professional development resource, enabling teachers to refine question design, marking practices, and feedback provision in alignment with the assessment objectives of the NSSCAS syllabus.

Overall, the examiner's report functions as a feedback mechanism that bridges the gap between external examination outcomes and classroom assessment practices, promoting continuous improvement in both teaching and learning.

4.9 Themes related to research question two

What practices do Oshindonga First Language teachers use in the implementation of formative assessment during teaching and learning?

4.9.1 The prioritisation of English in teaching Oshindonga First Language

This theme explored the practices used by Oshindonga First Language teachers when implementing formative assessment during teaching and learning. One recurring practice identified was the prioritisation of English whenever learners struggled to comprehend certain expressions in Oshindonga. Although this code-switching is intended to support understanding, it inadvertently conveys the notion that Oshindonga is less important or insufficient as a medium of instruction. Consequently, learners frequently incorporate English words into their Oshindonga writing, reflecting the linguistic patterns modelled by teachers in the classroom.

Participant D acknowledged this by stating:

Even we, as teachers, contribute to learners' poor performance. At times, I switch to English or Oshingandjera when I feel learners do not understand certain expressions. This practice sends the wrong message, making the subject appear less important. As a result, learners mimic this behaviour in their writing, inserting English words in quotation marks just as we do in class.

Similarly, **Participant E** noted:

"Learners tend to neglect Oshindonga and focus more on English as a Second Language for communication. I believe schools should establish Oshindonga debating clubs to encourage learners to discuss real-life issues and develop critical reasoning skills. This will help them respond to questions with thoughtful and structured arguments."

Participant I further elaborated on this issue:

"Several factors contribute to this problem. Firstly, the use of Oshindonga is not widely promoted at school because of the emphasis on English as the official language. Learners are often required to communicate in English rather than their vernacular languages."

The findings from the Heads of Department (HODs) reinforced this observation, indicating that prioritising English leads to a decline in the active use and practice of Oshindonga. This, in turn, limits learners' proficiency and confidence in their first language. The

institutional preference for English not only discourages the use of Oshindonga in academic contexts but also extends to informal interactions.

4.9.2 Dialectical Interferences in Oshindonga Language Learning

Closely linked to the dominance of English is the issue of dialectal interference, which further complicates learners' mastery of standard Oshindonga. Learners who speak dialects such as Oshikwambi, Oshikwaluudhi, Oshimbalantu, or Oshimbadja often encounter difficulties in spelling, comprehension, and pronunciation due to linguistic variations between these dialects and standard Oshindonga.

Participant I highlighted this by explaining:

“Another issue is dialectal differences. For example, an Oshikwambi-speaking or Oshikwaluudhi-speaking learner may struggle with Oshindonga vocabulary, as their dialect differs in word usage and pronunciation. These linguistic variations can affect spelling and comprehension.”

Participant G shared a similar view, stating:

“Another challenge is the influence of other languages. The school's English-speaking policy often interferes with learners' expression in Oshindonga. In addition, learners speak different dialects such as Oshimbalantu, Oshimbadja, and Oshikwambi, which sometimes affect their writing and understanding of standard Oshindonga. These language interferences make it harder for them to perform well, especially in areas that require accuracy and standard usage.”

Furthermore, dialectal interference was particularly evident in learners' writing, where they substituted Oshindonga sounds with those from their vernaculars.

Participant J elaborated:

“We have observed that some learners try to write in Oshimbalantu. This is mostly found in their essays, where they use the ‘v’ sound instead of the correct ‘y’. We tackle these issues early in the year by informing them which letters from their vernacular are not accepted in Oshindonga. We also use unprepared speeches to encourage learners to speak in standard Oshindonga and to correct their pronunciation and spelling.”

It is clear that the broader school environment tends to reinforce English dominance, reducing exposure to Oshindonga and undermining learners' motivation to use the

language. Teachers expressed concern that the lack of institutional and policy-level support for Oshindonga contributes to inconsistent language development and weaker performance in formal assessments.

In summary, while Oshindonga First Language teachers employ various formative assessment practices to address dialectal interference and challenges in language use, these initiatives are often constrained by sociolinguistic and institutional factors. The prioritisation of English, coupled with limited professional and resource support for Oshindonga, perpetuates learners' reliance on English and their home dialects.

4.9.2 Contextualisation of learning activities

This theme explores how teachers apply the communicative approach in daily Oshindonga lessons, particularly in assessment practices. It involves using authentic materials such as newspapers, videos, and songs to familiarise learners with the language as it naturally occurs in everyday life. Furthermore, this approach promotes active learner participation, with learners often working in pairs or groups to build collaboration skills and enhance social interaction.

The findings from the focus group interviews with the teachers revealed that they give learners activities that relate to real-life situations. Some teachers use examples from learners' home environments to help them connect with the content of the given passage on a personal level.

Adding to this, **Participant F** shared:

"I also like to refer them to real-life situations. For example, last week, the Founding Father of Namibia passed away, and his body was flown around the country. Learners had the chance to say their goodbyes in the streets. One of our lessons was on report writing. At the end of the lesson, I asked them to write a report about what they saw when the body of the Founding President passed through their town."

Participant A stated:

"I also give them an activity, such as writing a short piece that they can relate to. For example, last year, the rainfall was minimal, and there was a drought, unlike this year. I then ask them to write about what a certain place looked like during the drought last year and how it looks this year after the rain. This helps them write real-life stories or use their imagination in a realistic way."

Participant D supported this view by saying:

“I only integrate the communicative approach sometimes. For instance, we may be working on a text, and learners might not understand certain things. They often ask questions like, “Is this like what we do at home when ...?”

They enjoy relating the text to real-life situations to better understand it. Sometimes, the text is quite difficult. As I mentioned, you cannot just pick any text and take it to class. As a teacher, you must first read and understand the text before presenting it.

There are times when I even ask myself, ‘If a child asks me something about this text, how will I explain it?’ In such cases, I give examples of things they might find in their communities to help them understand.”

The responses from the semi-structured interviews with the HODs also reveal a strong focus on linking classroom learning with learners’ real-life experiences in their communities. Teachers deliberately connect traditional practices and contemporary social issues to the content presented in passages, encouraging learners to recognise that learning extends beyond the pages of books.

Participant J confirmed this by stating:

“We always strive to delve deeper into traditional practices and ensure that we compare what is presented in the passages with what is happening in their communities. For instance, when presenting an article about a specific issue, such as crime or rape, we contextualise the contemporary social issues surrounding us. If the issue is not addressed through a text, we send learners to conduct research during their outings over the weekend.”

Participant G also added to the discussion by saying:

“I advise teachers to incorporate the communicative approach by designing tasks that reflect real-life situations. For example, if learners write a speech, they should be asked to present it in class as if they were delivering it to the intended audience. This helps them develop both their writing and speaking skills. By encouraging learners to express themselves in meaningful, practical contexts, teachers can assess not only language accuracy but also fluency, clarity, and confidence, key components of communicative competence.”

Participant I also confirmed this by saying:

“Apart from promoting reading, we encourage learners to engage with their parents based on the content of the passages given, to show them that these things are not just found in books, but also within their communities. We also assign them home-based activities to complete during the holidays, such as learning more about idioms and vocabulary, which they then discuss with their families. Parental involvement is crucial, as parents are key stakeholders in supporting language development. Additionally, we motivate teachers to incorporate Oshindonga films that focus on cultural contexts.”

The findings reveal that Oshindonga First Language teachers implement formative assessment through practices that are grounded in real-life experiences, cultural relevance, and communicative engagement. Teachers deliberately use the communicative approach, which prioritizes effective language use in authentic contexts that reflect their everyday lives, to enrich classroom teaching. This approach is implemented not only through the use of real-world materials, such as newspapers, local videos, and traditional songs or local relevant texts, but also by connecting lesson content to learners’ lived experiences, traditional practices, and relevant social issues within their communities. Additionally, contextualisation helps learners affirm the relevance of their language studies beyond the academic setting.

This contextualised approach helps learners to interpret texts more effectively, develop critical thinking skills, and express themselves with greater clarity and relevance. It also helps them develop both their writing and speaking skills. When learners express themselves meaningfully in practical contexts, teachers can assess not only language accuracy but also fluency, clarity, and confidence, key components of communicative competence.

4.10 Themes related to research question three

What are the challenges faced by the Oshindonga teachers in the implementation of assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms?

4.10.1 Overcrowded classrooms

This theme highlights overcrowded classrooms as a major challenge faced by Oshindonga First Language teachers at the NSSCAS level. Data from the focus group interviews revealed that large class sizes negatively affect teachers’ ability to conduct fair and accurate assessments. Teachers reported that overcrowding forces them to shift from individual to group-based assessments, compromising the reliability and fairness of

performance measurement. Furthermore, learners do not always participate equally in group activities, leading to unreliable assessment outcomes.

Participant E illustrated this challenge, stating:

“At our school, we already have five classes, each with 50 learners. I have one grade with 50 learners, in addition to other Oshindonga classes at different levels. It’s difficult to give each learner the attention they deserve.”

Similarly, **Participant D** echoed these concerns, explaining how large numbers of learners make individualised assessment nearly impossible:

“Apart from marking all learners’ work, which is already demanding, imagine handling 40 learners at NSSCAS level plus around 50 learners each in Grades 10 and 11. You have essays to mark for Grades 10 and 11 while also catering to Grade 12 and other responsibilities. Oshindonga First Language at NSSCAS level requires greater attention.”

Participant C shared a similar experience, adding that large class sizes often necessitate grouping learners to reduce the marking workload:

“Our classes are overcrowded with learners doing Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Most of the time, you want to assign individual work to accurately assess each learner’s performance. However, marking these assessments becomes a problem. For instance, this year I have 64 Learners, which is far too many to manage individual work, so I end up grouping them to reduce my marking load. The problem is that not all learners contribute equally. In a group of three, you may find that only one learner has actually participated, yet all receive the same mark. This is truly one of the challenges we face in schools.”

The findings from the semi-structured interviews with the Heads of Department (HODs) confirmed similar challenges. Both Participant I and Participant J described how overcrowded classrooms hinder effective teaching and assessment practices. The reliance on group work, while intended to reduce the marking burden, often results in unequal learner participation and unfair assessment outcomes.

Participant I stated:

“Overcrowded classrooms pose a significant challenge, making it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention. Some learners are also reluctant to participate in lengthy tasks, such as writing essays, which require proper spelling and paragraphing.”

Additionally, language teachers often have heavily loaded timetables, which can be demotivating.”

Likewise, **Participant J** elaborated:

“Our classrooms are overcrowded with learners studying Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Ideally, one would prefer to assign individual tasks to accurately assess each Learner’s strengths and weaknesses. However, the challenge arises during the marking process, it is not possible to mark each learner’s activity every time a task is given. Consequently, I often resort to group work to reduce the amount of marking required. Unfortunately, not all pupils engage equally in group tasks; in a group of three, it is common to find that one learner has not contributed at all, yet the mark awarded applies to all members. This remains a significant challenge in our schools.”

The evidence from both teachers and HODs demonstrates that overcrowded classrooms severely undermine the effectiveness and fairness of assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Large class sizes limit teachers’ capacity to provide individualised feedback and to accurately measure each learner’s performance. As a result, group assessments are often used as a coping mechanism to manage workload; however, this practice compromises the validity and reliability of assessment outcomes. Consequently, overcrowding not only affects the accuracy of learners’ results but also diminishes opportunities for formative feedback and individual learner development, core principles in effective language assessment.

4.10.2 Minimal content-based workshop in the region

This theme highlights the lack of adequate subject-specific training, as one of the challenges faced by the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS level. This lack of adequate subject-specific training leaves many teachers uncertain about how to effectively assess learners in line with curriculum expectations.

Participant A expressed this sentiment as follows:

“We are invited by the region, but the sessions only provide feedback from those who participated in the National Marking. We go through each question and the corresponding mark scheme.”

Participant C, who had received training, noted:

“... However, the training that is conducted in the regions only involves the interpretation of questions in the NSSCAS's previous year's question papers.”

The findings also highlighted a lack of standardised guidance within schools, leading to inconsistencies in how certain aspects of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language question paper are taught and interpreted. This variation leads to confusion among learners, especially when they encounter different teaching approaches and expectations. It further emerged that many of those who lacked formal training relied heavily on informal support from colleagues to familiarise themselves with the subject.

Participant E confirmed this by stating:

“I also did not attend any workshop. The information I have, I got it from colleagues in the region. As I have mentioned, this is my second year teaching the subject, and the regional office has not offered me any support.”

Participant B added:

“I did not attend any workshop. I try to obtain information from my colleagues in the region regarding the subject.”

Similarly, **Participant D** shared her experience:

“I did not receive any training. The year the subject was introduced at our school, we were invited to a workshop, but the facilitators mainly discussed the challenges teachers faced without offering any clear guidance. The Regional Education Official simply told us to read the syllabus since it was our first time teaching NSSCAS. I read it, but I still could not understand much. I had to seek help from colleagues who had previously taught the subject at other schools. Fortunately, one colleague from a neighbouring school had attended the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language national marking session, and that's how I acquired the limited knowledge I have.”

Participant A further added by saying:

“The current workshops are not effective ...”

One key finding from the Heads of Department (HODs) responses is the lack of adequate subject-specific training for teachers, which significantly affects their ability to assess learners effectively and in line with the curriculum requirements. There are also participants who did not attend any workshops, which is an undesirable state of affairs,

as they don't gain new ideas for using different assessment strategies that can help them in their teaching. Participants also highlighted that many teachers feel uncertain about how to carry out accurate and consistent assessment, particularly in the context of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language. Although regional workshops are offered, they tend to focus primarily on past examination papers and marking schemes, thus offering minimal guidance on formative or classroom-based assessment strategies.

Participant G said:

“The major issue is the lack of adequate subject-specific training, which leaves many teachers unsure about how to assess learners accurately and in alignment with the curriculum. Workshops provided at regional levels often focus narrowly on past examination papers and marking schemes, offering limited support on formative or classroom-based assessment practices.”

Based on the responses above, the findings reveal that teachers of NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language face significant challenges in implementing effective assessment strategies due to a lack of subject-specific training and inadequate professional development support. Regional workshops are often limited in scope, focusing primarily on examination papers and marking schemes, while offering little guidance on formative or classroom-based assessment practices. The absence of standardised guidance across schools leads to inconsistent teaching and assessment approaches, resulting in low learner performance. In many cases, teachers are left to rely on informal peer support, which, while helpful, cannot substitute for structured and comprehensive training. These challenges collectively hinder teachers' ability to assess learners accurately and in alignment with the curriculum, underscoring the urgent need for targeted, practical, and ongoing support to strengthen assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language classrooms.

4.10.3 Inadequate support from the Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Omusati Regional Office)

This theme explored the lack of support teachers received from Heads of Departments (HODs) at the NSSCAS level. HODs play an important role in ensuring the effective delivery of subjects, thereby promoting the success of both teachers and learners. However, when such support is inadequate or entirely absent, it can negatively affect teaching quality and learner performance in the subject.

The findings from the focus group interviews with teachers revealed widespread concern about the lack of subject-specific knowledge among many Heads of Departments (HODs), particularly regarding the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum. Teachers across several schools reported that their HODs were unable to provide meaningful academic support or guidance due to limited, and in some cases, a complete lack of understanding of the subject content. As a result, teachers felt unsupported in key areas, including lesson planning, assessment design, marking, and internal moderation.

Moreover, in most instances, HODs were found to hold qualifications in unrelated fields, most commonly in English Second Language, which left them ill-equipped to support teachers in Oshindonga First Language teaching and assessment practices. Participants further indicated that some HODs had been appointed recently and were unfamiliar with the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS syllabus, curriculum requirements, and assessment standards. This lack of experience and subject familiarity further compounded the challenge and contributed to inconsistencies in the guidance and supervision provided to teachers.

Teachers also reported that support from the Omusati Regional Office was limited, particularly in terms of subject-specific workshops, monitoring visits, and professional guidance on Oshindonga First Language assessment at the NSSCAS level. As a result, they experienced uncertainty regarding curriculum interpretation, assessment expectations, and moderation requirements.

Participant D supported this by saying:

“Most of the HODs in the region do not have any knowledge of Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS. You could find an HOD coming to your class to evaluate, but the HOD has no knowledge of what you are teaching. I think they also need training. There is no way you can monitor things that you do not understand. Even if I encounter a problem with a certain topic or phrase, I cannot approach my HOD for help because he has no subject knowledge. We may assume their workload is the issue, but they need to understand the subject in order to support teachers. Now, we are struggling in our schools. For example, last year, we were only two Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers. When we faced challenges, we first asked each other. If we could not resolve the issue, we contacted other schools because our HOD had no subject knowledge. It is truly difficult for this HOD to support those of us teaching NSSCAS level.”

Similarly, **Participant B** remarked:

“I am new at the school, and I have not gotten any help from my HOD up to today. If there is anything I would like to ask, I go to my colleagues for help.”

In agreement, **Participant F** stated:

“I support the points made by Participant D. Most of the appointed HODs can only teach English Second Language from Grade 8 to 10. They have no knowledge of Oshindonga First Language.”

Nonetheless, teachers reported that the support provided by Heads of Departments (HODs) was limited, inconsistent, and confined to narrow areas of the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum. In many cases, HODs could only assist with topics or papers for which they had previously received some form of training, leaving significant gaps in subject supervision and academic guidance. This fragmented, partial support created challenges for teachers who required comprehensive, continuous guidance across all components of the subject.

Participant E provided an example of this by saying:

“My HOD supports me sometimes with Oshindonga First Language issues, but she can only help me with Paper 2, which she received training on during the marking session. When I have issues with Paper 1, I must seek assistance from other schools.”

Overall, the findings highlight a persistent concern about the lack of effective monitoring and support from Heads of Department (HODs) in implementing Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS assessment practices. A key issue is the insufficient subject-specific knowledge among many HODs, with several being qualified in unrelated subjects. This significantly restricts their ability to provide meaningful academic guidance and to monitor teaching and assessment processes.

While some teachers do receive support, it is often limited to areas in which the HODs themselves have received prior training, resulting in inconsistent and incomplete guidance. In the absence of comprehensive support, teachers are frequently forced to depend on their peers, both within and outside their schools, to address assessment-related challenges. Furthermore, teachers noted that HODs cannot conduct meaningful classroom monitoring without a clear understanding of the subject content.

4.11 Themes related to Research Question Four

Which in-service training programs and classroom support are available to Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies?

4.11.1 Regional-based training workshop

This theme explores the continuous professional development training given to teachers to support them in assessing the Oshindonga First Language. Participants in the study emphasised that, while initial national-level training sessions were conducted, particularly during the curriculum's introduction, ongoing support mechanisms remain essential. The HODs described a more proactive approach taken at the school level within the department, as illustrated by the following responses:

Participant J supported this by saying:

“The good thing is that our region calls new teachers for workshops at the beginning of each year. This year, I have already sent two. This ensures that they are placed at the same level as teachers from other schools. I encourage my teachers to always ask for help when they are struggling. In this way, we are building on each other’s experiences.”

Participant I shared this viewpoint by saying:

“Regional training has been minimal, with only one session planned for April 2025, but by then, most of the teachers will be on holiday. More national-level workshops are needed to help teachers cope with the demands of the subject.”

The Regional Education Official also highlighted efforts to train teachers and schools and to provide guidance to new teachers, which, at times, is done by telephone.

Participant K confirmed this by saying:

“Yes, they are all trained. All the schools were trained. In addition, I remember when this NSSCAS was introduced; most schools were trained in Okahandja at NIED (National Institute for Educational Development). Then, whenever we have a school that is permitted to implement the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum for the first time, we first offer them training. Like this year, we have one secondary school in the region that was permitted to offer Oshindonga First Language at NSSCAS for the first time. Although they were not invited for the training yet at the regional level, we do offer them advice telephonically.”

The findings revealed that schools newly permitted to offer the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum are provided with initial orientation and guidance, even when this support is informal and delivered telephonically. This form of guidance serves as an important introductory support mechanism, helping new schools and teachers understand curriculum expectations and assessment requirements as they begin implementing the subject. Although informal in nature, telephonic guidance from the Regional Office ensures that newly established centres are not left unsupported and can access professional advice when introducing the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum.

In addition, participants indicated that regional training opportunities form part of the broader continuous professional development structure supporting Oshindonga First Language teachers. While regional workshops are occasionally organised, these training initiatives are valued as platforms for strengthening teachers' assessment knowledge and for aligning instructional practices across schools. Participants' calls for more frequent and coordinated regional workshops further reflect the recognition of workshops as an effective professional development mechanism for enhancing teachers' assessment strategies.

Consequently, it can be concluded that regional workshops and telephonic guidance sessions together constitute an emerging continuous professional development framework for Oshindonga First Language teachers. In this way, regionally based training workshops and related support mechanisms directly address the research question by demonstrating which continuous professional development and classroom support are used to enhance Oshindonga First Language teachers' assessment strategies at the NSSCAS level.

4.11.2 Minimal support within and outside the school

This theme emerged from a question that asked the participant to share their views on the professional development programs currently in place to support teachers in improving their assessment skills. Support from Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Regional Education Official is vital to the professional growth and effectiveness of Oshindonga First Language teachers. Participants revealed that, while regional efforts tend to focus primarily on new teachers, ongoing support for experienced teachers often depends on individual requests or school-level initiatives. Departmental meetings and circuit-level workshops provide essential platforms for sharing ideas and best practices, especially through collaboration with national markers. Despite these limitations, schools often rely on internal structures and inter-school collaboration, with HODs playing a

crucial role in moderating assessments and addressing academic concerns. The HODs shared their viewpoint by giving the following responses:

Participant J supported this by saying:

“At the school level, it's mainly departmental meetings. The region primarily focuses on new teachers. They don't focus as much on teachers with ongoing problems unless we ask for help.”

Participant I confirmed this by saying:

“There are no professional development programs currently in place. The school relies on collaboration with the neighbouring schools. The teachers share possible methodologies that they feel work well with Oshindonga NSSCAS. One thing that we do as a school is set assessment activities together, and the HOD moderates them. After the activity is marked, the HOD moderates it again to identify any areas of concern and address them promptly.

Yes, despite the lack of training from the region, we cope with what we have as a school and with collaboration from our neighbouring school. Sometimes the teachers put in more effort for the two HODs to organise a meeting to attend and address certain issues that have arisen in Oshindonga.”

The Regional Education Official also contributed to the emerging theme by revealing that the region has implemented strategic plans to improve school performance. These include targeted interventions and training sessions designed to support teaching and learning in Oshindonga First Language. The Regional Education Official shared the following viewpoints.

Participant K confirmed this by saying:

“Normally, we conduct workshops at the circuit level in the region, whereby teachers come together and share ideas. We make use of the national markers to assist those who did not get the opportunity to be appointed as Oshindonga First Language national markers. And apart from the workshops at the circuit Level, the region itself is also having a program for strategic plans in place, whereby we put some plans on how to assist schools in terms of performance.”

I can say yes and no because, as the Regional Education Official, we sometimes cannot reach every school due to the time frame and the lack of transport support from the region.

But to the school which we managed to reach, one can see that their results are really good, which shows that the training helped them to achieve that.”

Several key deductions can be drawn from the responses above regarding the support structures in place for Oshindonga First Language teachers. Firstly, the findings revealed that departmental meetings are the primary source of support at the school level, during which Heads of Departments (HODs) lead the moderation of assessments and guide discussions among teachers. These meetings provide a platform for identifying and addressing teaching challenges, particularly in relation to Oshindonga NSSCAS content. This internal school-based collaboration proves vital in the absence of formal regional support programmes.

Apart from that, collaboration among neighbouring schools is a practical alternative to the lack of structured professional development. Teachers voluntarily come together to share effective teaching strategies and support one another. This self-driven approach underscores teachers' commitment to maintaining quality teaching despite systemic constraints.

In conclusion, schools have developed internal mechanisms, led by HODs, to support teachers. Additionally, inter-school collaboration serves as a crucial supplement, ensuring that professional development continues through informal yet impactful channels.

4.12 Themes related to Research Question Five

How can assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum be improved to promote effective language learning outcomes?

4.12.1 Targeted professional development and sustained support

This theme presents views expressed by teachers during the focus group interview regarding professional development and support related to assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language. Participants consistently emphasized the need for professional development activities focused specifically on subject content and assessment. Teachers indicated that workshops are one of the main forms of training currently available to them.

Participants reported that some training sessions have been offered, including workshops and feedback sessions linked to national marking. However, several teachers stated that

these training opportunities are limited in scope and depth. They further indicated that the existing training does not always provide sufficient guidance for newly appointed teachers who are required to teach and assess Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level.

Teachers also reported that they would prefer workshops that focus more closely on Oshindonga First Language content and assessment requirements. They indicated that such workshops should include detailed coverage of subject topics, assessment tasks, and marking guidelines. Participants further stated that workshops that combine feedback from national marking sessions with practical guidance on classroom assessment would be useful for supporting their work.

Participant C

“I was fortunate when I started teaching NSSCAS, as I received an invitation to attend a workshop on NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language at NIED in Okahandja. During this workshop, I learned effective strategies for approaching certain NSSCAS questions. Moreover, we engaged with many professionals from various departments who guided us in interpreting the questions and better supporting our learners in schools. Therefore, I believe it is essential for teachers to develop a shared understanding of the subject to provide learners with consistent and accurate information.”

Participant A

“I have received training, and I believe it was beneficial. However, to develop a common understanding, I believe the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should organise two workshops per year to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Currently, we are invited to these workshops by the regional office, but they mainly focus on providing feedback from those who attended the national marking sessions. In these sessions, we go through each question and examine the mark scheme. Unfortunately, this approach does not support new teachers who have limited knowledge. These teachers need to be equipped with effective assessment strategies to use during lessons, as well as the skills to read and interpret the syllabus accurately. Therefore, workshops should focus on building this foundational knowledge, as they are one of the most effective means of supporting teachers in developing subject expertise.”

The findings from the semi-structured interviews with the HODs highlighted the absence of consistent engagement by the Omusati Regional Educational authorities, with visits often limited to examination periods rather than providing ongoing academic support. This

lack of interaction leaves teachers uncertain about the effectiveness of their teaching strategies and disconnected from broader curriculum developments. The communication and collaboration gap between schools, regional offices, and national bodies, such as the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessments (DNEA) and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), further intensifies the issue, highlighting the urgent need for a more integrated and responsive professional development framework. To shed more light on this regard, it is imperative to pay attention to the HODs' responses below:

Participant J supported this by saying:

"We need to engage more. The Regional Education Official needs to invite teachers to workshops to keep them informed about what is new in the system. Currently, we do not know whether the strategies that we are using are the same as those in other regions. Therefore, we are in a dilemma. We do not even know if our teaching is correct."

The regional office officials only visit schools during examinations. However, as we begin the academic year, they should come and help the teachers. They should ask, 'What do we really need? How can they help, especially with assessment? And so many others.'"

Participant I viewed this by saying:

"There is also a gap - there is no direct link between the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessments (DNEA) and the schools. There is a need for the workshop every two or three years, especially at the national level, where officials from the DNEA and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) meet with all the teachers to share challenges related to the subject."

Participant G added to the emerging theme by saying:

"I think the region really needs to organise workshops and invite experts from the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) to train our teachers. Many of us feel we need regular support to stay up to date and confident in our assessment practices. Honestly, we could benefit from refresher workshops as often as possible, ideally even on a regular basis. Assessment is such a crucial part of teaching, and without proper training, it becomes difficult to do it effectively and fairly."

The Regional Education Official also contributed to the emerging theme by highlighting a strong call for more structured and accessible professional development opportunities at the national level, particularly workshops to enhance teachers' understanding of the

NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum. The Participant emphasised the importance of ensuring that all teachers receive direct, first-hand information rather than relying on second- or third-hand accounts, which may lead to misinterpretation or gaps in knowledge. Therefore, the participant advocated for an increase in the number of national-level workshops to build teachers' competence and ultimately improve learner outcomes.

Participant K also confirmed this by saying:

“Another important point is that the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture needs to provide more workshops for all teachers at the national level so that they receive first-hand information rather than second- or third-hand information.

Yes, we can acknowledge that the country lacks enough resources, which is why workshops are minimal. However, we all know that workshops are essential for teachers to refresh their knowledge and gain the information they need to assist their learners effectively. We often say that learners do not understand the subject, but we fail to examine where the problem originates. The truth is that many teachers also do not fully understand the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum. If teachers themselves do not understand it, how can they effectively assist their Learners? That is why I am suggesting increasing the number of workshops to help teachers gain a better understanding of the NSSCAS curriculum so they can pass this knowledge on to their learners.

We all know that when the number of learners is small, teachers can give more attention to each learner and conduct remedial lessons more easily. But if teachers do not fully understand the curriculum, they will struggle to assist even the few learners they have in their classroom.”

The findings from the above responses reveal a consistent call for enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers of Oshindonga First Language. Although some training opportunities exist, a central concern emerging from the data is the lack of regular, structured workshops at both regional and national levels. Teachers expressed a clear need for ongoing training, particularly in relation to assessment practices and the implementation of the NSSCAS curriculum. The current workshops are perceived as irregular and often inaccessible to newly appointed teachers. There is a strong consensus among both teachers and Heads of Department (HODs) that workshops should be more

frequent, content-focused, and directly linked to the practical realities of classroom assessment.

Moreover, the lack of coordination between schools and key national bodies, such as the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessments (DNEA) and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), is regarded as a significant barrier, particularly at the beginning of the academic year, as it limits teachers' access to the guidance and resources necessary for success. Without adequate support and clarity, teachers may struggle to interpret and apply the curriculum correctly, which, in turn, affects learner performance.

4.12.2 Providing more resources to strengthen the use of effective assessment strategies

Participants expressed the view that the availability of adequate teaching, learning, and assessment resources is central to strengthening the use of effective assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms. They reported that limited access to appropriate resources constrains their ability to design meaningful assessment tasks and to support learners effectively.

Participants also highlighted inadequate access to updated teaching materials, real-life learning resources, and technological tools. They explained that this shortage limits learner engagement and comprehension and places additional pressure on teachers, who are frequently required to improvise or spend time searching for materials instead of focusing on lesson planning and assessment design. Several participants emphasised the need for culturally relevant materials that reflect African contexts and learners' lived experiences, which they believed would enhance both teaching and assessment practices.

Overall, participants indicated that resource limitations not only undermine the quality of assessment but also hinder their capacity to implement learner-centred and contextually relevant assessment strategies effectively.

Participant I shared this view by saying:

"We need to have resources that focus more on African culture and society, rather than prioritising Western culture. Many of the books we currently have, such as Excellence Books, focus primarily on Western culture, often ignoring African cultural elements. We need to recommend that authors, in collaboration with education planners, prioritise African

cultural representation. The scarcity of teaching and learning materials forced us to spend more time searching for or improvising resources instead of focusing on lesson planning and assessment design.”

Participant J indicated that teachers need to have resource accessibility by saying:

“We need to expose learners to real-life situations. Some learners do not know what is happening around the world. Maybe we should use the smartboard more to give them knowledge. We need to bring in more newspapers and reading materials, including novels. This will help them, as it requires learners to have more knowledge and to know how to use terms. This limited access to technological and assessment resources restricted opportunities for learners to apply innovative and formative assessment skills during classroom activities.”

Participant G contributed to the emerging theme by saying:

“I really think we need national workshops where all Oshindonga teachers can come together and be trained specifically on assessment strategies. It is important that we are all on the same page when it comes to evaluating learners fairly and effectively. In addition to training, these workshops should also provide teachers with a platform to share the challenges they face in their classrooms. Sometimes, you find that another teacher has already found a way to handle a problem you are struggling with. When we come together and talk openly, we might find practical solutions that actually work in our context. Another issue is the use of technology or computers as resources. Even if we want to make use of technology, most of the time the school does not have access to the internet, and sometimes we lack equipment and training on how to use it.”

The Regional Education Official also contributed to the emerging theme by giving the following responses:

Participant K confirmed this by saying:

“The recommendation I can give to teachers is that they should develop a culture of reading. They must actively engage in reading, especially on social media and the internet, or Oshindonga available literature books. They need to familiarise themselves with the language. Just because there are no prescribed literature books for Oshindonga at this level, does not mean we should not read them. We are teachers. If we are not cultivating a

culture of reading in our learners, then we will not. And this is where they will get knowledge to be able to analyse information, the many skills needed at this level.”

In summary, the findings under this theme reveal that strengthening assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms is closely linked to improved access to resources. Participants highlighted the shortage of culturally relevant teaching and learning materials, noting that existing resources are often dominated by Western content and do not adequately reflect African cultural contexts. They believed that this limits learners' engagement and language development and places additional strain on teachers, who are forced to improvise materials rather than focus on lesson planning and assessment design.

Participants also emphasised the importance of exposing learners to real-life materials such as newspapers, novels, and digital content. They perceived such resources as essential for developing learners' vocabulary, contextual understanding, and the ability to use appropriate terminology. However, they reported limited access to technological tools, unreliable internet connectivity, and insufficient training in the use of digital resources, which restricts opportunities to implement innovative and formative assessment strategies.

The Regional Education Official's contribution further reinforced participants' views by emphasising the importance of developing a culture of reading among both teachers and learners. This was seen as a way of strengthening language proficiency, analytical skills, and content knowledge, particularly in the absence of prescribed Oshindonga literature at this level.

Overall, the theme reveals that participants perceive effective assessment in Oshindonga First Language to depend on improved access to culturally relevant and real-life resources, as well as on the meaningful use of technology. Their responses point to the need for a more supportive, collaborative professional environment that equips teachers with the resources, skills, and confidence to implement assessment strategies effectively and enhance learners' educational experiences and outcomes.

4.12.3 Teachers' reflective practice

This theme explores how teachers adapt future lessons based on the outcomes of formative assessments. Findings from the focus group interviews indicate that teachers regularly reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and use insights gained from

assessments to refine strategies and enhance learners' academic progress. In practice, this involves strategies such as grouping learners for peer discussions, assigning additional tasks to underperforming learners, providing individual support, and conducting remedial teaching on topics that learners have not fully understood.

Participant A highlighted her approach, emphasising the benefits of small-group interactions:

"I change my teaching methods if the one I used before is not effective. Instead of assigning individual activities, I group learners so they can discuss the activity among themselves. Additionally, I may work with a small group of learners who are struggling and reteach the same topic to help them understand better. Learners learn best when they learn from each other. You should also instruct them to ensure that everybody in the group participates, and no one is left behind."

Participant E preferred one-on-one support, explaining:

"For me, I prefer one-on-one discussions. I call each learner individually and review the specific objectives I wrote for them. We then discuss the challenges they faced, including the difficult questions they faced. After having one-on-one discussions with all the affected learners, we go back to the drawing board, reteach the whole group, and then assess them again to see if they understand the topic and if the assessment objectives were met."

Participant C described a similar reflective approach:

"I give an additional task or activity to all the learners who scored below the average marks. I explain once again how to use language and style, and how to answer the questions correctly in the examination. It feels like you have to go back and reteach the entire activity. After that, I give them a new activity, not the exact same one as before, but a similar one to reinforce their understanding."

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers consistently engage in reflective practice, adjusting their teaching when strategies do not yield the expected results. Common approaches include group discussions, extra tasks for struggling learners, one-on-one support, and remedial teaching for misunderstood topics. Remedial teaching often focuses on language features, authors' writing styles, and examination strategies, followed by the use of new, related activities to reinforce understanding. This cycle of teaching, assessing, and adjusting demonstrates teachers' commitment to helping each learner succeed. The regular use of reassessment after remedial teaching further

underscores a reflective, iterative approach, in which teachers continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their methods and make evidence-based adjustments to meet learners' needs and achieve expected outcomes.

The findings under this theme demonstrate that teachers' reflective practice is central to enhancing learner outcomes in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. By evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching strategies and adjusting them based on learners' performance, teachers ensure that instruction is responsive to individual and group learning needs. This iterative process of assessment, reflection, and adjustment not only strengthens learners' understanding of the curriculum content but also promotes the development of key language skills. Consequently, reflective practice emerges as a vital mechanism for aligning classroom teaching with curriculum objectives, ensuring that learners achieve the intended learning outcomes and are better prepared for national assessments.

4.12.4 Improving marker selection for fair and effective assessment

This theme explored the importance of improving the selection of teachers for national marking duties to ensure fair, effective, and beneficial assessment practices. Findings from the focus group interviews revealed that participants perceive the current selection process as limiting the professional and academic benefits that marking could provide to both teachers and learners. Teachers reported that when only one teacher from a school is selected to mark a single paper, the knowledge gained from training sessions and marking practice is not sufficiently shared within the school. Participants emphasised that involving more teachers in marking and ensuring that selected markers are actively teaching the subject would enhance knowledge transfer, strengthen classroom practices, and improve learner outcomes. The participants gave the following viewpoints:

Participant F supported the view by saying:

“Only teachers who teach the subject at that level should be chosen for marking. At some schools, there are several teachers, but only one is selected to mark one paper. What about the other paper? How will that teacher help the others if they only attended one session? Also, some teachers no longer teach Oshindonga, yet they are still appointed to mark it.”

Participant D agreed, saying:

“The teacher who teaches NSSCAS should be appointed to mark NSSCAS, and the same for NSSCO.”

Participant C shared:

“Teachers should rotate during the national marking exercises. If one goes for NSSCO this year, they should go for NSSCAS the next year, depending on the grade they teach. This would also give others a chance.”

The discussion above highlights that the Ministry’s current approach to teacher training during curriculum revisions is ineffective, as it excludes many teachers from direct participation, resulting in gaps in the proper implementation of the curriculum. In addition, the selection process for national marking duties is considered non-transparent, as some of the teachers appointed are no longer offering the subject. This reduces the overall effectiveness of the national marking system and weakens its impact on teaching quality.

4.13 Synthesis of interview and focus group findings

This chapter presented and synthesised the study’s findings, structured around the research questions guiding the investigation. Data from focus group interviews with teachers, semi-structured interviews with Heads of Departments (HODs), and an interview with a Regional Education Official revealed key themes regarding assessment strategies for Oshindonga First Language at the Advanced Subsidiary level in the Omusati Region.

The study indicates that teachers’ perceptions of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms include the use of previous examination question papers. It was a common strategy to use past national examination papers, which familiarised learners with exam formats in order to improve performance.

Teachers also discussed the perceived effectiveness of assessment objectives for Oshindonga First Language learners. By clearly communicating assessment objectives through classroom displays or learners’ notebooks, teachers can enhance learners’ understanding of assessment objectives, in turn improving learners’ understanding of learning goals and expectations. Feedback emerged as a critical component of effective assessment; teachers provide timely, specific, and structured feedback, including paragraph-by-paragraph corrections, model answers, and guided reinforcement activities. Teachers’ perceptions of the examiner’s report as an evaluative and feedback

tool were highlighted, indicating that it enables teachers to identify gaps and refine classroom assessment practices.

The practices Oshindonga First Language teachers use in implementing formative assessment during teaching and learning include prioritising English and addressing dialectical interference. Contextualisation of learning practices was also highlighted, with teachers using strategies such as code-switching, diagnostic exercises, culturally relevant texts, and family engagement to enhance learners' proficiency, comprehension, vocabulary, and communicative competence.

Challenges impacting assessment effectiveness include overcrowded classrooms, limited content-based regional workshops, and insufficient support from HODs and regional offices. These constraints hinder the provision of individualised feedback and standardised assessment practices, highlighting the need for systemic support.

The study also emphasises the importance of ongoing professional development. Teachers call for frequent, content-focused regional workshops, targeted training, a deeper understanding of the curriculum, and reflective practice to improve learner outcomes. Collaboration between neighbouring schools further supplements formal support structures. Additionally, improvements in the selection of markers for national examinations were deemed necessary to ensure that professional development gained from marking duties effectively benefits schools and enhances teaching quality.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that effective assessment in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level depends on both teachers' strategies and support systems, professional development opportunities, and a collaborative educational environment. These insights provide a foundation for policy recommendations, enhanced classroom practices, and future research to strengthen assessment and improve learner outcomes in the region.

4.14 Presentation of data from documents

In addition to interviews, the study further analysed documents to understand participants' responses. These documents included the teacher's file, where they keep all their documents, lesson plans, Oshindonga School-based Past Examination Question Papers, Oshindonga First Language learners' assessments and class activities, and Heads of Department (HODs) monitoring files. These documents outlined the expectations, standards, and frameworks within which teachers operate.

Teacher's files

The analysis of teachers' files, namely the *Preparation File*, *Resource File*, and *Subject File*, revealed inconsistencies between the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) policy expectations and actual classroom practice. While most teachers maintained the required files, their use was largely administrative rather than instructional.

Preparation files often lacked detailed assessment objectives and reflection components, showing limited use as tools for improving teaching and learning. Resource Files were frequently incomplete, missing key materials such as Individual Learning Support Plans and differentiated learning resources. Similarly, Subject Files, though generally maintained by Heads of Department (HODs), were inconsistently utilised by teachers and often served merely as compliance documents. Records from inter-school meetings that could enhance alignment of subject assessment strategies were also not consistently filed for future reference.

Overall, the findings suggest that oversight by HODs, limited professional support, and a lack of collaborative engagement have reduced the pedagogical value of these files. Strengthening monitoring systems, promoting professional development on file management, and fostering collaborative use of Subject Files are essential steps towards transforming these documents into effective tools for reflective teaching, coherent assessment practices, and improved learner outcomes in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level.

Oshindonga NSSCAS lesson plans

According to MoEAC (2021), all teachers are required to prepare well-structured lesson plans daily or weekly, developed in advance and, where possible, collaboratively, to promote consistency in teaching and ensure alignment with syllabus objectives. However, this study found that only School 1 demonstrated evidence of lesson planning, recorded in a hardcover book, while the others relied primarily on National Examination Question Papers as the basis for teaching. This practice indicates a significant deviation from policy expectations and suggests limited use of lesson planning to guide teaching and assessment.

The absence of structured lesson plans undermines the integration of formative assessment and weakens the link between teaching objectives and the NSSCAS syllabus. Consequently, teachers may focus narrowly on examination preparation rather

than developing learners' broader language competencies, thereby reducing the effectiveness of assessment strategies intended to support holistic language learning.

Oshindonga First Language school-based past examination question papers

It was observed across all the participating schools that teachers mostly rely on old Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS National Examination question papers. Notably, some of the passages in these papers were directly taken from the Oshindonga First Language NSSCO (Ordinary Level), which do not align with the standards expected at the NSSCAS level. This part of the analysis evaluated the appropriateness of the classroom assessment materials, particularly whether the selected reading passages and questions reflect the higher-order linguistic and analytical demands of the NSSCAS curriculum. Consequently, it was found that many of these passages lacked essential language features required at this higher level. For instance, learners at the NSSCAS level are expected to analyse texts with sensitivity and a discerning awareness of how language creates effect; move confidently between specific parts and the whole text when discussing language use and its overall impact; and critically evaluate the accuracy, validity, and adequacy of the reasoning in relation to the author's claims. Furthermore, they should be able to identify relevant ideas and language features for a specific purpose, appreciate both the content and the author's intent in a reading passage, and recognise the use of stylistic devices that contribute to meaning.

Oshindonga First Language's learners' assessment and class activities

All participating schools indicated that they had provided learners with the required school-based activities. The NSSCAS curriculum, however, expects such activities to promote higher-order thinking by engaging learners in analysing language use, evaluating authors' intentions, and interpreting complex texts. The study found that, although teachers designed and marked these activities, many tasks were based on old examination papers that did not meet NSSCAS standards. Some questions were derived from Oshindonga NSSCO (Ordinary Level) passages, which lack the linguistic and cognitive depth expected at the NSSCAS level. As a result, the school-based assessments did not fully address the advanced analytical and interpretive skills outlined in the syllabus.

Oshindonga First Language, HODs for language monitoring file

According to MoEAC (2021), the subject head is expected to provide instructional leadership by coordinating the implementation of the subject curriculum, fostering

collaboration among teachers, and promoting continuous professional development to strengthen teaching competence. This responsibility is typically carried out by the Head of Department (HOD). However, the findings of this study revealed a gap between these expectations and actual practice. In most participating schools, the HODs did not teach Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level and, as a result, lacked the subject-specific expertise required to offer effective pedagogical guidance. Consequently, they did not actively monitor or support teachers in implementing the NSSCAS curriculum. Moreover, evidence from the study indicated that the HODs at the participants' schools did not conduct classroom visits in 2024, nor did they conduct any prior to my data collection in 2025, and that most schools did not maintain monitoring files as required. This lack of instructional oversight suggests limited adherence to the monitoring and support standards outlined in policy.

Synthesis of document analysis results

The analysis of documents revealed a clear gap between policy expectations and actual practice in the assessment and teaching of Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Only Schools 1, 3, and 4 maintained an administrative file; however, these lacked several required documents, including lesson plans, as evidenced in the HOD monitoring form (Annexure N). Overall, lesson planning across the participating schools was weak. Only one school presented evidence of written lesson plans, which were mostly based on outdated examination question papers rather than the current NSSCAS syllabus or scheme of work, as shown in Annexure P.

Apart from that, the document synthesis relies on NSSCO-level past papers, which do not meet the cognitive and linguistic demands of NSSCAS, creating a significant mismatch between instructional content and curriculum expectations.

Although learners' assessment and classroom activities were found in all schools and were marked, most of these tasks were adapted from inappropriate NSSCO-level materials. They were not properly aligned with the NSSCAS scheme of work, which was largely absent in most schools. As a result, classroom assessments failed to promote higher-order thinking or evaluate learners' analytical and interpretive skills as prescribed by the NSSCAS syllabus.

The analysis of HODs' monitoring files showed evidence of weak instructional leadership. Most Heads of Department did not teach Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level and therefore lacked the subject-specific expertise necessary to monitor or support

teachers effectively. Moreover, there was no record of classroom supervision or internal monitoring in 2024 or before my data collection in 2025, and most schools that participated in the study had no monitoring files.

Overall, the findings from the document analysis indicate major gaps in curriculum implementation, lesson planning, assessment design, and instructional leadership. These shortcomings collectively undermine effective teaching and learning, suggesting an urgent need to strengthen planning, supervision, and professional development to ensure that assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language align with NSSCAS standards.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the study's findings in relation to the research questions, drawing on evidence from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. The results were organised around key themes that reflect teachers' perceptions of assessment strategies, their practices, the challenges affecting implementation, the support they receive, and the improvements they suggest. Additionally, the document analysis findings indicated major gaps in curriculum implementation, lesson planning, assessment design, and instructional leadership. Moreover, the results from the document analysis revealed significant shortcomings in how the curriculum is implemented, lessons are planned, assessments are designed, and instructional leadership is exercised.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings from the three data collection instruments used: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to the literature and theory underpinning this study.

5.2 Findings and discussions

5.2.1 Discussion of findings

This study investigated the assessment strategies used by teachers in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools. Grounded in the Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) by Box et al. (2015), the study explored *the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools*. Five objectives were formulated and addressed through an in-depth exploration of teachers' perceptions of assessment strategies they use, their assessment practices, challenges faced, available training opportunities, and strategies for improvement

Teachers' perceptions of the use of previous examination question papers as an assessment strategy

The findings from the focus group interviews with teachers, semi-structured interviews with Heads of Department (HODs), and document analysis revealed that teachers rely on past exam question papers when assessing learners' work. A key finding across the focus group interview and semi-structured interviews was that teachers viewed the widespread use of past national examination question papers as a vital assessment strategy. They used it frequently as both a teaching and assessment tool. Teachers consistently indicated that past examination papers not only assessed learners' comprehension and language proficiency but also familiarised them with the exam structure and expectations. Consequently, this dual function, serving both pedagogical and assessment purposes, was perceived as particularly effective in preparing learners for formal assessments and enhancing overall academic performance.

These insights are consistent with those of Kayoko (2019), who observed that many Namibian teachers rely heavily on examination-based assessment strategies, primarily to improve pass rates rather than to enhance teaching and learning. This focus on 'teaching to the test' can, however, risk narrowing learners' educational experiences by

overlooking broader curriculum goals. Similarly, Mtshweni (2020) found that teachers often prioritised performance scores over meaningful learning, leading to an overemphasis on test preparation at the expense of deeper understanding. The author further argues that assessment should not merely aim to improve test results but rather to develop learners' competencies to navigate real-life challenges effectively.

In particular, teachers noted that past examination papers were used to teach critical language features such as figurative language (*omipopyofano*) and persuasive writing. These activities not only enabled learners to engage with authentic texts but also allowed them to practise the analytical and expressive skills required for success at the NSSCAS level. As one participant mentioned, they often "teach the question paper," demonstrating how to interpret text types, identify linguistic features, and respond appropriately. Hughes (2020) underscores the need to distinguish between formative and summative assessment, noting that formative assessment supports learning by enabling teachers to adapt instruction based on learners' progress. Additionally, Govender (2019) argues that formative assessment is frequently overlooked in favour of past examination papers, largely due to accountability pressures. As Svensäter and Rohlin (2023) noted, such pressures stem from the use of learners' test scores to evaluate school performance. However, this approach often captures only limited learning outcomes, focusing mainly on factual knowledge and comprehension rather than higher-order thinking. Kulasegaram and Rangachari (2018) caution against overreliance on summative tools such as past examination papers, as they do not provide a holistic picture of learners' development.

Although the exam-driven approach may help build confidence and familiarity with the examination process, it may undermine broader educational goals. Asamoah et al. (2024) contend that education should aim to develop a wide range of competencies, including comprehension, creative expression, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and collaboration. If teaching is disproportionately exam-driven, learners may miss opportunities for creativity and exploration that support more meaningful language development.

Moreover, the findings reinforce the Personal Practice Assessment Theory, which emphasises that teachers' beliefs, experiences, and personal conceptions of assessment strongly shape their classroom practices. In this study, teachers' beliefs about the purpose and value of assessment were reflected in their task design, feedback, and evaluation of learners' performance. For example, many teachers viewed assessment primarily as a tool for preparing learners for the NSSCAS final examinations. As a result,

they reported designing assessment tasks that closely mirrored examination formats, such as comprehension tests, essays, and grammar exercises, aligned with the requirements of Papers 1 and 2.

In addition, several teachers indicated that they placed strong emphasis on marks and grading, believing that assessment should mainly measure learners' achievement and readiness for national examinations. This belief influenced their feedback practices, which were often limited to indicating correct and incorrect answers, awarding marks, and giving brief comments, rather than providing detailed, formative feedback aimed at improving learning.

Some teachers also expressed that time constraints and heavy workloads shaped their assessment practices, leading them to prioritise group assessment tasks and a predominantly summative assessment approach. In this regard, they reported relying heavily on previous examination question papers, which familiarised learners with the examination structure, format, and expectations. This exam-oriented practice was viewed by teachers as a practical way of preparing learners for the NSSCAS final examinations.

However, this emphasis on group work and examination-style tasks meant that less attention was given to individual learners' work and formative assessment approaches. Teachers acknowledged that this could disadvantage some learners, as not all learners actively participate in group tasks, and weaker learners may be overshadowed by more dominant peers. As a result, opportunities to identify individual learning gaps and provide targeted support through formative feedback were often limited.

According to Muhammad and Purbani (2020), these beliefs shape teaching methods, learner interactions, classroom management, and the selection of assessment tools. Ghafri et al. (2021) add that changes in education policy and access to professional development can also reshape these beliefs, potentially encouraging more balanced and learner-centred approaches.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the critical role of examination-based assessment strategy in assessing Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Teachers' perceptions of the use of previous examination question papers as an assessment strategy were highlighted in this study, as they believe it provides learners with a strong understanding of assessment as both a measure of achievement and a vehicle for promoting meaningful and lasting learning.

Perceived effectiveness of assessment objectives in assessing Oshindonga First Language learners

The findings indicate that teachers perceive assessment objectives as a central assessment strategy that guides both teaching and learning in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. All participants acknowledged that aligning lesson aims with the assessment objectives outlined in the syllabus ensures that classroom instruction remains focused on the intended learning outcomes. Teachers viewed this alignment not merely as a compliance measure but as a deliberate approach to maintaining the validity and fairness of learner assessment. Teachers described the syllabus and its assessment objectives as a reference framework for lesson planning, task design, and developing classroom tests. They reported that when assessment objectives guide their practice, teaching becomes more purposeful and assessment more consistent with curriculum standards. This perception aligns with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT), which posits that teachers' beliefs about assessment strongly shape how they design and implement assessment activities in their classrooms.

Furthermore, teachers emphasised the importance of making assessment objectives visible to learners by displaying them in classrooms or pasting them in learners' notebooks to promote learner awareness of performance expectations. This practice reflects an "assessment for learning" approach, where learners understand the goals of lessons and can monitor their own progress. This perception aligns with the views of Bholá et al. (2003) and Contino (2013), who highlight that curriculum standards and assessments must be aligned to effectively measure learners' achievement of intended outcomes. Similarly, Yu et al. (2022) argue that such alignment enhances fairness and consistency in assessment, while McLachlan et al. (2018) note that teachers with a deeper understanding of the curriculum are better able to design meaningful and coherent assessments. Moreover, Meng (2023) and Sewagegn (2020) similarly stress that meaningful learning occurs when there is a coherent alignment between teaching activities, assessment tasks, and learning outcomes.

Overall, teachers perceive the use of assessment objectives as an integrated assessment strategy that promotes consistency, transparency, and fairness in assessing learners' progress. By aligning their lessons and tests with syllabus objectives, teachers strengthen the validity of their assessments and support learners' engagement with clearly defined learning goals.

Perceived role of feedback in improving learner performance

The findings indicate that teachers perceive feedback as a key assessment strategy that directly supports learning and teaching in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. Teachers described feedback as integral to formative assessment rather than a final evaluative step. They believe that providing timely, specific, and constructive feedback enables learners to recognise their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and develop their language proficiency over time. This perception aligns with Irons and Elkington (2021), who define formative assessment as a process that generates feedback to benefit both learners and teachers by helping learners regulate their learning and enabling teachers to refine their instructional practices. Consequently, feedback is conceptualised not merely as a marking activity, but as a diagnostic and developmental tool that supports learners in achieving the syllabus objectives. In this regard, diagnostic writing tasks serve as low-stakes formative activities to identify persistent grammatical and structural challenges in learners' written work. The insights gained from these tasks enable teachers to provide targeted, constructive feedback that addresses individual learner needs and promotes continuous language development.

Teachers also emphasised the importance of timeliness and clarity in feedback delivery. They reported that feedback should ideally be provided within a week to allow learners to recall their work and engage meaningfully with comments. This aligns with the findings of Liu et al. (2024) and Meng (2023), who argue that prompt and actionable feedback enhances learning by bridging the gap between current and expected performance. Teachers' feedback strategies in this theme included paragraph-by-paragraph comments on written tasks, where they explained errors, offered examples for improvement, and encouraged self-correction. This approach reflects a formative assessment mindset, where feedback is intended to promote learning continuity rather than to conclude the assessment process. In support of this, Chauke and Tabane (2024) emphasise that teachers should adapt their assessment practices to accommodate all learners in inclusive classrooms, ensuring that feedback serves diverse learner needs.

Furthermore, teachers perceive feedback as a strategy that encourages learner engagement and responsibility in the learning process. They promote active participation by requiring learners to respond to feedback through corrections and revisions, thereby fostering self-regulated learning. This perception resonates with Winstone and Boud (2022), who contend that feedback is most effective when learners use it to plan and improve their future work. Similarly, Black and William (2003) stress that effective

feedback must be specific, individualised, and aligned with clear learning goals, principles reflected in the teachers' emphasis on detailed, constructive comments that guide learners' progress.

Finally, the findings highlight the supportive role of Heads of Departments in sustaining effective feedback practices. Heads of Department (HODs) were found to play a crucial role in monitoring learners' books, ensuring that corrections are completed, and verifying that feedback aligns with Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS assessment objectives. This practice is consistent with Nash and Winstone (2017), who argue that feedback must align with learning objectives to have a meaningful impact. Teachers also reflected on how feedback outcomes inform their subsequent lesson planning, reinforcing the cyclical nature of formative assessment. Furthermore, Weston et al. (2024) emphasise that opportunities should be provided for learners to analyse their own thinking, learning processes, and growth. They further assert that providing detailed, actionable feedback is a key component of effective competency-based assessment, as it guides further learning and development, helping learners refine their skills and address specific challenges. Overall, teachers perceive feedback not as an isolated activity, but as a continuous assessment strategy that informs instruction, deepens understanding, and promotes sustained academic progress.

Teachers' perceptions of the examiner's report as an assessment and feedback tool

The findings indicate that teachers perceive examiner reports as an important assessment strategy that bridges formal examination feedback and classroom instruction. This perception aligns with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) advanced by Box et al. (2015), which asserts that teachers' assessment practices are not merely determined by prescribed policies but are deeply shaped by their professional beliefs, prior experiences, and contextual realities. The theory further explains that teachers continuously reflect on their assessment experiences, adapting strategies to suit their learners' needs and classroom conditions. In this way, assessment becomes a personalised and evolving practice that bridges theoretical understanding with practical application. Participants consistently reported that examiner reports enhance their assessment literacy, guide their classroom practices, and help them identify learners' common errors and misconceptions. This supports Nsingo's (2015) assertion that examiner reports play a critical role in helping teachers understand how learners respond to examination questions and improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers also

highlighted that participating in national marking sessions deepens their understanding of marking criteria and encourages reflective assessment practices. Similarly, Dadzie et al. (2023) and Asamoah-Gyimah (2022) note that teachers with strong assessment literacy are better equipped to interpret assessment data and adapt instruction to address learners' needs.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that teachers value the collaborative sharing of examiner insights within departments as a professional learning opportunity. This collaborative culture resonates with Dewey's experiential learning philosophy, which Crawford et al. (2023) further expand, underscoring that reflection and metacognitive engagement are central to meaningful learning, an idea mirrored in how Oshindonga teachers incorporate examiner feedback into their formative assessment activities. Teachers who participate in national marking not only gain knowledge through hands-on experience but also reflect on and share that learning with colleagues, translating insights into improved classroom practices. Such discussions during marking also reflect Lalor et al.'s (2019) argument that collective reflection helps identify learning gaps and align classroom practice with broader assessment objectives.

Moreover, examiner reports are perceived as tools for diagnostic and formative assessment rather than merely summative evaluation. Nsingo (2015) notes that examiner feedback helps teachers pinpoint persistent learning difficulties, enabling more responsive teaching approaches. Similarly, Ugwu (2022) views examiner reports as indicators of systemic challenges and misalignments between curriculum aims and classroom realities, supporting their integration into formative assessment cycles. When used in this holistic manner, examiner reports become valuable resources for creating inclusive, supportive classroom environments that promote learner confidence and growth.

Participants reported carefully studying examiner reports to identify recurring learners' errors, weak content areas, and common misinterpretations of examination questions. They then used this information to revise their lesson plans, redesign assessment tasks, and place greater emphasis on problematic topics during instruction. For example, several teachers indicated that after reviewing examiner comments on Paper 1 comprehension and Paper 2 essay writing, they adjusted their classroom assessments to include more practice tasks that mirrored these formats and explicitly addressed the weaknesses highlighted in the reports.

Teachers further explained that they incorporated examiner feedback into classroom discussions with learners, drawing attention to common mistakes and modelling acceptable responses using extracts or examples based on examiner guidance. In this way, examiner reports were not treated as external policy documents but were translated into concrete teaching and assessment actions suited to their learners' abilities and classroom realities. Participants who had attended national marking sessions added that their direct exposure to marking scripts deepened their understanding of marking criteria, enabling them to provide more accurate feedback, set clearer expectations for learners, and align classroom assessment more closely with NSSCAS standards.

This reflective and adaptive use of examiner feedback demonstrates the core assumptions of the Personal Practice Assessment Theory, which holds that teachers' assessment practices are shaped by their beliefs, experiences, and contextual judgment rather than by policy prescriptions alone (Box et al., 2015). In this study, teachers' belief in the practical value of examiner reports motivated them to actively engage with, reinterpret, and apply the feedback in ways that responded to their learners' needs and their own instructional constraints. Through this process, examiner reports became tools for continuous learning, reflective practice, and alignment between classroom assessment and national examination standards.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that teachers in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms perceive examiner reports as a powerful assessment strategy that transforms summative evaluation into actionable classroom feedback. Through reflective engagement and professional collaboration, teachers adapt examiner insights to improve instruction, strengthen learners' preparedness, and enhance overall performance.

The Prioritisation of English in teaching Oshindonga First Language

The findings reveal that Oshindonga First Language teachers use several adaptive, informal practices to implement formative assessment in linguistically diverse classrooms. These include allowing learners to express themselves in both Oshindonga and English when explaining complex ideas and using code-switching between dialects to clarify concepts and ensure understanding. While responsive to learners' needs, this strategy can inadvertently reinforce English dominance and marginalise Oshindonga. Teachers also rely on unplanned oral assessments, diagnostic writing tasks, and immediate oral corrections to monitor progress and address dialectical errors.

Collectively, these practices provide real-time feedback and inform instructional adjustments, reflecting the core principles of formative assessment.

However, despite these efforts, the findings highlight that the effectiveness of these formative assessment practices is constrained by systemic and linguistic factors. Learners' frequent insertion of English words into Oshindonga writing tasks illustrates both the impact of inconsistent exposure to the language and the influence of institutional policies that prioritise English as the language of prestige. This reality resonates with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2016) framework, which advocates for balanced bilingual development but appears misaligned with classroom realities. Similarly, Nwokoro et al. (2020) and Mokibelo et al. (2024) observed that such dominance of colonial languages often leads to confusion and disengagement among learners, thereby limiting the impact of formative assessment activities aimed at improving linguistic competence.

Dialectal interference in Oshindonga language learning

In their practice, some teachers initiate creative formative assessment strategies that draw on cultural and contextual materials. For instance, they encourage the use of Oshindonga folktales, debating clubs, and local media to promote expressive and critical language use (Levitan & Johnson, 2020). Although these activities are informal and largely teacher-driven, they represent meaningful attempts to integrate cultural relevance into assessment. This aligns with Kabungo and Banda (2019) and Gasana and Twizeyimana (2019), who emphasise that debate-based and interactive language tasks enhance learner confidence, critical thinking, and communicative competence. Such practices reflect teachers' awareness of formative assessment as a continuous, learner-centred process that supports both linguistic and cognitive development.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate a lack of structured and institutionalised formative assessment practices that systematically address dialectal and linguistic diversity. Teachers' informal adaptations, while commendable, lack consistent support from school leadership and policy frameworks. This situation echoes Mokibelo (2023) and Molosiwa and Mokibelo (2010), who note that teachers' preference for English often stems from systemic pressure and limited institutional recognition of indigenous languages. The study therefore underscores the need for a more structured, inclusive, and linguistically responsive formative assessment framework that acknowledges dialectal variation,

affirms the value of Oshindonga, and promotes equitable language learning opportunities for all learners.

Teachers also reported implementing various formative assessment strategies to address these linguistic challenges. These include impromptu speech tasks, diagnostic writing exercises, and explicit instruction in standard orthography and pronunciation (Haerazi et al., 2019). Such strategies enable teachers to identify dialectal interference in learners' language use and to provide corrective feedback. However, these efforts are often time-consuming and require consistent reinforcement, as many learners continue to revert to their home dialects, particularly in writing (Levitan et al., 2025).

Contextualisation of learning activities

The findings reveal that Oshindonga First Language teachers implement formative assessment through highly contextualised and grounded practices that reflect what they actually do in their classrooms. Participants' responses indicate that these practices are adaptive and closely aligned with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT), which asserts that teachers' beliefs, prior experiences, and contextual realities significantly shape how they plan, design, and implement assessment strategies (Box et al., 2015). In Oshindonga classrooms, PPAT highlights that teachers' decisions are influenced not only by curriculum requirements but also by learners' linguistic backgrounds, cultural knowledge, and community experiences, ensuring that assessment practices are meaningful, equitable, and contextually responsive. In line with this framework, teachers reported that their assessment tasks often draw on learners' lived experiences, national events, traditional customs, environmental issues, and personal stories, thereby bridging the gap between abstract curriculum content and real-world relevance (Barrun & Cajurao, 2025).

Formative assessment in these classrooms frequently takes the form of collaborative tasks, oral storytelling, and community-based writing activities, which promote shared meaning-making among learners. Such strategies mirror sociocultural perspectives on learning, where knowledge is socially constructed within communities of practice (Arrafii, 2020). By incorporating Oshindonga folktales, idioms, and culturally familiar texts, teachers create learning experiences that are both culturally affirming and personally relevant, consistent with PPAT's view that local realities and teacher beliefs actively shape assessment practices.

Teachers also adapt assessment approaches to accommodate learners' linguistic diversity and individual needs. Practices such as code-switching, diagnostic writing tasks, gamified storytelling, and comic strips are used to ensure understanding and engagement while promoting higher-order thinking and critical reflection (Weston et al., 2024; Aparicio et al., 2021; Bhalla & Sareen, 2020). Classroom discussions and oral dialogues are frequently employed to support both speaking and writing development, demonstrating teachers' commitment to interactive and responsive assessment practices (Naghdipour, 2017). These strategies exemplify how formative assessment can be personalised and inclusive, recognising learners' backgrounds, dialectical variations, and cultural knowledge.

Additionally, the data indicate a strong commitment to fostering home–school collaboration. Teachers design tasks that require learners to involve their families, particularly parents, in language-learning activities (Levitan & Johnson, 2020). Tasks exploring cultural expressions, including idioms, proverbs, and traditional vocabulary rooted in everyday usage, strengthen both linguistic competence and familial ties (Arrafii, 2020). The involvement of parents and communities through home-based assignments and discussions of cultural elements further enriches the learning process and provides additional opportunities for formative assessment (Weston et al., 2024). Teachers are also motivated to incorporate Oshindonga-language films and local narratives to reinforce learners' comprehension of cultural contexts and promote a deeper appreciation of the language's expressive power (Levitan et al., 2025).

In essence, the findings indicate that participants in this study recognise that formative assessment is most effective when it is culturally responsive, community-oriented, and contextually relevant, as reflected in the daily practices of Oshindonga First Language teachers. By integrating learners' home, community, and cultural knowledge into assessment, teachers foster meaningful, equitable, and motivating learning experiences that reinforce both linguistic competence and cultural identity. These practices exemplify the core tenets of PPAT, demonstrating that assessment strategies are not merely procedural tools but are actively shaped by teachers' beliefs and the contexts in which they teach.

Overcrowded classrooms

The study revealed that overcrowded classrooms pose a significant challenge to the implementation of effective assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language

NSSCAS classrooms. Teachers reported that high learner-to-teacher ratios increase workload, limit opportunities for formative assessment, and often force the use of group assessments. Although group assessments are a practical way of managing large classes, they are less diagnostically effective because they do not allow teachers to accurately identify each learner's individual strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs. As a result, teachers are unable to determine which specific learners require additional support or which concepts individual learners have not yet mastered.

This finding aligns with Osai et al. (2021), who identify overcrowding as a barrier to personalised feedback, and Prayitno (2023), who emphasises that smaller classes allow richer teacher–learner interactions and collaborative engagement. Large classes reduce teachers' ability to provide individualised attention, compromise teaching strategies, and shift pedagogical practices from learner-centred to whole-group formats (Vakili et al., 2024; Graham, 2023).

Within the PPAT framework (Box et al., 2015), teachers' assessment practices are shaped by personal beliefs and contextual realities. Participants in this study described how overcrowding forces compromises between pedagogical ideals and logistical feasibility, making it difficult to maintain close monitoring of individual learners' progress. Overcrowded classrooms hinder teachers' ability to form strong relationships, maintain eye contact, and track individual learner needs (Panhwar & Bell, 2023). While strategies such as group work help manage large classes, they dilute the diagnostic purpose of assessment and obscure individual learners' strengths and weaknesses (Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

Teachers also reported significant marking fatigue and time pressure due to the volume of assessments in large classes, particularly for essays and grammar tasks. These challenges affect teacher morale and job satisfaction (Matsepe et al., 2019) and further constrain the quality and frequency of meaningful feedback. Participants indicated that heavy workloads limit their ability to provide detailed, formative feedback that could guide learner improvement. This highlights the importance of strong instructional leadership to support teachers in managing workload and sustaining assessment quality (Biyela, 2019).

Finally, the study confirms that overcrowded classrooms compromise equity, validity, and the diagnostic purpose of formative assessment. When assessment is conducted mainly through group tasks, individual learner progress remains hidden, preventing targeted

support and differentiation (Tshangana et al., 2023). Consequently, teachers are unable to respond effectively to diverse learning needs. Structural reforms, such as manageable class sizes, workload adjustments, and stronger institutional support, are therefore necessary to enable meaningful, culturally responsive, and learner-centred assessment practices. As Levitan et al. (2025) emphasise, assessment should reflect learners' identities and experiences, which is difficult to achieve in overcrowded classrooms, despite teachers' commitment and pedagogical knowledge.

Minimal content-based workshop in the region

The findings revealed that another challenge facing Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers in implementing effective assessment strategies is the limited availability of structured, content-specific professional development. Participants consistently reported that, when held, regional workshops mainly focused on national examination marking schemes rather than on formative assessment practices or content pedagogy. This finding supports Sabina (2020), who emphasises that Continuous Professional Development training following curriculum revisions is essential to help teachers adopt new pedagogical and assessment approaches. In the Oshindonga NSSCAS context, teachers reported receiving minimal or no subject-specific training after the curriculum reform, forcing them to depend on informal peer collaboration. Consequently, this lack of targeted professional support has led to inconsistent assessment practices and reduced teacher confidence, reflecting a clear misalignment between curriculum expectations and the available professional development structures.

Furthermore, teachers described how, in the absence of formal workshops, they relied heavily on collegial support and informal sharing of ideas to interpret the syllabus and assessment standards. This finding aligns with Chauraya and Brodie (2017) and Antinluoma et al. (2021), who view professional learning communities as vital spaces for collaborative reflection and shared expertise. However, while such peer-led learning fostered some sense of professional solidarity, participants acknowledged that these efforts could not replace structured, expert-facilitated workshops. As Frank (2024) notes, without systematic, content-specific, and continuous professional development, teachers are unlikely to implement assessment reforms effectively or achieve desired learning outcomes.

Within the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) proposed by Box et al. (2015), teachers' assessment practices are influenced by their underlying beliefs, accumulated

experiences, and the contextual factors that define their teaching environments. However, the present findings highlight a limitation of this framework: it does not fully account for broader systemic and institutional constraints, such as insufficient training opportunities and limited regional or ministerial support. The minimum of formalised training structures has left many teachers unprepared to engage in reflective, learner-centred assessment practices. Thomas (2012) emphasises that school management should create opportunities for teachers to attend professional development workshops, seminars, and in-service programs that specifically enhance their understanding of learner-centred assessment.

Finally, the findings suggest that teachers view workshops not only as skill-building platforms but also as spaces for motivation, recognition, and sustained professional engagement. Frank (2024) and Gaines et al. (2019) argue that educational systems should prioritise teacher well-being and continuous learning, as these directly influence the quality of assessment implementation. The absence of such structured support in the Oshindonga NSSCAS context perpetuates uncertainty and inconsistency in assessment practices. In summary, without institutionalised, content-focused, and ongoing professional development, teachers are left to navigate complex assessment expectations with limited guidance, undermining both the intent and effectiveness of formative assessment in the classroom.

Inadequate support from the Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Omusati Regional Office

The participants' responses revealed that many Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers operate in environments with inadequate academic and pedagogical support from their Heads of Departments (HODs) and the Omusati Regional office. The findings of this study align with the existing literature, which underscores the importance of instructional leadership and regional support for the effective implementation of assessment. Dube-Xaba and Makae (2018) assert that HODs are responsible for maintaining assessment standards and ensuring teachers understand and apply assessment policies. However, the current study found that most HODs in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms lack subject-specific expertise and qualifications, thereby limiting their ability to provide adequate pedagogical guidance, an issue also raised by Dube-Xaba and Makae (2018), who highlighted concerns about HODs' limited pedagogical knowledge in subjects outside their area of qualification.

The inadequacy of HOD support in moderating, guiding, and monitoring assessment implementation was echoed by Seobi and Wood (2016), who observed that many HODs lack the professional capacity to manage curriculum demands and support effective instruction. This is consistent with Motsamai (2016), who argued that the absence of appropriate subject-matter knowledge among HODs impairs their ability to ensure the quality of assessment tasks and hinders their engagement in ongoing pedagogical dialogue with teachers. The situation described by participants, where HODs merely act as "final checkers" of reports, aligns with Seobi and Wood's (2016) assertion that HODs often adopt a bureaucratic, task-oriented role rather than engaging meaningfully with instruction and assessment improvement.

In cases where partial support was offered, such as in marking Paper 2, such efforts were reported as inconsistent and heavily dependent on prior training. These isolated successes suggest that with proper capacity-building, HODs could be more effective in their roles. However, the absence of sustained support structures has forced many teachers to rely on informal peer networks, a trend also observed by Haufiku et al. (2022), who found that teachers often rely on one another when formal leadership lacks subject expertise. This informal collaboration, while beneficial in the short term, cannot substitute for systemic and sustained instructional leadership.

The findings also highlight tensions arising from dialectal variations among teachers, which further compound the lack of consistency in assessment practices or guidance. These challenges reflect what Motsamai (2017) identified as broader concerns over the poor quality and validity of assessment tools, underlining the need for internal moderation and subject-specific oversight. The study further uncovered limitations in the regional support structure. Although the Omusati Regional Office demonstrated a commitment to teacher support, participants reported that logistical constraints, particularly a lack of transport and time, prevented regular school visits. These findings resonate with those of Haufiku et al. (2022), who found that subject advisors rarely visit schools, despite being expected to offer expert advice and contribute to teachers' professional growth in areas such as creativity, problem-solving, and assessment literacy. Haufiku et al. (2022) reinforce the critical role of subject advisors as curriculum specialists responsible for guiding instructional improvement, yet the implementation in the field remains inconsistent. Furthermore, the absence of ongoing advisory services from subject advisors echoes Haufiku et al.'s (2022) observation that many education advisors in developing countries are based in regional offices and fail to provide on-site support

where it is most needed. Haufiku et al. (2022) stress the need for teachers to receive timely guidance from curriculum designers and subject experts to perform their roles effectively, an expectation that was unmet in many of the participating schools in this study.

Collectively, these sources reinforce participants' concerns that assessment implementation is hindered not solely by individual teacher preparedness but also by broader systemic deficiencies at the school and regional levels. These findings confirm the Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) by Box et al. (2015), which emphasise that teachers' assessment decisions are influenced not only by their internal beliefs and experiences but also by their surrounding institutional context. In this study, the limited subject knowledge of HODs and the poor logistical support from the regional office clearly demonstrate how external contextual factors constrain teachers' capacity to meaningfully apply assessment strategies. Moreover, the adaptive response of forming informal peer networks validates the PPAT framework's emphasis on teacher agency. In this case, inadequate HOD support and inconsistent regional interventions reveal how institutional weakness constrains the translation of assessment theory into practice. Additionally, the emergence of informal peer networks validates the PPAT notion of adaptive teacher behaviour in response to contextual challenges but also underscores that such adaptations are insufficient substitutes for structured, expert-driven support systems.

Regional-based training workshop

The participants' responses regarding the availability of Continuous Professional Development programs and classroom support for Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers to improve their assessment strategies highlighted the value of regionally based training workshops organised by the Omusati Regional Office. These workshops were described as vital platforms where teachers receive guidance on curriculum interpretation, assessment standards, and marking practices specific to the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language syllabus.

Participants reported that these regional-based sessions act as vital spaces for reflective professional growth, where teachers collaboratively interpret assessment expectations, exchange classroom experiences, and refine their understanding of marking and moderation processes. Such engagement enhances teachers' confidence and capacity to design assessment tasks that align with national requirements while responding to

learners' linguistic and cultural diversity. This observation resonates with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) (Box et al., 2015), which posits that effective assessment practice evolves through the interaction between teachers' internal beliefs and the external professional environments that nurture reflection, dialogue, and contextual adaptation.

The findings further revealed that these workshops are often facilitated by experienced subject advisors and moderators, who provide practical examples and address content-specific challenges faced in the classroom. Teachers appreciated these engagements as they promote reflective practice, foster consistency in marking, and encourage collaboration among teachers across different schools. This observation resonates with Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021), who assert that regional training and induction programs are instrumental in developing teachers' capacity to implement new curricula effectively. Similarly, Ali and Hamza (2018) emphasise that regular, structured training positively influences both teacher performance and learner outcomes by introducing innovative teaching and assessment approaches.

Furthermore, the regional workshops play a key role in bridging the gap between national-level training and classroom implementation. Teachers acknowledged that while initial national training provided a foundation for understanding NSSCAS assessment requirements, regional workshops offer more localised, continuous support tailored to their specific teaching contexts. This ongoing engagement ensures that teachers remain up to date and confident in applying assessment strategies that reflect both national expectations and community realities.

The participants' appreciation of these workshops underscores the critical role of regionally driven CPD initiatives in sustaining teacher growth. Consistent with Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021), continuous professional development must be structured, practical, and responsive to teachers' needs to ensure meaningful implementation of the curriculum. The participants' reflections demonstrate that regional workshops not only enhance professional competence but also cultivate a collaborative professional culture among Oshindonga First Language teachers.

In summary, the findings suggest that regionally based training workshops form a cornerstone of professional support for Oshindonga NSSCAS teachers. These programmes exemplify the importance of sustained, localised professional development in enhancing assessment literacy and pedagogical effectiveness. In line with the PPAT

framework, such regionally contextualised support enables teachers to refine their assessment practices through continuous learning, peer engagement, and adaptive implementation that responds to both curricular demands and classroom realities.

Minimal support within and outside the school

The findings revealed that in the absence of consistent regional training opportunities, Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) teachers primarily rely on school-based support systems led by Heads of Departments (HODs). This theme highlights the crucial role HODs play in sustaining professional growth and facilitating continuous professional development within schools. As Kin and Kareem (2019) assert, effective instructional leadership is central to teacher development, with competent school leaders serving as catalysts for transformative teaching and assessment practices. Similarly, the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020 (MoEAC, 2020) identifies HODs as key instructional leaders responsible for Continuous Professional Development training, pedagogical guidance, and ongoing support for teachers. These institutional roles were reflected in participants' accounts, which emphasised how HODs assist with lesson planning, assessment design, and the moderation of learners' work, even though such support often occurs informally and varies in consistency across schools.

Furthermore, So-Oabeb et al. (2024) affirm that HODs are central to teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) through mentoring, appraisal, and facilitating access to learning opportunities. However, the findings revealed that not all HODs possess the subject-specific expertise required to fully support Oshindonga NSSCAS teachers, particularly in addressing the subject's complex linguistic and curriculum-related demands. This mirrors Mkandawire's (2010) observation that limited capacity and logistical barriers can constrain curriculum implementation, resulting in inconsistent instructional guidance and limited classroom monitoring.

Despite these challenges, teachers in the study described the emergence of adaptive, school-based strategies that help sustain professional learning. Departmental meetings, internal moderation sessions, and inter-school collaborations were identified as valuable avenues for teachers to share experiences, exchange assessment ideas, and offer peer mentorship. These practices echo the views of Ali and Hamza (2018), who emphasise that teacher collaboration and ongoing training enhance pedagogical quality and improve learner outcomes. Although So-Oabeb and Du Plessis (2023) caution that HODs' heavy workloads may limit the extent of support they can offer, this study's findings reveal that

many HODs actively overcome these constraints through creative leadership. By providing informal guidance, sharing resources, and facilitating collaborative discussions, they continue to offer meaningful instructional support that strengthens teachers' assessment practices.

These findings align with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) (Box et al., 2015), which posits that teachers' assessment practices are shaped by their beliefs, experiences, and educational context. In Oshindonga NSSCAS classrooms, the support provided by HODs, through peer moderation, departmental guidance, and collaborative problem-solving, demonstrates how school-based leadership directly shapes teachers' implementation of assessment strategies. Yen et al. (2021) further emphasise that effective leadership relies on professional expertise and adaptive support, a quality evident in the HOD practices described by participants.

Lastly, the findings affirm Mokibelo et al.'s (2024) view that strong leadership and targeted professional support are particularly critical in first language and indigenous-language education contexts, where linguistic diversity and limited resources pose unique challenges. In this regard, the efforts of Oshindonga HODs and teachers to sustain internal mentorship, share assessment materials, and support one another through informal collaboration demonstrate a meaningful and resilient form of professional development.

Overall, while CPD structures remain limited, the school-based leadership and peer collaboration facilitated by HODs provide a crucial support network that sustains teacher growth, reinforces assessment quality, and upholds the broader goals of equity and curriculum responsiveness within the Namibian education system.

Targeted professional development and sustained support

When participants were asked how assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum could be improved, they consistently emphasised the need for targeted professional development and sustained support focused specifically on assessment. The findings revealed a persistent gap in the provision, accessibility, and structure of professional development for teachers offering Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level. While some training opportunities are available, they are often irregular, limited to newly appointed teachers, and insufficient to

equip teachers with the knowledge and skills required to effectively implement assessment strategies.

These findings align with Meng (2023), who emphasises that ongoing professional learning is vital for improving instructional quality, strengthening subject expertise, and fostering collaboration among teachers, all of which contribute to better learner outcomes. However, the inconsistent and fragmented nature of professional development reported in this study suggests that many Oshindonga teachers are not adequately supported to meet curriculum demands.

Participants' call for practical, content-based workshops aligns with the position of Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021), who argue that professional development should be continuous, staged, and aligned with curriculum reforms rather than delivered as isolated events. This aligns with the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020 (MoEAC, 2020), which underscores the importance of supporting teacher excellence through systematic training and collaboration within and across schools. However, findings indicate a disconnect between schools and national education bodies such as the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), leading to delayed or unclear communication of assessment expectations at the start of the school year.

Participants also noted that regional education offices tend to engage with schools primarily during the examination period, providing limited guidance during the crucial phases of planning, instruction, and assessment design. Weston et al. (2024) emphasise that diversifying assessment types is essential for developing and measuring learners' competencies effectively, but this must be supported through phased capacity-building that strengthens both teachers' pedagogical and assessment practices. This finding reinforces the need for ongoing professional support rather than sporadic, exam-focused interventions. Similarly, Ozmusul (2015) argues that effective school leadership should proactively engage external experts to facilitate meaningful, continuous teacher development across the academic year.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings resonate with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) proposed by Box et al. (2015), which asserts that teachers' assessment practices are shaped by their beliefs, experiences, and contextual realities. In this context, the limited institutional and regional support constrains teachers' ability to design innovative assessment strategies, compelling them to rely on personal experience

and peer collaboration to meet curriculum demands. The inconsistent professional support observed in this study, therefore, not only undermines the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020, which mandates regional offices to assist schools in improving teaching and assessment quality, but also illustrates how contextual limitations influence teachers' assessment practices within the PPAT framework.

The study further confirmed that the absence of regular and inclusive training weakens teachers' confidence and assessment literacy. Mtshweni (2020) links inadequate knowledge of formative assessment to weak teaching practices, while Coombe et al. (2023) observe that even teachers with theoretical understanding struggle to apply assessment principles in practice without contextualised guidance. These issues were particularly evident among newly appointed Oshindonga teachers, who reported difficulties adapting to the complex NSSCAS assessment standards.

In the absence of structured support, teachers have developed informal collaborative networks to share knowledge, interpret syllabus documents, and co-develop assessment materials. Meng (2023) supports such collaboration, viewing it as a key feature of professional learning communities that promote shared reflection and practical problem-solving. Although these teacher-led initiatives partially fill the training gap, they remain inconsistent and lack the expert guidance required for long-term professional growth.

These adaptive practices resonate with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) (Box et al., 2015), which emphasises that teachers' assessment decisions are influenced not only by their beliefs and experiences but also by the institutional and contextual conditions surrounding their work. In the case of Oshindonga NSSCAS, the findings show that limited institutional support has compelled teachers to rely on practice-based, peer-driven knowledge to navigate assessment demands. Mtshweni (2020) similarly found that teachers often implement assessments based on personal experience rather than official policy due to gaps in formal guidance.

Furthermore, Karakus (2021) and Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021) highlight that insufficient training during curriculum implementation negatively affects teachers' ability to adapt strategies to diverse classroom contexts. This is especially critical in linguistically diverse classrooms, where differentiated assessment strategies are essential for equitable learning. Antisan et al. (2020) and Weston et al. (2024) further assert that strong leadership, structured professional development, and continuous mentoring significantly enhance teacher effectiveness and learner achievement.

Overall, the findings affirm that targeted, consistent, and contextually relevant professional development is essential for strengthening teachers' assessment capacity in Oshindonga NSSCAS. Teachers' ability to deliver fair, inclusive, and effective assessment practices depends on the quality and consistency of the professional support available to them. The study thus extends the application of the PPAT framework by illustrating how limited institutional and systemic support contributes to variability in assessment practices, particularly in under-resourced and linguistically diverse contexts.

Providing more resources to strengthen the use of effective assessment strategies

The findings of this study indicate that teachers perceive adequate resources as central to strengthening effective assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms. Participants associated meaningful assessment with access to appropriate teaching, learning, and assessment materials, particularly real-life resources such as newspapers, novels, magazines, and digital content that support learner engagement, vocabulary development, and contextual understanding. They have also reported that existing resources in many schools are dominated by Western-oriented content and do not sufficiently reflect African cultural contexts, which they believe limits learners' engagement, language development, and ability to relate meaningfully to assessment tasks. This perception aligns with MoEAC's (2016) emphasis on a range of instructional and assessment resources to support learner-centred pedagogy. Teachers further explained that learners often struggle with comprehension and writing tasks due to limited exposure to real-world texts and contemporary issues, prompting them to recommend more culturally relevant and real-life reading materials.

Participants also highlighted widespread shortages of basic teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, reference books, newspapers, and library resources, as well as inconsistent access to technological tools such as smartboards and digital devices. They reported that inadequate materials limited their ability to design engaging, contextually relevant assessment tasks and forced them to spend time improvising or searching for resources instead of focusing on lesson planning and assessment design. These findings are consistent with Van Wyk and Mostert's (2016) observations that shortages and poor-quality textbooks hinder effective language teaching, and with Mothowanaga and Gladwin's (2021) and Mkandawire's (2010) assertions that insufficient teaching and learning materials constrain curriculum implementation.

Participants further indicated that unreliable internet connectivity and insufficient training limited meaningful integration of digital tools into assessment practices, restricting opportunities for innovative and formative assessment. These views align with Zou et al. (2024), who note that technology-supported strategies enhance instruction, and with Shaheen et al. (2020) and Frank (2024), who emphasise the role of technology and contextual materials in strengthening learner engagement and assessment quality.

The Regional Education Official's contribution reinforced participants' views by linking limited access to appropriate and updated resources to teachers' weak understanding of the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum, echoing Makunja's (2016) finding that misaligned and outdated textbooks hinder curriculum interpretation and classroom application. In the absence of prescribed Oshindonga literature at this level, participants further believed that cultivating a culture of reading among both teachers and learners could strengthen language proficiency, analytical skills, and content knowledge. Overall, the findings show that teachers associate effective assessment practices with access to adequate material and technological resources. Participants recommended increased provision of textbooks, culturally relevant real-life reading materials, and educational technology to enable richer assessment tasks, reduce teacher workload, enhance learner participation, and strengthen alignment between teaching, learning, and assessment. These findings underscore that strengthening assessment practices requires not only individual teacher effort but also systemic investment in resource provision to support equitable, contextually relevant, and learner-centred assessment.

Teachers' reflective practice

The findings revealed that teachers of Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS actively engage in reflective practices that align assessment with their lessons. Teachers reported that they adapt their teaching methods based on evidence gathered from formative assessment. Consequently, practices such as peer group discussions, one-on-one support, remedial sessions, and the provision of additional tasks for underperforming learners illustrate a continuous reflective cycle in which teachers observe learners' performance, interpret learning difficulties, and modify instruction accordingly. In this way, assessment is not treated as an endpoint but rather as a source of feedback that informs subsequent teaching decisions aimed at enhancing learners' academic progress. This cyclical use of assessment mirrors Suphasri and Chinokul's (2021) conception of reflective practice as a systematic inquiry process in which teachers collect, analyse, interpret, and evaluate evidence from their own teaching to improve future practice. It

also reflects Korthagen's (2017) assertion that reflective practice generates new insights that lead to more effective classroom behaviours.

This reflective orientation is consistent with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC, 2016), which promotes learner-centred education and encourages teachers to identify learners' needs, diversify instructional strategies, and structure lessons flexibly. In the present study, reflective practice was evident in teachers' continuous monitoring of learners' understanding and their adjustment of instruction in response to learning gaps. Similarly, Shatumbu's (2019) view of teachers as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge resonates with participants' reflective stance, as they used assessment information to guide learner support, provide targeted remediation, and refine their strategies. Furthermore, Evans and Elkington's (2017) emphasis on feedback and self-monitoring aligns with these practices, since teachers deliberately engaged learners in discussions about their performance and used feedback to shape further lessons. In this regard, reflection not only informs teaching decisions but also enables teachers to deepen their understanding of themselves and their practice, as proposed by Suphasri and Chinokul (2021), who argue that reflective practice challenges and refines teachers' beliefs, emotions, and personal philosophies of teaching.

However, the findings also revealed that teachers' reflective practices are shaped mainly by personal initiative and accumulated classroom experience rather than by structured professional development or institutional support. This pattern aligns with the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) proposed by Box et al. (2015), which emphasises that assessment practices evolve through the interaction of personal beliefs, prior experiences, and contextual realities. In this study, reflection functioned as an adaptive response to classroom challenges, with teachers modifying assessment and instruction based on observed learner needs. Although teachers used reflective strategies such as small-group work, remedial teaching, and individualised support to connect learning with learners' prior knowledge (Hamukonda & Luneta, 2023; Schoenfeld, 2019), reflection remained largely reactive, triggered by poor performance rather than proactive differentiation. Nevertheless, reflective practice contributed to teacher quality and professional development (Koellner & Jacobs, 2015) by increasing teachers' awareness of ineffective methods and enabling unlearning (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2015). This reflective process also aligns with Korthagen's (2017) emphasis on self-awareness and mindfulness in teaching. Therefore, targeted professional development and structured training in reflective and learner-centred assessment (Bélisle et al., 2024) are essential

to move teachers from intuitive, experience-based reflection to deliberate, evidence-informed reflective practice, thereby strengthening assessment quality and improving Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS learning outcomes.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that teachers' reflective practice plays a central role in shaping assessment and instruction in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms; thereby reinforcing the need for structured professional support to sustain reflective, learner-centred assessment practices in line with both national policy and the PPAT framework.

Improving marker selection for fair and effective assessment

The findings revealed that inequitable access to national marking opportunities limits the professional growth of Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers and undermines the fair and consistent implementation of assessment strategies. Participants strongly recommended that the selection of national markers be made more transparent and rotational, ensuring that all active subject teachers have equal opportunities to participate. They argued that the current practice, where a small group of markers is repeatedly selected, deprives many teachers of meaningful exposure to standardised marking criteria and national expectations. Consequently, teachers who are excluded from these processes struggle to design classroom assessments that accurately reflect national standards or to provide learners with feedback informed by authentic examination experience.

This concern is supported by Athiworakun and Adunyarittigun (2022), who explain that teachers use test-related materials and marking experiences to refine school-based assessments, adjust test items, and allocate instructional time effectively. Likewise, Barnes (2016) emphasises that involvement in national marking enables teachers to critically evaluate teaching materials, while Cholis and Rizqi (2018) note that such participation enhances teachers' pedagogical awareness and contributes to improved learner outcomes. Chan (2020) further adds that exposure to examination marking influences not only assessment design but also broader instructional practices, including lesson sequencing and resource use.

From a formative assessment perspective, Correia and Harrison (2020) assert that collecting and interpreting evidence of learning is essential for guiding teaching and improving performance. When teachers lack marking experience, they miss out on

valuable insights into learners' performance patterns and marking standards, often relying instead on peer opinions or informal judgments. This can lead to inconsistencies in assessment practices and weaken the feedback loop between teaching and learning. Similarly, Athiworakun and Adunyarittigun (2022) argue that teachers who participate in marking processes are better equipped to create positive washback effects, align classroom tasks with examination skills, and help learners develop effective study and test strategies.

Applying the Personal Practice Assessment Theory (PPAT) by Box et al. (2015), these findings indicate that teachers' assessment practices are shaped not only by personal beliefs and experiences but also by access to structured professional development opportunities, such as national marking. Limited participation in these opportunities restricts the professional learning context, forcing teachers to rely on intuition or prior experience rather than evidence-based assessment practices. This reinforces Correia and Harrison's (2020) observation that a disconnect between classroom and national assessment regimes can result in misalignment between curriculum delivery and assessment objectives.

In summary, the theme highlights the critical need for transparent, equitable, and rotational marker selection to strengthen teachers' assessment literacy and align classroom practices with national standards. Broader inclusion in national marking would foster reflective, evidence-driven assessment design, enhance teacher competence, and ultimately improve language-learning outcomes in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms.

Analysis of data from documents

The document analysis revealed a gap between the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) policy expectations and actual classroom practices in the teaching and assessment of Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS. Specifically, evidence drawn from teachers' files, lesson plans, assessment materials, learners' work, and HOD monitoring records pointed to systemic weaknesses in curriculum implementation, lesson planning, assessment design, and instructional leadership. Importantly, these documents provided relatively unbiased insight into routine school practices, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings (Armstrong, 2021).

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' professional documentation was largely maintained for administrative compliance rather than for pedagogical effectiveness. For instance, Preparation, Resource, and Subject Files were often incomplete or poorly utilised, despite MoEAC (2021) requirements that all subject teachers maintain a Preparation File containing written lesson plans and relevant professional information, and that workshop materials be kept in Resource Files and Administration Files. Consequently, this reflects limited instructional support at the school level and reinforces Govender's (2019) assertion that education systems frequently assume that teachers can implement curriculum-aligned assessment without sustained professional development. In this study, the absence of such professional support was evident in both the quality and use of teachers' documentation across the participating schools.

Furthermore, lesson planning practices revealed a clear misalignment between policy requirements and classroom implementation. Although lesson plans were recorded in hardcover books in only one participating school (Annexure P), they were poorly structured and mostly based on outdated examination papers, such as NSSCH and NSSCO, rather than the NSSCAS syllabus. This contradicts MoEAC (2021) expectations that written lesson preparation is compulsory for all teachers, regardless of experience, and that lesson plans should be prepared daily or weekly using the school template and completed well in advance of classroom delivery. Moreover, MoEAC (2021) stipulates that a proper lesson plan should include the skill, topic, teaching and learning materials, lesson objectives, and the basic competencies to be achieved. As a result, instructional content in this study was disconnected from curriculum requirements, thereby undermining the intended learning outcomes of the NSSCAS framework.

This finding also contradicts MoEAC's (2016) expectations that lesson plans should explicitly demonstrate how lessons contribute to overall learning and assessment goals. Similarly, Farhang et al. (2023) emphasise that effective lesson planning requires deliberate preparation for specific lessons and learner groups, with content organised logically to promote meaningful learning. Therefore, the lack of structured planning in this study supports Shaabani's (2011) argument that teaching without a pre-planned programme is ineffective, while planning without proper implementation remains unproductive.

In addition, the findings revealed significant weaknesses in the quality and suitability of assessment materials used in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms. Teachers relied heavily on outdated NSSCH- and NSSCO-level examination papers,

which failed to meet the higher-order linguistic and analytical demands of the NSSCAS curriculum. Although assessments were regularly administered and marked, most tasks were adapted from inappropriate sources and were consequently misaligned with the NSSCAS syllabus. This practice contradicts MoEAC (2016) requirements for continuous, competency-based assessment and, moreover, limits teachers' capacity to use assessment as a tool for learner support and instructional intervention. Consistent with Piacentini et al. (2023), the continued use of misaligned assessment tasks restricted meaningful learner engagement and hindered the development of advanced language competencies.

Moreover, MoEAC (2016) underscores the importance of regular formal and informal assessment across cognitive, physical, and social domains to inform instructional decision-making. However, in the absence of appropriately designed and curriculum-aligned assessment tasks in this study, teachers were unable to use assessment meaningfully to support learner development or to implement remedial and compensatory teaching where necessary. This finding highlights a critical disconnect between assessment policy and classroom practice.

Additionally, the analysis of HOD monitoring files exposed weaknesses in instructional leadership and internal quality assurance. According to MoEAC (2021), Heads of Department (HODs) are expected to coordinate curriculum implementation, provide pedagogical guidance, and promote continuous professional development within their departments. However, in most participating schools, HODs did not teach Oshindonga First Language at NSSCAS level and therefore lacked the subject-specific expertise required to support teachers effectively. Compounding this challenge, there was no evidence of classroom supervision or internal monitoring conducted in 2024 or prior to my data collection in 2025 at most of the participating schools, and most schools did not maintain monitoring files as required. Consequently, these findings align with Hatmanto's (2024) argument that HODs are expected to lead staff in implementing and sustaining planned programmes daily, an expectation that was not realised in the participating schools.

In summary, the document analysis, comprising teachers' files, lesson plans, past examination question papers, learners' assessments, class activities, and HOD monitoring records, revealed substantial gaps in curriculum implementation, lesson planning, assessment design, and instructional leadership. Collectively, these shortcomings undermine effective teaching and learning and point to an urgent need for

strengthened planning systems, active instructional supervision, collaborative support structures, and sustained professional development. Addressing these systemic weaknesses is therefore essential to ensuring that assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms are aligned with curriculum standards and promote meaningful and effective language learning outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter begins with a concise summary of the research, reaffirming its aim to investigate the assessment strategies teachers use in implementing the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools. The summary captures the theoretical and conceptual foundations underpinning the research, particularly the Personal Practice Assessment Theories (PPAT) by Box et al. (2015), which highlight how teachers' beliefs, prior experiences, and contextual influences shape their assessment decisions and strategies.

The study's theoretical framework served as a lens to understand the complex interplay between teachers' assessment practices and broader curriculum expectations. The relevance of PPAT is reinforced by its emphasis on formative assessment and its ability to improve learning outcomes through reflective, context-responsive teaching practices. Grounded in this framework, the research explored five core objectives: teachers' perceptions of assessment strategies, their formative assessment practices, the challenges they face in assessment implementation, the availability of in-service training and support, and ways assessment can enhance language learning outcomes.

The chapter then presents conclusions drawn from the data analysis, structured around each research objective. These conclusions provide insight into how current assessment strategies are applied in Oshindonga First Language classrooms and identify critical gaps and challenges, such as limited in-service training opportunities and resource constraints. Finally, this chapter offers targeted recommendations directed at the Ministry of Education, curriculum developers, school administrators, and teachers. These recommendations aim to strengthen assessment literacy, improve the design and delivery of in-service training, and promote the adoption of learner-centred assessment practices aligned with curriculum standards. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research, including the need to explore assessment practices across other Namibian languages and the long-term impact of professional development on assessment competence.

The study revealed that teachers' perceptions of assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary classrooms were shaped by personal experiences, the demands of the NSSCAS curriculum, and external examination requirements. Although many teachers acknowledged the importance of learner-centred

assessment approaches, their actual practices often leaned toward teacher-directed methods such as quizzes, tests, and assignments. This highlighted a gap between theory and practice, consistent with the PPAT framework, in which assessment decisions are shaped by contextual realities and individual teacher beliefs.

The findings further revealed that teachers used assessment strategies, including classroom discussions, peer feedback, and continuous exercises; however, these practices were inconsistently implemented across schools. The implementation was often hindered by time constraints, inadequate training, and limited resources. These challenges directly responded to the third research objective and reflected systemic barriers within the education system.

Additionally, the study found that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and professional support mechanisms for Oshindonga First Language teachers were minimal and irregular. Most teachers had not received refresher training on the revised NSSCAS curriculum, particularly regarding updated assessment strategies. As a result, teachers demonstrated limited confidence and effectiveness in implementing appropriate assessment practices, which, in turn, negatively affected the quality of learning outcomes. This finding highlights a weakness in curriculum support structures rather than individual teacher shortcomings.

Despite these challenges, the findings point to critical areas requiring attention to strengthen assessment practices. Teachers emphasised the need for regular and sustained professional development, structured collaborative planning opportunities, and improved access to updated teaching and assessment materials both within and beyond their school environments. Furthermore, the limited involvement of subject advisors emerged as a key concern, suggesting the need for stronger subject-specific guidance to support consistent and effective implementation of the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS syllabus.

In summary, the current study addressed all five research questions and the study's objectives. It provided empirical evidence that assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language classrooms are influenced by both internal (teachers' beliefs and practices) and external (curricular demands and systemic support) factors. The findings reinforce the relevance of the PPAT theoretical framework in explaining the complexity of classroom assessment and offer actionable insights for improving Oshindonga First Language assessment in Namibian secondary schools.

6.1 Recommendations

After analysing the data and drawing conclusions from the main findings, a set of recommendations is proposed for various stakeholders within the Namibian education sector. These recommendations are organised into four levels of responsibility: teachers, policymakers (MoEAC), Heads of Department (HODs), and regional education offices. This multi-level responsibility reflects the collaborative nature required to strengthen assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level.

6.1.1 Recommendations for teachers

Teachers play a central role in ensuring effective assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language. Findings from document analysis and the focus group interview with teachers revealed a heavy reliance on outdated NSSCO-level past papers rather than the NSSCAS syllabus, highlighting the need for teacher-led improvements in curriculum-aligned assessments. It is recommended that Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS teachers should actively participate in dialect-sensitive professional development workshops, facilitated by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) through NIED and regional education offices. These workshops must explicitly address dialectal variations (e.g., Oshindonga vs. Oshikwambi) to prevent contradictory instructional practices and confusion among learners. In addition, the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment (DNEA) should provide clear guidelines that standardise assessment across dialects, ensuring consistency in marking and evaluation.

School leadership should revisit school language-use policies to promote Oshindonga as a medium of learning and communication in both formal and informal spaces. To reinforce this, schools should establish Oshindonga clubs, debate forums, and reading groups. Additionally, teachers can integrate multimedia and cultural resources such as films, folklore, and songs into their lessons. These strategies will not only strengthen language identity but also provide informal opportunities for assessing vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension.

It is also recommended that Oshindonga first-language teachers minimise code-switching during instruction and feedback. They should consistently use standard Oshindonga as the primary medium of instruction and feedback, limiting the use of English or other dialects during lessons. This approach will ensure that learners are consistently exposed to the standard form of Oshindonga, thereby reinforcing correct grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Moreover, teachers should enhance learners'

comprehension by rephrasing or modelling explanations in Oshindonga, promoting full engagement with the language. Furthermore, teachers should also design formative assessment activities (e.g., debates, peer feedback, and storytelling) that encourage learners to engage critically and creatively in Oshindonga, with continuous assessment cycles reinforcing academic and linguistic development.

Teachers should be further encouraged to incorporate structured formative writing tasks with clear rubrics that focus on spelling, grammar, and vocabulary development. Schools, together with MoEAC, should ensure teachers are trained to address the negative influence of digital shorthand on formal writing by modelling proper conventions, identifying frequent errors, and providing improved sample responses. Feedback practices also require strengthening by teachers, who should prioritize timely, specific, and constructive feedback, ideally provided within one week of assessments, so that learners can engage meaningfully with corrections. In written tasks, teachers should adopt paragraph-by-paragraph feedback, addressing both strengths and weaknesses in detail to promote analytical precision. Importantly, teachers should view feedback not as the end of assessment but as an ongoing instructional tool that informs lesson planning, adapts teaching strategies, and strengthens learner-centred practices in line with NSSCAS requirements. Teachers should encourage learners to complete corrections after receiving feedback and engage in peer discussions to ensure that they have the same understanding. School principals and HODs should reinforce this expectation by monitoring teachers' marking timelines. Furthermore, teachers should dedicate time to clarify task instructions before assessments, reducing confusion and enabling learners to perform at their best. Finally, reflective learning should be embedded into classroom practice.

6.1.2 Recommendations for policy makers (MoEAC)

At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) should address systemic challenges by establishing regular, curriculum-aligned workshops for Oshindonga NSSCAS teachers. These workshops should focus on syllabus interpretation, assessment item design, and the use of examiners' reports at the beginning of each academic year.

To improve accessibility, MoEAC should also invest in blended training models that combine face-to-face workshops with virtual platforms, instructional videos, and online resource portals. These training models would expand professional development

opportunities for teachers, ensuring that both new and experienced Oshindonga First Language teachers can access training regardless of geographic or logistical constraints. By combining face-to-face workshops with virtual platforms, instructional videos, and online resource portals, teachers can continuously develop their assessment literacy, curriculum understanding, and classroom strategies. This improved teacher capacity would translate into more effective lesson planning, consistent use of standard Oshindonga, and better-aligned formative and summative assessments, ultimately enhancing learners' comprehension, language skills, and overall performance in Oshindonga First Language.

It is further recommended that MoEAC strengthen coordination between national and regional offices to ensure consistent delivery of professional development and reduce disparities across schools. This includes improved access to assessment resources, such as examiner reports, archived scripts, and rubrics, supported by practical guidelines for classroom use.

To promote sustainability, MoEAC should formalise peer support networks by institutionalising mentorship and collaborative learning models. Experienced teachers could serve as mentors for novice colleagues, thereby fostering collective expertise in assessment practices. Additionally, the MoEAC should establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of training, drawing on teacher feedback to refine programmes and align them with classroom realities.

Finally, it is recommended that MoEAC provide greater institutional support by funding language-specific resources, integrating dialectal diversity into curriculum materials, and ensuring induction and mentorship programmes for newly appointed NSSCAS teachers. Context-sensitive CPD models, particularly cluster-based and blended approaches, should be prioritised to overcome logistical challenges in remote areas.

6.1.3 Recommendations for Heads of Department (HODs)

Heads of Department are key instructional leaders and therefore play a pivotal role in strengthening assessment practices. It is recommended that HODs receive targeted subject-specific training in Oshindonga First Language to build their capacity for academic leadership. This would enable them to effectively guide teachers, monitor assessment practices, and ensure alignment with NSSCAS expectations. HODs should require teachers to keep professional portfolios or files to support regular reflection on their teaching practice. This would document classroom practices and promote evidence-

based, learner-centred approaches. Regular departmental review meetings should then be used to share reflections and collaboratively refine assessment strategies. Furthermore, HODs should foster collaborative planning and collective reflection, particularly by integrating discussions of examiner reports into departmental meetings at the beginning of each academic year. Joint lesson planning, shared marking practices, and peer observation can help align classroom practices with national standards.

The role of HODs in feedback monitoring should also be strengthened. Classroom visits, book checks, and follow-up on corrections are effective practices that uphold accountability and promote consistent implementation of feedback strategies. HODs should ensure these practices remain systematic and supportive rather than punitive.

6.1.4 Recommendations for Regional Education Offices

Regional offices must play a more proactive role in bridging systemic gaps. Improved resource allocation is required, including adequate transport and staffing to facilitate equitable school visits, particularly in remote areas. Training interventions should be more frequent and strategically scheduled, ideally before each academic term, to ensure teachers remain up to date with curriculum and assessment requirements. It is further recommended that regional CPD be inclusive and context-sensitive, ensuring that both new and experienced teachers benefit. Cluster-based training models should be adopted to address logistical challenges, and professional development should focus on practical, subject-specific strategies rather than general pedagogy. This can be done by regional offices by promoting inter-school collaboration, supporting cluster groups, or fostering communities of practice. These forums can provide opportunities to share best practices, solve common challenges, and sustain peer support.

Finally, regional offices should implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of CPD initiatives. Findings from these evaluations should inform continuous improvements in both the content and delivery of training programs, ensuring that CPD remains responsive to teachers' professional needs and classroom realities. In collaboration with the MoEAC, regional offices should also formalise and strengthen the role of Heads of Departments (HODs) as instructional leaders through clear role definitions, targeted leadership training, and ongoing professional support, thereby reinforcing sustainable school-based support systems.

Limitations and delimitations of the study

This study faced several limitations that directly affected how the findings addressed the main research question on teachers' assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS classrooms. Furthermore, the study was confined to selected secondary schools within a single geographic region, limiting the generalisability of the findings to schools in other regions of Namibia, where contextual challenges and resources may differ. Additionally, the study concentrated on secondary schools offering Oshindonga First Language at NSSCAS level, thereby excluding insights from primary or tertiary institutions. This decision ensured that the study addressed its central aim but limited the scope of the findings to a single educational phase. By narrowing the participant criteria and research context, the study generated in-depth insights but at the expense of broader generalisability.

The study was also shaped by deliberate delimitations that closely aligned it with the research aim. It specifically focused on Oshindonga First Language teachers implementing the NSSCAS curriculum, rather than including teachers of other subjects or language levels. This narrow focus enabled a detailed investigation of assessment strategies in this subject, but inevitably limited the applicability of the findings to broader curriculum contexts.

To strengthen future research, it is recommended that a larger, more diverse sample of Oshindonga teachers be included, spanning multiple regions of Namibia to capture contextual variations in assessment practices. Moreover, comparative studies involving other indigenous languages or subjects at the NSSCAS level could broaden understanding of how assessment strategies are influenced by curriculum reforms, teacher preparedness, and school-level support systems.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this study's recommendations underscore that sustainable improvement in Oshindonga First Language assessment practices depends on multi-level collaboration and shared accountability across the education system. At the classroom level, teachers are required to strengthen their assessment practices through dialect-sensitive instruction, formative assessment, and purposeful reflective feedback. At the school level, Heads of Department must assume a proactive academic leadership role by promoting collaborative planning, mentoring teachers, and systematically monitoring

assessment and feedback practices. At the regional level, education offices are tasked with addressing logistical constraints and professional development gaps by providing equitable, context-responsive support and training. At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture must institutionalise coherent professional development structures, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and ensure sustained access to appropriate assessment resources. Collectively, these recommendations affirm that the effective implementation of assessment in the Oshindonga NSSCAS depends on a coordinated, integrated support system that empowers teachers, aligns assessment practices with curriculum intentions, and ultimately enhances learner achievement.

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List of Appendices

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Annexure A: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 15 November 2024

Ref: **2024/11/15/00000325/06/RB**
Name: **Kandjengo M**
Student No.: **19282370**

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Dear **Kandjengo M**

Researcher(s): Name: **Kandjengo M**
E-mail address: 19282370@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: **+264812418519**

Supervisor: Name: **Prof NP Khumalo**
E-mail address: ekhuman@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: **0728063166**

Title of research: *EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY CURRICULUM IN OMUSATI REGION SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NAMIBIA.*

Qualification: MEd (Curriculum and Instructional Studies)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/11/15 to 2027/11/15**.

The low risk level application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 15 November 2024 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. The study's risk level is Category 2- Low risk: Human participants are involved and there is foreseeable risk of inconvenience. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information is involved.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/11/15**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2024/11/15/00000325/06/RB** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof RB Monyai
Acting Head: CEDU Research
monyarb@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean: CEDU
gakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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Annexure B: Approval Letter from the Executive Director, MoEAC



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Enquiries: Mr. N. Eiman
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File no: 13/2/9/1

Luther Street, Govt. Office Park
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
Namibia

Mr. Michael Kandjengo
Cellphone Nr: 081 2418519
Email: shilumbulimichael@ahoo.com

Dear Mr. Kandjengo,

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE OMUSATI REGION

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 05 February 2025 seeking for permission to conduct academic research for your Masters in Education in Curriculum Studies. The research which is titled: "Exploring the Assessment Strategies Used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Omusati theRegion".

Permission has been granted to you. However, you have to seek for further approval from the Regional Directors of Education, Arts and Culture of the Oshana region, as per the Basic Education Act (3 of 2020), Section 37, to ensure that the following conditions are met:

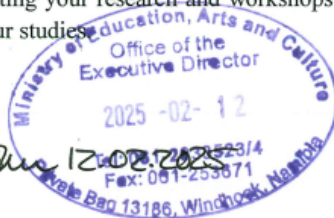
- Participation is voluntary.
- Permission is sought from the principal.
- Minimum interruption during school lessons.
- Staff members' normal work is not disrupted during your interviews.

Furthermore, you are kindly requested to share your research findings with the Ministry after completion of the research project. You may contact Mr N. Eiman on the above provided contacts at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for submission of your research findings at the above indicated details.

We wish you the best in conducting your research and workshops and the Ministry looks forward to hearing from you upon completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely,


Sanet L. Steenkamp
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Annexure C: Permission Letter to Omusati Regional Directorate



To: **Mr. P. Kashiimbi**
Director of Education – Omusati Region
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Private Bag 523
Outapi

Dear Mr. Kashiimbi

**REF: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN OMUSATI REGION-
SELECTED (NSSCAS) SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

I am Michael Kandjengo, a Senior Education Officer at the Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment. I am pursuing a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA), under the supervision of Professor Nontobeko Khumalo (ekhuman@unisa.ac.za; Cell: 072 806 3166).

I request your permission to conduct a two-month field study in six secondary schools offering Oshindonga First Language (NSSCAS) within the Omusati Region **from 03 March to 18 April 2025**. The selected secondary schools are: **Onawa SS, David Sheehama SS, Nuuyoma SS, Haudano SS, Niilo Taapopi SS, and Negumbo SS**. The study will involve ten participants: six Oshindonga First Language teachers, three HODs for Languages, and one Senior Education Officer overseeing the implementation of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language curriculum in the Omusati Region.

Participants were selected based on their school's performance in the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language as it appears in the 2023 NSSCAS National Distribution of Symbols from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture document at the DNEA. Two teachers offering Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level were selected from two of the top-ranked-, two from the middle-ranked-, and two from the low-ranked-performing schools in the Region. The HODs are also to be selected from these schools. A Senior Education Officer overseeing NSSCAS implementation in the region will also be selected to participate.

The study will entail **exploration and analysis of the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms at an Advanced Subsidiary level in selected secondary schools within Omusati region in Namibia**. This investigation will look into the specific strategies used to assess students' understanding, knowledge, and skills in the subject, as well as the factors influencing their implementation and effectiveness. The study will involve Document analysis such as the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language syllabus, class tests, student workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, resource books, old school NSSCAS question papers, and marking schemes to identify the types of assessments used and their alignment with the curriculum objectives. Semi-structured Interviews will also be conducted with the Heads of Departments (HODs), and Senior Education Officers. Furthermore, the researcher will also

conduct a Focus group interview with the teachers from the six selected schools to gather their perspectives on the assessment strategies used, the challenges faced, and their needs to improve the teaching and learning of NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language.

The research study is not an evaluation of the performance or competence of teachers, and by no means is it a commission of inquiry, but rather, an academic attempt to Explore the assessment strategies used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary curriculum within the Region.

The benefits of this study will provide valuable insights into how assessment strategies are currently utilized in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. This information can be used to identify areas for improvement and develop more effective assessment strategies aligned with the syllabus objectives. In determining the factors that influence student performance in the Oshindonga First Language, the study will contribute to developing strategies to improve students' learning outcomes. This may include recommendations for changes in teaching methods, curriculum materials, assessment practices, or resource allocation.

Potential risks are: While the research on assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language appears promising, it is important to consider potential risks that could impact the validity and reliability of the findings. The study's focus on the Omusati region might limit the applicability of the findings to other regions in Namibia. The **teacher's selection** may also not accurately reflect the overall assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language teaching.

Apart from that, relying merely on teachers, HODs, and Senior Education Officers' perspectives might introduce bias, as respondents may provide socially desirable answers or overlook certain aspects of their assessment practices. Document analysis, such as syllabuses, test papers, and lesson plans, can provide valuable insights, but they may not capture the full context of assessment practices in the classroom. Finally, collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources within a limited timeframe might be challenging, affecting the research's depth and scope.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

As part of the feedback process, the researcher plans to organize group sessions or workshops to share the findings with multiple participants simultaneously. The aim is to ensure that participants thoroughly comprehend the research results and can integrate them into their teaching practices for improvement.

I am familiar with and will adhere to the UNISA research and ethics policies. I have attached my research proposal and a copy of the ethical clearance document for your reference.

For any enquiries, please contact me at +264 812418519 and email: 19282370@mylife.unisa.ac.za or shimbulimichael@yahoo.com.

The permission was already sought from the Executive Director, Ms. Steenkamp, and was approved. See the attached document. I believe this study will contribute valuable insights to improve assessment practices and enhance the learning environment for Oshindonga First Language students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Kandjengo Michael

Annexure D: Permission Letter to Principal



Request for permission to conduct research at Senior Secondary School

EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY CURRICULUM IN OMUSATI REGION SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NAMIBIA

17 February 2025

To the Principal

Dear Mr.

I am Kandjengo Michael, conducting research under the supervision of Professor Nontobeko P. Khumalo, an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, School of Teacher Education, College of Education (CEDU) at the University of South Africa, as part of my M.Ed. studies. Her email address is ekhuman@unisa.ac.za, and her mobile phone number is [072-806-3166](tel:072-806-3166).

I am requesting the participation of and *the Head of Department (HOD) for Languages* in a study titled *Exploring the Assessment Strategies Used in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Omusati Region Secondary Schools, Namibia*. The study will be conducted from **03 March to 18 April 2025**.

The study aims to investigate the assessment strategies used by teachers in the Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary Curriculum in Namibian secondary schools. Your school has been selected as one of the schools that are offering Oshindonga First Language, NSSCAS Examination in the Omusati Region.

The study will entail **exploring and analyzing the assessment strategies used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms at an Advanced Subsidiary level in selected secondary schools within the Omusati region of Namibia**. This investigation will look into the specific strategies used to assess learners' understanding, knowledge, and skills in the subject, as well as the factors influencing their implementation and effectiveness. The study will involve Document analysis, such as the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language syllabus, class tests, learner workbooks, lesson plans, mark sheets, resource books, old school NSSCAS question papers, and marking schemes to identify the types of assessments used and their alignment with the curriculum objectives. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Interviews will be conducted with **the Heads of Department (HODs) for Languages at their respective schools**. Additionally, **focus group interviews** will be held with **teachers from the selected schools** to gain insights into their perspectives on assessment strategies, the challenges they face, and the factors that influence their decisions. **The Focus Group interviews and discussions** will take place as from the [11 to 12 March 2025 at the Omusati Directorate Professional Development Sub-Division, Math Lab \(Pick n' Pay Complex\) in Outapi](#).

The benefits of this study will provide valuable insights into how assessment strategies are currently utilized in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. This information can be used to identify areas for improvement and develop more effective assessment strategies aligned with the syllabus objectives. In identifying the factors that influence learner performance in Oshindonga First Language, the study will contribute to developing strategies to improve learners' learning outcomes. This may include recommendations for changes in teaching methods, curriculum materials, assessment practices, or resource allocation.

Potential risks are: While the research on assessment strategies in the Oshindonga First Language appears promising, it is important to consider potential risks that could impact the validity and reliability of the findings. The study's focus on the Omusati region might limit the applicability of the findings to other regions in Namibia. The **teacher's selection** may also not accurately reflect the overall assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language teaching.

Apart from that, relying merely on teachers, HOD, and Regional Education Official perspectives might introduce bias, as respondents may provide socially desirable answers or overlook certain aspects of their assessment practices. **Document Analysis Limitations** such as syllabuses, test papers, and lesson plans can provide valuable insights, but they may not capture the full context of assessment practices in the classroom. Finally, collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources within a limited timeframe might be challenging, affecting the research's depth and scope.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

As part of the feedback process, the researcher plans to organize group sessions or workshops to share the findings with multiple participants simultaneously. The aim is to ensure that participants thoroughly comprehend the research results and can integrate them into their teaching practices for improvement.

Yours sincerely,



Kandjengo Michael

cell +264 812418519 and email: 19282370@mylife.unisa.ac.za or shimbulimichael@yahoo.com

Annexure E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Date: 25 February 2025

Title: **EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY CURRICULUM IN OMUSATI REGION SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is **Kandjengo Michael**, and I am doing research under the supervision of **Prof. Nontobeko P Khumalo**, Department of Email: ekhuman@unisa.ac.za; Cell: **072-806 3166**, an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, School of Teacher Education, College of Education (CEDU) towards a M Ed at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY CURRICULUM IN OMUSATI REGION SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NAMIBIA.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could be used to identify areas for improvement and develop more effective methods aligned with the syllabus objectives. Additionally, it will explore factors influencing learner performance and provide recommendations for improving learning outcomes through changes in teaching methods, curriculum materials, assessment practices, or resource allocation.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are one of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language experts who is also involved as a trainer of trainers in the Omusati Educational Region at this level.

I obtained your contact details from your Oshindonga First Language Regional Education Official in the Region, who was asked to provide the contact details of the teachers teaching NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language at the six selected schools based on the mark distribution list obtained from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. The study will involve six teachers, three HODs for Languages, and one Regional Education Official. Participants will be selected based on their school's performance in NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language. Two teachers and one HOD will be from top-performing schools, while two teachers and one HOD will be from middle-performing schools, and two teachers and one HOD will be from low-performing schools. Apart from that the Oshindonga First Language Regional Education Official will also be part of the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Describe the participant's actual role in the study.

The study involves conducting *semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis*. *The type of questions expected to be asked are attached to this document. The semi-structured interviews are expected to last approximately 30 minutes.*

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent (adult). You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study will provide valuable insights into how assessment strategies are currently used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. This information can be used to identify areas for improvement and develop more effective assessment strategies aligned with the syllabus objectives. By identifying the factors that influence learner performance in NSSCAS, Oshindonga First Language, the study will contribute to developing strategies to improve learners' learning outcomes. This may include recommendations for changes in teaching methods, curriculum materials, assessment practices, or resource allocation. The study further will provide a deeper understanding of the assessment practices used in Oshindonga First Language classrooms. This knowledge can be used to inform future research and policy decisions.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

The research may require significant time for the participants to complete interviews or any other data collection method, such as document analysis. Participants may also have emotional responses when discussing their teaching experiences or challenges related to the teaching and learning of the NSSCAS Oshindonga First Language. Participants may also feel uncomfortable sharing personal or sensitive information about their teaching practices or experiences of Oshindonga First Language. Participants' involvement in the research may lead to negative consequences within their social or professional setups, especially if others see their views or experiences as controversial.

To mitigate the risks, the participants will be provided with a detailed informed consent document outlining the purpose of the research, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time to feel at ease when taking part in the research project. Furthermore, all the participant's data will be kept confidential, and all identifying information will be removed from all the published reports. Finally, the participants will be given the option to remain anonymous throughout the research process.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research (*this measure refers to confidentiality*) **OR** Your name will not be recorded anywhere. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give (*this measure refers to anonymity*). Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (*this measure refers to confidentiality*).

While the researcher will make every effort to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's office, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Government Office Park, Luther Street, Windhoek for future research or academic purposes. Electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. All the hard copies used for this research will be shredded using the already available shredding machinery at the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (DNEA). The Electronic copies available will also be deleted from all the hard drives of the computer through the use of a relevant software program.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY? No, participants will not receive any direct payment or financial incentives for participating in this study. The participants should not incur any significant costs as a result of their participation in this research project. The researcher will strive to minimize any potential expenses, such as travel or materials, that may be required from the participants. If any costs do arise, they will be justified and explained to participants in advance.

However, the participants will be contributing to a research project that aims to improve the teaching and assessment of NSSCAS, Oshindonga First Language in Namibian secondary schools. Their insights and experiences will be invaluable in informing educational policy and practice. Participation in the study may also provide opportunities for professional development, such as sharing with other teachers about new teaching strategies that may help their school improve in Oshindonga First Language performance compared with other African-Namibian recognized languages.

The decision to offer no direct payment or financial incentives is based on the principle of fairness and equity. The benefits that participants will receive, such as contributing to educational advancement and professional development, are considered to be valuable and just compensation for their time and effort. Additionally, the researcher will ensure that all participants are treated fairly and equitably throughout the study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the **UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact **Mr. Kandjengo Michael** at +264812418519 or email 19282370@mylife.unisa.ac.za or shimbulimichael@yahoo.com. The findings are accessible for a year.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Kandjengo Michael at +264812418519 or email 19282370@mylife.unisa.ac.za or shimbulimichael@yahoo.com

Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, feel free to air your views on the matter. The researcher will then communicate with the supervisor, Prof. Nontobeko P Khumalo, Department of Email: ekhuman@unisa.ac.za: Cell: 072-806 3166, an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, School of Teacher Education, College of Education (CEDU) on the matter, who will then refer it to the ethics chair if necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.



Kandjengo Michael

Annexure F: Consent Form



CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY DURING THE FOCUS GROUP (Return slip)

I, ... (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I will not disclose personally sensitive information or any other information discussed in the focus group.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree with the recording of the *document analysis* and *focus groups*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) Kandjengo Michael

Researcher's signature

03 March 2025
Date

Annexure G: Head of Departments Interview Questions



M. Kandjengo - Interview Questions for the Head of Department

General Background Questions

1. Can you briefly describe your role as the Head of Department for languages in your school?
2. How long have you been in this position, and what is your experience with regard to the NSSCAS curriculum implementation?
3. What is your professional background to Oshindonga First language NSSCAS Level?

Assessment Strategies (Question 1)

1. What assessment strategies do you believe are most effective in assessing Learners' understanding of Oshindonga First Language at the Advanced Subsidiary level? Why?
2. How well do you understand the specific assessment objectives and expectations outlined in the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum?
3. In your view, are the assessment strategies used in your department aligned with the learning outcomes outlined in the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum? Why or why not?
4. How do you ensure that your teachers' assessment strategies are aligned with the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum's objectives and standards?
5. How do you motivate and guide your teachers to use assessment feedback to refine their teaching strategies and enhance learning?
6. Do you find provided assessment materials such as the Oshindonga First Language syllabus or marking grid helpful and easier to use? Explain your answer.
7. Do you think external assessments, such as national exams, accurately reflect Learners' Oshindonga language abilities? Why or why not?

Implementation of Formative Assessment (Question 2)

1. What factors do you believe contribute to the relatively poor performance of Oshindonga Learners compared to other languages?
2. What strategies do you think could be used to improve Learner's performance in Oshindonga First Language? Or What do you think can be done to remedy the situation?
3. How do the Learners who speak other Oshiwambo dialects cope with learning the Oshindonga First Language?
4. In what ways do you help your teacher adapt assessment strategies to effectively support Learners from diverse Oshiwambo dialect backgrounds in Oshindonga First Language classroom?
5. As a Head of Department, how do you advise or support teachers when Learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds struggle to understand the Oshindonga terminology used in class?
6. As a Head of Department, how do you guide and support teachers in integrating the communicative approach to language teaching in their assessment strategies?
7. How do you help teachers to adjust their future lessons based on formative assessments results?

Challenges in Assessment Implementation (Question 3)

1. What are the challenges your teachers face in implementing effective assessment strategies in Oshindonga First Language classes?
2. As a Head of Department, what challenges do you observe teachers facing when teaching Learners from different language backgrounds, and how do you support them in overcoming these challenges?

3. How do the forecast grades provided by Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers compare with the actual examination results, and what factors contribute to any discrepancies?
4. As a Head of Department, how do you guide and support teachers in determining Learners' forecast grades in Oshindonga First Language?
5. Are there any cultural or linguistic factors that affect how Learners perform in Oshindonga First Language? If so, how do you address them?

Teacher's classroom support and Professional Development Training (Question 4)

1. How effectively do you think teachers in your department have been trained on assessment strategies for the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum?
2. What type of professional development programs are currently in place to support teachers in improving their assessment skills?
3. Do you think the training provided is sufficient to equip teachers with the necessary skills to assess Learners effectively? Why or why not?
4. What additional support or training do you think teachers need to enhance their assessment strategies?

Recommendations and Improvements (Question 5)

1. Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you offer to improve assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level?
2. How can the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture better support teachers in effectively assessing Oshindonga First Language?
3. Before I end our discussion, what else would you like to share with me about your experiences or teaching of the Advanced Level Oshindonga First Language curriculum?

Thank you for your time. Your valuable input is highly appreciated.

Annexure I: Regional educator officer Interview questions



M. Kandjengo - Interview Questions for the Regional Education Official

Introduction

1. What is your home language?
2. How long have you been a Regional Education Official for the Oshindonga First Language?
3. Can you please briefly give an overview of your background and experience in teaching Oshindonga First Language at an Advance Subsidiary Level?
4. Which Oshiwambo dialect is most commonly spoken by most of the Learners found in the Oshindonga First Language classrooms in your region? How does this influence the teaching and learning of Oshindonga First Language?

Professional Development and In-Service Training (Question 4)

5. How effectively do you think teachers in your department have been trained on assessment strategies for the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum?
6. What type of professional development programs are currently in place to support teachers in improving their assessment skills?
7. Do you think the training provided is sufficient to equip teachers with the necessary skills to assess Learners effectively? Why or why not?
8. What additional support or training do you think teachers need to enhance their assessment strategies?

Improving Assessment Strategies (Question 5)

4. Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you offer to improve assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level?
5. How can the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture better support teachers in effectively assessing Oshindonga's First Language?
6. Before, I end our discussion, what else would you like to share with me about your experiences or teaching of the Advanced Level Oshindonga First Language curriculum?

Before we conclude our discussion, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

I feel that I have adequately shared my experiences and knowledge regarding teaching the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum.

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | Strongly Disagree |
| 2 | Disagree |
| 3 | Neither Agree nor Disagree |
| 4 | Agree |
| 5 | Strongly Agree |

Thank you for your time. Your valuable input is highly appreciated.

Annexure J: Focus group confidential Agreement



FOCUS GROUP CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ grant consent that the information I share during the focus group may be used by **Kandjengo Michael** (name of the researcher) for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: (Please print): **Kandjengo Michael**

Researcher's Signature: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kandjengo Michael', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 03 March 2025

Annexure K: Focus Group Interview



Focus Group Interview Questions: Assessment Strategies in NSSCAS, Oshindonga First Language

Introduction and Background

1. What are your qualifications and professional background in teaching Oshindonga First Language at an Advance Subsidiary Level?
2. How long have you taught Oshindonga First Language at an Advance Subsidiary Level?
3. Which language would you consider your home language?
4. Which Oshiwambo dialects do most of your Oshindonga First Language Learners in your class speak?

Assessment Strategies (Question 1)

1. What assessment methods do you commonly use in your Oshindonga First Language classes? (e.g., formal tests, essays, projects, oral presentations, portfolios) Why?
2. How well do you understand the specific assessment objectives and expectations outlined in the Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS curriculum?
3. How do you ensure that your assessment strategies align with the curriculum's objectives and standards?
4. How do you utilise feedback from assessments to improve your teaching strategies and support Learners learning?
5. Do you find provided assessment materials such as the syllabus or marking grid helpful and easier to use? Explain your answer.
6. Do you think external assessments, such as national exams, accurately reflect Learners' Oshindonga language abilities? Why or why not?

Implementation of Formative Assessment (Question 2)

1. What factors do you believe contribute to the relatively poor performance of Oshindonga Learners compared to other languages?
2. What strategies do you think could be used to improve Learner's performance in Oshindonga First Language? What do you think can be done to remedy the situation?
3. How do the Learners who speak other Oshiwambo dialects cope with learning the Oshindonga First Language?
4. In what ways do you adapt your assessment strategies to effectively support Learners from diverse Oshiwambo dialect backgrounds in your Oshindonga First Language classroom?
5. As a teacher, how do you support Learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds when they struggle to understand the Oshindonga terminology used in class?
6. How do you integrate communicative approach to language teaching in your assessment strategies?
7. How do you adjust your future lessons based on the results of formative assessments?
8. Can you share any achievement or effective strategy that has helped you improve Learner's performance in Oshindonga First Language NSSCAS?

Challenges in Assessment Implementation (Question 3)

1. What are the challenges you face in implementing effective assessment strategies in your Oshindonga First Language classes?
2. What difficulties do you as a teacher face in teaching Learner's different language background?

3. How do you address the linguistic diversity among Learners who speak different Oshiwambo dialects in your classroom?
4. How do the forecast grades provided by Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary teachers compare with the actual examination results, and what factors contribute to any discrepancies?
5. How do you determine Learners' forecast Grades in Oshindonga First Language?

Teacher's classroom support and Professional development Training (Question 4)

1. Have you received any specific professional development training on assessment strategies at NSSCAS level? If so, what are they, and how have these opportunities impacted your assessment practices?
2. In what ways do you feel your Heads of Departments (HODs) monitor and support you to enhance your Oshindonga First Language Advanced Subsidiary assessment practices?
3. What support do you provide for Learners who struggle with the Oshindonga First language?
4. What additional training would help you improve your Oshindonga First Language assessment strategies?

Recommendations and Improvements (Question 5)

1. Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you offer to improve assessment practices in Oshindonga First Language at the NSSCAS level?
2. How can the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture better support teachers in effectively assessing Oshindonga's First Language?
3. Before, I end our discussion, what else would you like to share with me about your experiences or teaching of the Advanced Level Oshindonga First Language curriculum?

Thank you for your time. Your valuable input is highly appreciated.

Similarity Report

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Kandjengo M -19282370- Research Paper - 02 October 2025.docx	MICHAEL KANDJENGO

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Annexure M: Letter from the Editor

ACET Consultancy
Anenyasha Communication, Editing, and Training
Box 50453 Bachbrecht, Windhoek, Namibia
Cell: +264814218613
Email: mlambons@yahoo.co.uk

1 March 2026

To Whom It May Concern

LANGUAGE EDITING – MICHAEL KANDJENGO

This letter confirms that a research report titled "EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES USED IN THE OSHINDONGA FIRST LANGUAGE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY CURRICULUM IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA" was submitted to me for language editing.


The research document was professionally edited, and tracked changes and suggestions were incorporated. The research content or the author's intentions were not altered during the editing process, and the author has the authority to accept or reject my suggestions.

Yours faithfully



PROF. (DR) NELSON MLAMBO
PhD in English
M.A. in Intercultural Communication
M.A. in English
B. A. Special Honours in English – First class
B. A. English & Linguistics

Annexure N: HOD Monitoring form



Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

Omusati Region

Year: 2023 24

Monitoring Form

Date	subject	Monitored Area	Findings	Remarks	Subject teacher's signature	Monitor's signature
11.03.24	Qshindongs	CDI	No lesson plan Activity was given to learners after the lesson.	You are advised to have lesson plan.		HOD
			The interaction between teacher and learners was good.	Keep it up		
		Files	One file available, the combination of all files	The teacher is advised to have all the files		HOD

Monitored by:Date.....

Annexure P: Example of a lesson plan from one of the schools

Ondondo: 12

Omalalaka no ga mbwalanganga: Aalongwa sha
Lsha nenvoto nokundanjukuhwa uneshwa
momikale dhi ili nodhi ili.

Omalalaka no gokundakundakunde: Aalongwa sha
taya vulu okumona mo omashilakala kaga
opala nipambele yelaka ga longithwa malakano
kondakundakunde, unam kuu okutambako
oshilakimo nomaiwo gomukshi mokashwa.

ikwattukholongo

- Okamb 100 per sewa
- omapulo omakulu

Egandjo koshilongwa

Okankandathana dhelongitho haka nomu
hingo okuwatankitea oshilakimo mpulo.
Elongitho haka nomuhingo okuwatankitea
omalalaka no ga yotaka m. ganyoli
ga yotaka.

Oku eta etilito kumuule komalalaka no
ganyoli.

Egandjo koshilongadhalwa

: Epulo motango (Nov 2021) oshilakimo sha A

(eloka)

Omungoli da lolola eineketo mavaali ngaa shi
 da hololwa molcaleshwa otandi dhulalulwa kuyi
 ngoye amvavi ku na siku noka nlope, shila ongele wa
 gumu mo ngamadlukwa. Omungoli da tsu aavali
 amukumo opo ya kale neineketo kya lola mukula
 nokukula aluvato. Okwa haca yaa sholola
 nana nokusa unye molcugwantha po oshilonga
 stapukula iyoyano oshoka ngile oya sholola
 oyana opo taya otaya luvula onajila elho
 pulca.

(omuhinga)

Omushangi da lolola unbanda, shila onjele
 tashi ku kwatta. Okwa haca
 Ina kala konima, shila onjele tashi ku kwatta.
 Omungoli da tsu aavali amukumo opo yaa
 lue unwa nayi unwa ya ganda nokupukulula
 oyana. Okwa haca kya unbanda a kala aavali
 ya kale noka ipa embadi unwa ya pukulula
 amaluvato gawo, shaa shi stapukula amaluvato
 oshilonga shaaavali. Omungoli da tsu aavali mka
 amukumo opo ya pule kumaha naasitoo
 shina okunigwa po opo oshigwana shi
 putidhawe mondila.