

**REVIEW OF BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM AS STRUCTURATION  
THROUGH EDUCATION RESEARCH IN NAMIBIA**

by

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## DECLARATION

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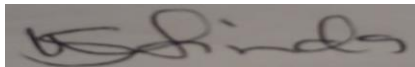
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THROUGH EDUCATION RESEARCH IN NAMIBIA.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                                                                  |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AS     | Advanced Subsidiary                                              |
| HIGCSE | Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education  |
| IGCSE  | International General Certificate of Secondary Education         |
| JSC    | Junior Secondary Certificate                                     |
| MoE    | Ministry of Education                                            |
| MoEAC  | Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture                          |
| NAMCOL | Namibia College of Open Learning                                 |
| NDP    | National Development Plan                                        |
| NIED   | National Institute for Educational Development                   |
| NSSCH  | Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher Level                |
| NSSCO  | Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level              |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development            |
| SDG    | Sustainable Development Goals                                    |
| SEO    | Senior Education Officers                                        |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund           |
| UNISA  | University of South Africa                                       |

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of educational research in reviewing Namibia's basic education curriculum towards developing a socially relevant education. The thesis highlights the interplay between curriculum reviews, as a normative societal trajectory, and educational research, exploring how these elements can inform one another through a dialectical relationship of structure and agency. Using Structuration Theory as a framework, this qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with twelve (12) Senior Education Officers (SEOs). It explored how 'agents' (mainly curriculum reviewers) interact with 'structures' (such as policies and resources) to either support or hinder the link between research and curriculum review. SEOs recognise research as vital for keeping the curriculum relevant, but they feel restricted by bureaucratic structures that prevent the practical use of research in decision-making. While reviewers see research as a crucial evidence-based resource, a gap persists between theoretical results and real-world application. The results show that structural elements like policies, institutional frameworks, benchmarking, and funding can create opportunities to incorporate research into the curriculum review. However, major obstacles such as limited resources, political interference, poor collaboration, and time pressures hinder this integration. These issues often lead to curricula that are not firmly grounded in evidence. At the same time, the findings point to opportunities for developing frameworks that combine research insights with stakeholder perspectives. Despite these challenges, reviewers draw on their professional expertise and teamwork within the NIED divisions to strategically navigate these structures and advocate for curriculum changes. The study proposed a structuration model that demonstrates how educational research can be effectively integrated into curriculum review. It also recommends continuous reflexive monitoring of the ongoing relationship between agents' actions and educational structures, along with establishing a dedicated support system to assist the integration process.

**Keywords:** *Educational Research, Curriculum Review, Structuration Theory, Basic Education, Agents, Structures, Evidence-Based Decision-Making, Policy-Practice Gap.*

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die rol van opvoedkundige navorsing in die hersiening van Namibië se basiese onderwyskurrikulum, met die oog op die ontwikkeling van onderwys wat sosiaal relevant is. Die tesis beklemtoon die wisselwerking tussen kurrikulumhersiening as 'n normatiewe gemeenskapsweg en opvoedkundige navorsing, en ondersoek hoe hierdie elemente mekaar kan beïnvloed deur 'n dialektiese verhouding van struktuur en agentskap. Deur die struktureringssteorie as raamwerk te gebruik, het hierdie kwalitatiewe studie halfgestruktureerde onderhoude met 12 senior onderwysbeamptes gebruik om te ondersoek hoe “agente” (hoofsaaklik kurrikulumbeoordelaars) met “strukture” (bv. beleide en hulpbronne) omgaan om die skakel tussen navorsing en kurrikulumhersiening te ondersteun of te belemmer. Senior onderwysbeamptes erken navorsing as noodsaaklik om die kurrikulum relevant te hou, maar voel beperk deur burokratiese strukture wat die praktiese gebruik van navorsing in besluitneming verhinder. Terwyl resensente navorsing as 'n belangrike bewysgebaseerde hulpbron beskou, bly daar 'n gaping tussen teoretiese resultate en toepassing in die werklike wêreld. Die bevindinge toon dat strukturele elemente soos beleide, institusionele raamwerke, normstelling en befondsing geleenthede kan skep om navorsing in kurrikulumhersiening in te sluit. Dit is veral belangrik om te weet dat struikelblokke soos beperkte hulpbronne, politieke inmenging, swak samewerking en tydsdruk sulke integrasie belemmer, wat lei tot kurrikulums wat nie stewig op bewyse gegrond is nie. Terselfdertyd dui die bevindinge op geleenthede vir die ontwikkeling van raamwerke wat navorsingsinsigte met belanghebbersperspektiewe kombineer. Ten spyte van die genoemde uitdagings, steun beoordelaars op hulle professionele kundigheid en spanwerk binne die afdelings van die Nasionale Instituut vir Opvoedkundige Ontwikkeling (*NIED*) om strategies deur hierdie strukture te navigeer en voorspraak te maak vir kurrikulumverandering. Die navorser stel 'n struktureringsmodel voor wat demonstreer hoe opvoedkundige navorsing effektief in kurrikulumhersiening geïntegreer kan word. Die ander aanbeveling sluit in om deurlopende refleksiewe monitering te doen van die voortgesette verhouding tussen agente se optrede en opvoedkundige strukture, benewens die vestiging van 'n toegewyde ondersteuningstelsel om die integrasieproses te fasiliteer.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Agente, basiese onderwys, kurrikulumhersiening, opvoedkundige navorsing, bewysgebaseerde besluitneming, beleid-praktykgaping, struktureringssteorie, strukture

## ISIFINYEZO SOCWANINGO

Lolu cwaningo lubheka indlela ucwaningo lwezemfundo olungasetshenziswa ngayo ekubuyekezeni uhlelo lwezifundo zemfundo eyisisekelo eNamibia, ngenhloso yokwakha imfundo ehambisana nezidingo zomphakathi. Ucwaningo luhlaziya ubudlelwano phakathi kokubuyekezwa kwekharikhulamu njengendlela umphakathi ozama ngayo ukuthuthukisa imfundo, kanye nocwaningo lwezemfundo olungaba ngumthombo wolwazi olusiza ukwenza izinqumo ezihlakaniphile. Ucwaningo lusebenzisa umbono weStructuration Theory njengesisekelo sokuhlaziya, kugxilwe ekutheni abantu ababamba iqhaza enqubweni yokubuyekeza ikharikhulamu basebenzisana kanjani nemithetho, izinqubomgomo kanye nezinsiza ezikhona ezibumba indlela umsebenzi owenziwa ngayo. Ucwaningo lwenziwe ngendlela ye-qualitative, kusetshenziswa izingxoxo ezihlelwe ngokulinganisela nabaphathi bezemfundo abaphezulu abayi-12 (Senior Education Officers). Inhloso kwakuwukuqonda ukuthi labo ababhekele ukubuyekezwa kwekharikhulamu basebenza kanjani ngaphakathi kwezinhlelo nezakhiwo zikahulumeni ezikhona. Imiphumela yocwaningo iveza ukuthi laba baphathi bayakuqonda ukubaluleka kocwaningo ekugcineni ikharikhulamu ihambisana nesikhathi kanye nezidingo zomphakathi. Nokho, baveza ukuthi izinqubo zokuphatha kanye nemithetho yehhovisi ivamise ukubambezela noma ivimbe ukusetshenziswa kwemiphumela yocwaningo ekuthatheni izinqumo. Nakuba ucwaningo lubhekwa njengomthombo obalulekile wobufakazi, kusekhona igebe phakathi kwemiphumela yocwaningo kanye nokusetshenziswa kwayo empilweni yangempela nasezinqubweni zokwenza izinqumo. Ucwaningo luphinde lwakhombisa ukuthi izinto ezifana nezinqubomgomo zikahulumeni, izinhlelo zezikhungo, ukuqhathanisa namanye amazwe kanye nokuxhaswa ngemali kungadala amathuba okuthi ucwaningo lube yingxenywe ebalulekile ekubuyekezeni ikharikhulamu. Kodwa-ke, kunezinselelo eziningi ezifaka phakathi ukuntuleka kwezinsiza, ukungenelela kwezepolitiki, ukungabambisani kahle phakathi kwabathintekayo kanye nengcindezi yesikhathi. Lezi zinto zenza kube nzima ukwakha amakharikhulamu asekelwe ngokuphelele ebufakazini bocwaningo. Ngakolunye uhlangothi, imiphumela iphakamisa ukuthi kukhona amathuba okwakha izindlela ezintsha ezihlanganisa ulwazi oluvela ocwaningweni kanye nemibono yabathintekayo emkhakheni wemfundo. Naphezu kwezinsalelo ezikhona, labo ababuyekeza ikharikhulamu basebenzisa ulwazi lwabo lobungcweti kanye nokusebenzisana phakathi kweminyango yeNational Institute of Educational Development (NIED) ukuze bathole izindlela zokusebenza ngaphakathi kwezinhlelo ezikhona futhi bakhuthaze ushintsho oludingekayo ekharikhulamu. Umcwaningi uphakamisa imodeli esekelwe kuStructuration Theory ekhombisa indlela ucwaningo lwezemfundo olungahlanganiswa ngayo

ngempumelelo enqubweni yokubuyekeza ikharikhulamu. Phakathi kweziphakamiso kukhona nokuqapha okuqhubekayo kobudlelwano phakathi kwezenzo zabantu abasebenza ohlelweni kanye nezakhiwo zemfundo, kanye nokwakhiwa kohlelo lokweseka oluzosiza ukuhlunganisa ucwaningo kanye nokubuyekezwa kwekharikhulamu ngendlela ephumelelayo.

**Amagama abalulekile:** Ababambiqhaza (agents), imfundo eyisisekelo, ukubuyekezwa kwekharikhulamu, ucwaningo lwezemfundo, izinqumo ezisekelwe ebufakazini, igebe phakathi kwenqubomgomo nokusebenza, Structuration Theory, izakhiwo.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The process of reviewing curricula is ongoing and involves a dynamic interaction between existing educational frameworks and the various individuals or agents involved. As Basu (2020) notes, the complexities of modern social practices, political climates, economic conditions, and environmental shifts require a rethinking of educational methods. These structures do not operate in isolation; instead, they interact and evolve alongside agents such as educators, students, policymakers, and communities who use and influence them. These agents contribute their perspectives and needs, prompting adjustments in content and teaching approaches. Research is crucial in this process, offering insights and data to guide curriculum review and improve its relevance and impact (Basu, 2020; Dumbuya, 2024). Borg (1973) emphasises research as a vital tool for uncovering truths and integrating knowledge with skills, underscoring the importance of agent-structure interactions in the development of education systems. Ultimately, for nations seeking to advance through education and research, understanding this reciprocal relationship is essential to designing effective, responsive educational programs that can address both national and global challenges.

UNESCO (2018) emphasizes that a nation's development depends greatly on the quality of its education system and its investment in research to foster positive change. Over time, education and research have become closely linked and influenced by various internal and external factors (Alvarado 2017; Bruce, 2017). This connection plays a crucial role in the success of a country's educational system. When a country struggles to meet its educational goals, it is important to pause and conduct a thorough evaluation to identify problems and consider potential improvements (Kolasi, 2020).

Conducting a curriculum review is essential but comes with unique challenges. Muraraneza, Mtshali, and Mukamana (2017) highlight issues such as the shift to a competency-based curriculum, the transition from informative to transformative learning, limited stakeholder involvement, teacher unpreparedness, and resource inadequacies. The duality of structures suggests that, while these challenges arise from existing educational frameworks, they can also be addressed through strategic action by curriculum-review agents. The success of the curriculum review process depends on various factors, notably the integration of research findings. Godfrey & Brown (2019) emphasise that educational research can provide a vital foundation, enhancing the review process and making it a replicable practice (Gouedard et al., 2020).

In Namibia, effectively transforming educational goals relies heavily on this process, which also plays a vital role in improving student learning outcomes.

Nonetheless, the translation of research into practical insights for curriculum review, particularly for the Basic Education programme, remains unclear. This study emphasises the need to integrate research to address Namibia's key challenges in curriculum review. It explores the complex links between educational research and curriculum development, a topic of keen interest among educators and researchers. The aim is to utilise research findings to better shape and improve the curriculum. The following section provides the background of the study.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

This study explores the crucial role of research in curriculum review processes, emphasising worldwide shifts toward Competency-Based Education and the integration of educational research in various international, regional, and local settings. It also offers an overview of curriculum review specifically in Namibia.

### **1.2.1 Global trends of curriculum review and education research**

The global trend in curriculum review increasingly emphasises Competency-Based Education (CBE), as noted by organisations like UNESCO and OECD. This shift reflects a recognition that traditional rote-learning methods fail to prepare students for the complexities of the modern world. Countries are reforming curricula to foster critical thinking, teamwork, and adaptability; however, the integration of research into these processes remains unclear.

Central to effective curriculum review is the interplay between education research, teacher agency, and the duality of structures. Priestley et al. (2021) argue that when teachers are active agents in curriculum development, they contribute valuable insights, fostering a dynamic rather than a static curriculum. High-performing systems like Finland and Singapore exemplify this by formally incorporating research into curriculum reviews (Levin, 2013), ensuring decisions are grounded in empirical data.

Furthermore, the OECD (2023) highlights the necessity of data-driven curriculum reviews. Learning analytics enable educators and policymakers to respond quickly to evolving social needs. Meanwhile, UNESCO's 2022 report, "Reimagining Our Futures Together," calls for curricula that are both academically challenging and socially responsible, tackling issues such as climate change and social justice. This viewpoint expands curriculum review to include research, ethical concerns, and global citizenship, fostering a comprehensive educational approach.

Although educational reforms in Africa reflect these values, implementation remains challenging. In South Africa, the shift from Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) underscores the importance of governance structures and their duality. Gumede and Biyase (2016) and Maharaj et al. (2016) note that, although structured, CAPS was implemented top-down, limiting curriculum review agents such as teacher

involvement. Local input is crucial for successful implementation (Adams & Morrow, 2018).

Zimbabwe's reforms aim to develop critical thinking through the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education, but issues in teacher training and resources remain (Chikoko & Ehlers, 2020). Research on socio-political contexts can enhance policy understanding (Tshelane & Tsoeu, 2021). Botswana's Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP 2015-2020) sought to align education with labour-market needs, yet Modibedi & Iloanya (2025) highlight the gap between economic aspirations and rural classroom realities. Incorporating local social dynamics into research can lead to more relevant policies.

Similarly, Malawi's Education Sector Implementation Plan aimed to improve educational quality, but without a context-sensitive policy, research progress has faltered (Mkandawire, 2021). Engaging with local realities through education research fosters actionable strategies and ensures that educators' insights and community needs shape policy discussions, driving sustainable improvement across Southern Africa.

The ongoing process of curriculum review is essential for adapting educational frameworks to the dynamic interactions among agents like educators, students, policymakers, and communities. Basu (2020) highlights that contemporary complexities in social practices, politics, economics, and environmental factors

necessitate a review of educational methods. Research plays a pivotal role in this process by providing insights and data to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum (Basu, 2020; Dumbuya, 2024). Borg (1973) highlights the importance of research in unearthing truths and integrating knowledge with skills, emphasising the interaction between agents and structures in education system development.

UNESCO (2018) asserts that a nation's development is closely tied to the quality of its education system and the investment in research. This relationship highlights the necessity for regular reviews to identify and address shortcomings in educational goals (Alvarado, 2017; Bruce, 2017; Kolasi, 2020). Muraraneza, Mtshali, and Mukamana (2017) identify challenges, including the shift to competency-based curricula, limited stakeholder involvement, and inadequate resources. These challenges can be navigated through strategic actions by curriculum-review agents, with research providing a robust foundation to enhance the review process (Godfrey & Brown, 2019; Gouedard et al., 2020).

In summary, while the global educational trajectory decisively favours research-grounded Competency-Based Education, the realisation of such reforms in Southern Africa is often hindered by misalignment between policy structures and implementers' agency. The literature shows that successful curriculum renewal depends not only on adopting international mandates but also on navigating the duality of structure, in which research serves as an enabling resource for decision-

making rather than a peripheral consideration. However, in the regional context, top-down mechanisms often marginalise the very empirical insights and stakeholder agency required for sustainable change. Against this backdrop of global ambition and regional implementation challenges, it is imperative to examine how the Namibian context navigates these tensions and to investigate the extent to which research evidence is effectively institutionalised within its curriculum review processes.

### **1.2.2 An overview of Namibia's curriculum review**

Namibia's curriculum review process is rooted in a historical shift from informal, traditional methods impacted by missionary efforts to a system shaped by the oppressive structures of colonial apartheid. Following independence in 1990, Namibia faced the critical task of dismantling these inequalities to forge a democratic education system. The government identified four strategic priorities to guide this transformation: access, equity, quality, and democracy (Ministry of Education, 1993). This foundational shift demonstrated the nation's dedication to using education as a tool for fostering a fairer society.

Since 1990, the country has undergone various reforms to align educational goals with national development plans and global standards. The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) was established in 1990 to lead this curriculum development and serve as a central hub for addressing educational challenges (MoEAC, 2021). Early reforms included establishing education as a basic human

right (Article 20 of the Constitution), shifting from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred pedagogy, and adopting English as the primary medium of instruction for Grades 5–12, replacing Afrikaans. Furthermore, the system integrated the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and Higher IGCSE to benchmark Namibian qualifications against international standards (Josua, Auala, & Miranda, 2022).

### **1.2.3 The Current Reform Cycle (2015–2026)**

Despite early progress, Namibia continues to grapple with challenges typical of a developing nation, including poverty, high unemployment, and the impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. To address these evolving socioeconomic factors, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) initiated a comprehensive curriculum review cycle in 2015, which is expected to run through 2026. This review was largely driven by the recommendations of the 2011 National Education Conference. As outlined by Josua et al. (2022), this conference gathered local and international stakeholders to align educational practices with *Vision 2030* Namibia's national strategy to match the quality of life of developed nations by industrialising the economy.

Key structural changes implemented during this period include:

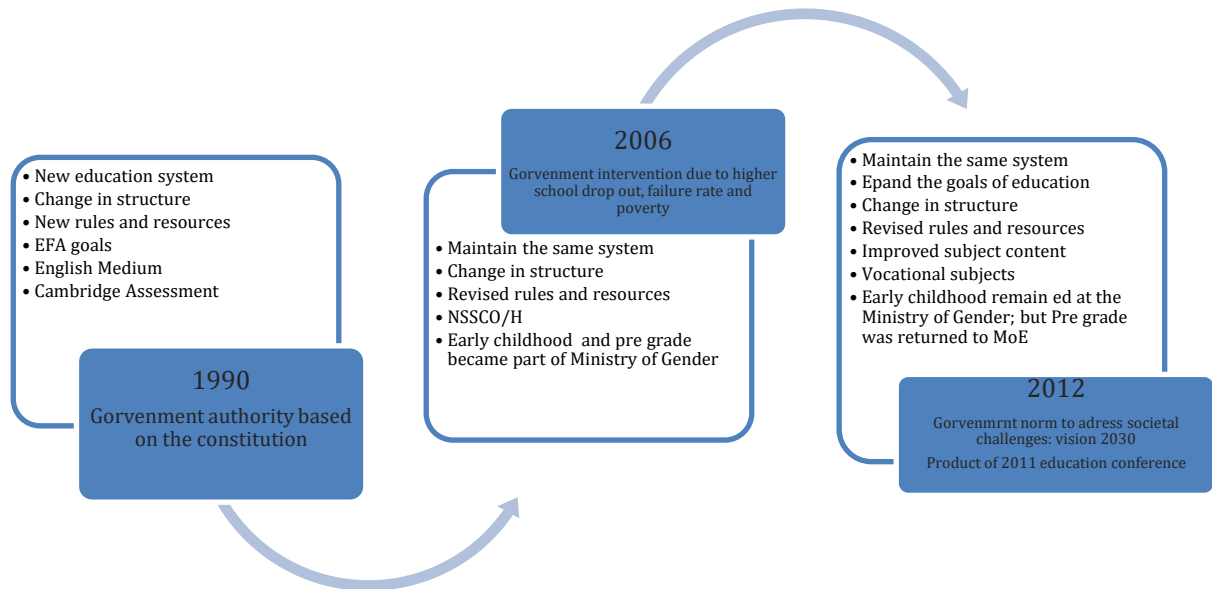
- The integration of pre-primary education into the basic curriculum, following a 2006 Cabinet decision, aimed at enhancing school readiness, as highlighted by MoEAC (2016) and UNICEF (2018). A major change was the implementation of Mother Tongue as the primary medium of instruction for

- Grades 1-3, supported by research indicating cognitive benefits of home-language instruction (Ministry of Education, 2014). However, challenges such as insufficient learning materials persist (Likando & Wolhuter, 2013).
- A shift from a two-phase to a three-phase secondary system: Junior Secondary (Grades 8–9), Senior Secondary (Grades 10–11), and the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level in Grade 12 (MoEAC, 2020).
  - The inclusion of practical subjects such as woodworking, welding, and fashion, to equip students with self-reliance skills and address the disparity between graduate skills and labour market requirements (Katjavivi, 2016).

While the curriculum has evolved from its colonial roots to espouse democratic values, critical issues linger. Josua et al. (2022) note that despite new qualifications (JSC, NSSCO, NSSCH), the actual content delivery and student performance have not changed significantly. Likando and Wolhuter (2013) highlight that student outcomes remain poor, and the implementation of vocational subjects is hampered by limited resources, with few schools offering the full range of technical subjects (MoEAC, 2016). Furthermore, Amukugo (2017) argues that the colonial remainder persists, suggesting that addressing these issues requires more than policy changes; it requires a shift in the underlying power structures of knowledge production.

To understand these challenges, the curriculum review process can be viewed through the lens of Giddens' (1984) Structuration Theory. In this context, the review process is a duality of structure. The Structure, comprising the Ministry, NIED, Cambridge, and national policies, provides the rules and resources (funding,

circulars). The Agents, specifically the Senior Education Officers (SEOs), determine the outcome through their actions (MoEAC, 2016).



*Figure 1.1 (Adapted from MoEAC, 2022) depicts this sequence of structuration.*

In the Namibian context, the government establishes the curriculum framework as the authoritative structure, yet the successful translation of policy into practice relies heavily on the agency of Senior Education Officers (SEOs). While these agents are pivotal in interpreting data to drive implementation, a significant disjuncture remains regarding how empirical evidence is utilised within bureaucratic constraints. The challenge is not an absence of data; indeed, the Ministry regularly commissions administrative surveys, including SACMEQ reports, learner achievement analyses, and regional Needs Assessments (MoE, 2022). However, the integration of this evidence is often superficial, prioritising administrative compliance over deep pedagogical inquiry. Consequently, the core deficit lies not in data collection but in the signification of that data; the process by

which agents assign meaning to research findings to substantively inform and transform the curriculum-review structure.

Although NIED involved various stakeholders in reviewing policies and learning materials (MoEAC, 2016; MoE, 2022), the extent to which they influenced outcomes remains unclear. There is limited empirical evidence on how Senior Education Officers interpreted this feedback or managed conflicts with bureaucratic constraints. As a result, it is uncertain whether these consultations resulted in meaningful structural changes or were merely procedural formalities.

While Amukugo (2013) and Josua et al. (2022) have outlined the history of Namibian educational reforms, a key gap remains regarding the micro-details of the review process itself. Specifically, few studies have examined the role of Senior Education Officers (SEOs) as central mediators of the tension between bureaucratic demands and the need for evidence-based change. This research fills that gap by analysing how SEOs interpret data to justify revisions and whether their actions are limited by structural constraints. By clarifying these decision-making processes, the study seeks to determine if current review procedures serve as real tools for educational change or simply reinforce existing procedural norms (Godfrey & Brown, 2019). Ultimately, this investigation aspires to inform future reforms by ensuring that the curriculum development process is both inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of all educational stakeholders.

### **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

Curriculum review in Namibia is a high-stakes, continuous journey guided by the Ministry of Education (2020) and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) to align the education system with Vision 2030. From 1990 to 2022, ambitious reforms were undertaken to shift from colonial models to frameworks fostering economic self-reliance (NIED, 2021). Despite these efforts, persistent challenges, such as rising poverty and unemployment, suggest a critical disconnect between policy intent and classroom reality (Katjavivi, 2016). If these reviews had been grounded in empirical research, problems such as resource limitations (Likando & Wolhuter, 2013) and mismatches between skills and labour market demands could have been addressed. Instead, persistent high failure rates push students to seek alternatives, such as enrolling in the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to improve subject performance, or to face unemployment, which exacerbates social crises (MoEAC, 2020; Biraimah, 2016).

To understand the ongoing disconnect, it is important to analyse the institutional dynamics of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). This institute plays a vital role within the Ministry of Education. It has two main divisions: the Curriculum Research and Development Division and the Professional Development Division. Senior Education Officers (SEOs) oversee the review process across all educational levels, which include Junior Primary (Pre-Primary to Grade 3), Senior Primary (Grades 4-7), Junior Secondary (Grades 8-9), and Senior Secondary (Grades 10-12/Advanced Subsidiary (MoEAC, 2021).

Using Giddens' (1984) Structuration Theory, this process can be viewed as an interaction between Structure (policies/frameworks) and Agency (SEO decisions), where these elements mutually influence one another (Tiefenbacher, 2020). However, a significant gap remains in how this interaction functions. Dyjur et al. (2018) and Smith and Johnson (2023) argue that while stakeholders are consulted, there are no clear procedures for incorporating their research findings into final decisions. As noted by Basu (2020) and Akkerman, Bakker, and Penuel (2021), this results in a disconnect in which reforms lack concrete evidence, increasing the risk that they become reactive rather than adaptive (Wyse et al., 2021). Research would have been significant in ensuring that the skills being introduced (e.g., entrepreneurship) align with the economic opportunities available to graduates, identifying the resource constraints in schools before rolling out resource-intensive reforms (Likando & Wolhuter, 2013), and providing data-driven interventions for high failure rates in Grades 11 and 12, rather than relying on structural changes alone (Biraimah, 2016).

My professional experience as a lecturer at a university in Namibia supports this observation. My previous research on curriculum integration found that, although data collection is frequent, its use for improvement is inconsistent and often constrained by structural inflexibilities. This study shifts the focus from a linear review approach to a nuanced understanding of these constraints, advocating a

model in which the curriculum aligns meaningfully with the social reality of the Namibian classroom.

This study is justified by the need to bridge the gap between the production of educational research and its internal utilisation in policy formulation. Most existing literature focuses on the *outcomes* of reforms, leaving little empirical evidence on the reviewers' decision-making processes. This research fills that gap by investigating how SEOs navigate bureaucratic structures to interpret research. The findings can provide the Ministry of Education with insights to institutionalise evidence-based practices, ensuring that future curriculum reviews are not merely procedural formalities but are responsive to the nation's educational goals.

#### **1.4 Research Statement of the Problem**

The core problem addressed by this study is the inadequate use of substantive educational research in Namibia's curriculum review process, which contributes to persistent implementation failures. Despite a clear mandate for evidence-based reforms to address skills mismatches (MoE, 2020), a significant validity gap persists between policy rhetoric and actual practice. As evidenced by the 2023 NSSCO results, in which only a fraction of candidates qualified for tertiary admission, 5,812 of 38,019 full-time NSSCO candidates qualified for tertiary admission, with similarly low progression rates to the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level (MoEAC, 2023). The current review mechanism fails to align the curriculum with learners' needs. Basu (2020) and Smith and Johnson (2023) highlight that

curriculum designers often struggle to demonstrate how revisions are grounded in empirical inquiry, with research integration frequently overridden by administrative deadlines. Consequently, the system remains static, reproducing outdated knowledge rather than evolving to meet the country's socio-economic needs (Akkerman, Bakker, & Penuel, 2021).

While existing literature frequently attributes these educational failures to downstream factors such as resource shortages or teacher resistance (Namolo, 2021; lipinge & Kasanda, 2013), these explanations overlook a more fundamental systemic flaw: the disconnect between the intended curriculum and the social reality of the Namibian classroom (Katjavivi, 2016; Biraimah, 2016). Specifically, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence regarding the internal decision-making processes of the Senior Education Officers (SEOs) who construct the curriculum. The literature does not clarify how these agents navigate structural barriers to interpret and utilise research data.

From the perspective of Structuration Theory, this represents a largely unexplored failure of the duality of structure, whereby reviewers' agency may be stifled by rigid institutional protocols. Until this gap is bridged, it remains unclear whether curriculum reviews are driven by empirical evidence or merely by procedural compliance. Therefore, this study aims to examine how educational research informs, or fails to inform, curriculum review processes in Namibia.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

### **1.5.1 Main Question**

- What is the structuration role of educational research on curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?

### **1.5.2 Sub-Questions**

- How is the knowledge produced through the duality of structures in education research related to curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia characterised?
- How do curriculum reviewers, acting as agents, perceive the integration of educational research into the review of the Basic Education curriculum in Namibia?
- How do the curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the curriculum review structure in Namibia?
- How can education research be enhanced to contribute optimally to curriculum review?

## **1.6 The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how education research informs the curriculum review process in Namibia. By utilising Giddens' Structuration Theory, the study seeks to understand how research is utilised (or constrained) by Senior Education Officers (agents) within the institutional frameworks (structures) of the Ministry of Education, thereby determining its influence on curriculum relevance. Ultimately, the goal is to create a model that will serve as a valuable resource for

the Ministry of Education, researchers, curriculum reviewers, educators, and the wider community. This model would provide insights into best practices and approaches for leveraging educational research to improve curriculum reviews in Namibia's basic education sector.

#### 1.6.1. The research aims:

- The primary aim of this study is to examine the structuration role of educational research on curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia.

#### 1.6.2 Objectives

- To identify the kind of knowledge that has been produced through the duality of structures in education research that relates to curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia.
- To examine the curriculum reviewers' views on the integration of educational research in reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia.
- To analyse how the curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the structure of curriculum review in Namibia
- To determine how education research can be enhanced for optimal contribution to curriculum review.

### **1.7 Definitions of Key Concepts**

In this section, I intend to lay the groundwork for the research by defining the key concepts involved. Several important concepts underpin this study, including

curriculum, curriculum review, research, and educational research. These concepts and their application in this study are defined as follows:

### **1.7.1 Curriculum**

According to Mulenga (2018), a curriculum refers to the range of subjects available. This study uses a broader definition, encompassing the overall objectives of education, individual subject components, and learning outcomes. A curriculum is basically the roadmap for what students will learn in a course or program. It outlines the lessons and academic content that will be taught, along with the goals for what students should achieve. It also includes how teachers organise their classes, the homework assignments they will give, the resources they'll use, and the ways they'll assess how well students are learning.

### **1.7.2 Curriculum Review**

Curriculum review is all about updating and improving our education system and its components. Dyjur et al. (2018) discuss a thorough, evidence-based examination of educational programs created by educators to improve student learning outcomes. The purpose of these evaluations is to carefully analyse academic programs, ensuring they offer optimal learning experiences for students.

### **1.7.3 Research**

Research, as described by Babbie (2004:30), is essentially a thorough investigation into a specific issue or problem, applying scientific methods. It seeks

to systematically describe, explain, predict, and manage the phenomena under investigation by employing both inductive and deductive reasoning. This approach to research considers it a valuable tool within the social framework dynamics. It not only helps us understand but also has the potential to transform and sustain institutions, phenomena, and structures through the idea of structural duality.

#### **1.7.4 Education Research**

Basu (2020) describes educational research as a thoughtful investigation designed to address various challenges in the field of education. Essentially, it is a structured way of collecting and analysing data to better understand and improve educational practices. Researchers have explored various topics, including classroom dynamics, teacher training, student learning, and interaction. Likewise, educational research is an academic and educational investigation that offers insights to influence and reshape social structures. In this regard, educational research is regarded as a tool/resource that the Agency uses to make informed decisions on curriculum review to promote quality educational outcomes in Namibia.

#### **1.8 Chapter Outline**

This study is structured into seven chapters, each with its own unique focus. Chapter One dives into the introduction and background, laying the groundwork for the research. This chapter highlights the significance of the study, outlines the problem being addressed, poses the key questions aimed to be answered, and

clarifies the goals. Important terms are also defined to ensure clarity throughout the study.

Chapter Two explores the theoretical foundation that underpins the research. It sets the stage for understanding the key concepts. Meanwhile, Chapter Three dives into the existing literature on research and curriculum reviews, highlighting both the ideas behind these processes and their real-world impact on education.

In Chapter Four, the research methodology is explored, detailing the methods used to conduct the study and the techniques for collecting and analysing data. Chapter Five shares insights gathered from interviews with NIED Education Officers, highlighting their findings.

In Chapter Six, the discussion delves deeply into the findings, exploring their implications and significance. Then, in Chapter Seven, everything is wrapped up with a summary of the results and suggestions for future research, along with recommendations based on the insights gained throughout the study.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the study that explores the review of the Basic Education curriculum, specifically drawing insights from research in Namibian education. It began by establishing the context and importance of the study, clarifying why this topic matters. Following that, the main research problem was presented,

highlighting the central question along with additional supporting questions that guide the inquiry. The goal is to provide a clear and relatable perspective on the current state of education in Namibia. The next chapter dives into the theoretical framework, specifically examining Antony Giddens' structuration theory and how it relates to curriculum review.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN CURRICULUM REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

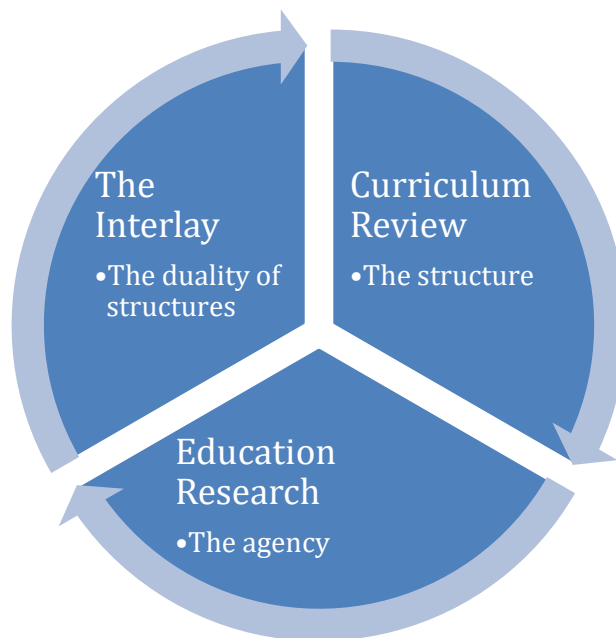
Swanson & Chermack (2013) explain that a theoretical framework is a way to outline the related theories that inform a study. This serves as a helpful roadmap for the research journey, bringing together various ideas and keeping everything organised as it moves forward. This chapter comprises four sections as detailed below:

- The initial portion addresses the conceptual framework and fundamental notions of Antony Giddens' structuration theory, which underpins the study.
- The second portion situates Giddens' theory as a methodological and analytical framework to analyse claims regarding the impact of structures, agency, and values.
- The final portion analyses Giddens' theory regarding curriculum review and the function of research.
- The final section addresses Giddens' structuration theory, its critiques and applications, and its intended use in this research.

## 2.2 The Conceptual Framework of Structuration Theory

The study's conceptual framework, adapted from Giddens (1984, 1990), includes: Curriculum Review, Education Research, and Structuration Theory, as illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework



The Structure (The Rules): The *Curriculum Review* process itself is the Structure. It has rules (policies and timelines) and resources (funding and textbooks).

The Agency (The Action): *Education Research* is the resource used by agents (Reviewers/SEO's). It provides discursive consciousness (the ability to explain why change is needed).

The Interplay (The Duality): As agents use research to change the curriculum, the structure is recreated. This is the Duality of Structure. If research is ignored, the

structure remains static (a colonial residue). If research is used, the structure evolves.

This study's conceptual framework is based on the duality of structure. It considers the Curriculum Review process as a social system shaped by institutional rules and resources. Education Research acts as a key transformative tool, enabling Agents (curriculum reviewers) to exercise their agency. Through Reflexive Monitoring, these agents apply research findings to question and challenge structural constraints, such as the colonial legacy and bureaucratic inertia, promoting a 'structuration' of the curriculum that is more socially relevant. The framework shows that the 'Nexus' is reached when research becomes more than an external input; it functions as a medium that actively helps reconfigure the curriculum structure.

This research utilised structuration theory. Giddens (1984, 1990), Bryant (1999), and Karsten (2015) identify six fundamental notions under structuration theory: structuration, structure, agency, duality of structure, time-space dimension, and reflexivity. This study focuses primarily on four concepts: structuration, structure, agency, and the duality of structure. The following concepts are analysed below:

### 2.2.1 Structuration

Resources function as both the instruments and results of social praxis, whereas structures are established and sustained as social systems influenced by regulations (Giddens, 1984). Karsten (2015) posits that structuration serves as a

social ontology focused on discerning what exists in the environment, rather than delineating developmental laws. Riley (1983) characterises it as a meta-theory that links human behaviour to structural explanations in social studies. British sociologist Anthony Giddens proposed the notion of structuration in his social theory. Giddens' concept of structuration seeks to elucidate human social behaviour by analysing the interplay between agents and structures. He characterises structuration as a social theory that elucidates human behaviour via the interaction of structures and agency (Giddens, 1984).

In his 1984 work, Giddens emphasises that structure and agency are not opposing concepts; instead, they complement and influence each other. This means that the way we act (agency) and the social frameworks we find ourselves in (structure) are interconnected and support one another. Curriculum reviewers create and replicate educational frameworks through their agency, which includes utilising educational research. Concurrently, they employ and alter these structures through their social behaviours during the curriculum revision process, either enabling or constraining their actions. The curriculum review requires initial approval from the Ministry of Education, the principal authority responsible for educational enhancements in Namibia. The Ministry of Education has authorised NIED to utilise its expertise to oversee the evaluation process within a designated timeframe.

In structuration theory, social structures, particularly the Ministry of Education and the NIED, are moulded and impacted by individuals' social activities. The norms, histories, views, and cultures of curriculum reviewers can profoundly influence their decision-making in the curriculum review and research process. Collins and Stockton (2018) suggest that structuration is a social theory focused on how social structures come into being and how they are maintained over time. It emphasises the importance of examining both social structures and individual actions, treating them as equally valuable for understanding society. This viewpoint is supported by Kolasi (2020), Karsten (2015), Jack and Kholeif (2007), and Pozzebon (2004), who emphasise that organisational structures and practices are established, modified, and transformed by members' actions and interactions. Organisational members utilise existing frameworks to guide their conduct, either by conforming to established regulations or by contesting norms through innovation, feedback, negotiation, or dissent. They are capable of formulating new regulations. In the context of curriculum review, agents might modify various rules and structures by utilising research findings to provide feedback to stakeholders during consultative sessions on the necessity of curriculum updates. The agents may also be constrained by ministerial regulations and policies governing which elements of the curriculum may be evaluated.

Karsten (2015) asserts that organisational practices inform individuals' daily activities, including routines, strategies, plans, rituals, and innovations. Structural theory emphasises the importance of temporal and spatial factors within an

organisation. Plans and objectives are formulated to be achieved within designated timeframes. The specified timelines guide the curriculum review process and establish deadlines for achieving the desired objectives. During this process, curriculum reviewers, researchers, and other stakeholders contribute to establishing and reinforcing regulations and resources through their actions.

Kolasi (2020) and Pozzebon (2004) assert that structuration can advantage companies in multiple ways, including:

- Offering a comprehensive and dynamic viewpoint on human behaviour that accounts for the effects of both structure and agency.
- Assisting agents in contemplating how their activities and interactions reproduce or modify organisational structures and practices.
- Assisting organisational members in recognising prevailing structures that affect their behaviours and promoting successful communication with other members across various temporal and geographical contexts.
- Assist in identifying and elucidating tactics and processes pertinent to social change, as well as in their replication in novel contexts and circumstances.
- Acting as a catalyst for organisational transformation by implementing new frameworks and methodologies to improve performance and well-being.

Structuration is a fundamental notion of Giddens' theory and is intricately linked to other associated ideas. This study posits that structuration theory underpins the interaction and communication between structures and agents (both unpacked in

the following section), including curriculum reviewers, and elucidates how these agents are oriented and empowered to fulfil their responsibilities within a social system. This indicates that the social structures governing the curriculum review process do not just replicate themselves; they are shaped by human acts, both directly and indirectly. These activities and practices can either undermine or preserve the culture or tradition within the social framework. In Namibia, the curriculum review process is overseen by political leaders who, because they lack expertise in educational research or curriculum development, usually simply endorse the recommended revisions. The curriculum reviewers operate within defined parameters using temporary resources, such as research, to inform choices about the educational system as a social institution.

#### 2.2.2 Structures

Giddens (1984), Tural (2017), and Kolasi (2020) characterise "structures" as components within which actors are interconnected, encompassing resources and regulations. Within the framework of a social system, Giddens (1984) delineates three basic types of structures as follows:

- Signification denotes the encoding of meanings via verbal and linguistic acts.
- Legitimation comprises normative viewpoints ingrained in societal norms and customs.

- Domination pertains to the exercise of authority, especially in the management of resources. The regulations and resources are clarified herein:

#### 2.2.2.1: Rules

According to Giddens (1984), rules can be understood as structuration principles that enable individuals to act within a framework, thereby affecting both agency and structure in social interactions. They provide the normative guides that shape actions in a social context. Nash (2018) asserts that every entity utilised as a power source within a structure or organisation is deemed a resource. Cohen (1989) and Sewell (1992) contend that structuration theory seeks to investigate and reshape a social system in which practices and possessions exert influence as social imperatives. Structuration theory underscores the importance of social structures that individuals establish by adhering to rules and utilising available resources. Giddens (1984:25) asserts that structure is delineated to facilitate social practices based on the subsequent categories of rules:

Procedural regulations define the manner in which a practice should be executed. These principles establish the foundation for an ethnomethodological analysis, which this study employs as its research framework. Moral norms comprise the laws and regulations that govern socially accepted conduct and differentiate right from wrong.

#### 2.2.2.2 Resources

Resources are characterised as entities that can be utilised to exert influence in social interactions, as indicated by Tural (2017). Giddens (1984:25) elaborates that structure is moulded to enable social practices based on several forms of resources:

- Material resources: this involves the allocation, distribution, and utilisation of available resources, such as capital, by actors to execute social activities.
- Authority resources: these denote the hierarchical roles within formal organisations that govern the allocation of time and space to fulfil the objectives of a job.

Giddens (1984) classifies resources into two main types. The first type is authoritative resources related to people. This includes physical strength, emotional commitment, and knowledge, all of which can help someone assert and maintain their authority. The second type is allocative resources, which are non-human and relate to material assets and tools. These resources are distinctive in terms of time and space, possessing observable qualities that might influence power dynamics. In a social system, resources and regulations can both empower and constrain individuals' behaviour, leading to both intended and unintended consequences. This may require meticulous evaluation and structural modifications. This pertains to the policies, standards, and principles that govern a thorough evaluation process. This involves curriculum reviewers engaging in

national and international consultations during the review process, including discussions with Cambridge, an organisation that provides accreditation and certification. It focuses on expected standards and works with other countries. It also consults experts, such as researchers and curriculum reviewers, as well as other important groups. The reviewers may then follow the guidelines or change their suggestions. Cambridge-approved courses span from primary education to A-level. These courses allow students to earn qualifications recognised worldwide, which can help them gain admission to top universities.

Resources encompass both the time required and the components necessary for the curriculum review process, such as funding, instructional materials, and research vital to the process. Moreover, the norms, attitudes, beliefs, and backgrounds of curriculum reviewers are seen as resources, as they enable reviewers to make personal decisions that influence the creation and maintenance of social institutions.

### 2.2.3 Agency

According to Giddens (1984: 14), agents are persons who engage with institutions to execute social acts via models. They are individuals who demonstrate agency (human action) within the confines of regulations established by social structures. Sewell (1992) posits that actors and structures jointly influence social systems that evolve within this dual framework. Sewell (1992) elucidates that, in the analysis of social systems, structuration theory examines the context of the event, the

interactions among agents within the structure, and the modality. Structures and agents perpetually affect one another while remaining both interconnected and distinct. Giddens (1984 and 1990) characterises modality as a mechanism for transforming social structures into actions, wherein interaction constitutes one of the agents' activities.

Giddens (1990) posits that sociologists should view individual agency and social structures as complementary rather than antagonistic facets of the same phenomenon. Individual agency pertains to the choices and behaviours of individuals within a societal context. In this study, 'agents' refer to those participating in the curriculum review process and implementing research, including NIED Education Officers, who function as both curriculum evaluators and researchers. They may operate as individuals representing the Ministry of Education and act on behalf of the government in curriculum review and research applications.

While individual agency is vital for social activity, it is both supported and limited by laws and resources that make such actions possible and understandable to others. Consequently, Giddens (1984) advocates for a transition in emphasis from individual agency or social structures to the predominant traits of individual acts and collective social frameworks. In Namibia, this requires the Ministry of Education, through NIED, to provide agents with vital resources, including research materials and instruments for conducting educational research. These

agents require assistance in both educational and economic domains. These specialists are expected to critically analyse and challenge prevailing standards through research in their curriculum assessments.

#### 2.2.4 Duality of Structure

Giddens (1979) defines 'duality' as the essential interrelation of social existence, in which structures and agency hold equal significance in social action. In his 1998 publication, Giddens demonstrates that structuration theory acknowledges the duality of social structures, highlighting the profound interconnection between structures and agency, which are inseparable. Giddens posits that organisations function as social systems, indicating an interconnection and collaboration among diverse individuals and entities to attain a common goal.

In his work, Giddens (1984) explores how human involvement plays a crucial role in shaping society. He examines how power dynamics, resource use, and shared expectations shape our social norms and rules. Giddens introduces the idea of 'duality,' which emphasises that social structures and human actions are interconnected. He challenges the belief that these structures simply control our behaviour; instead, he argues that people actively engage with and change them in their everyday lives. This idea highlights the ongoing relationship between individual actions and social systems (Giddens, 1990).

Building on this, Lupton (2016) points out that Giddens' ideas about duality are important because they help individuals understand how to navigate social frameworks, even as they impose limitations on behaviour. In this view, humans are not just followers of social rules but active participants who can create, modify, and influence the very systems in which they live.

### **2.3 Contextualising Giddens' Structuration Theory**

Structuration theory offers a persuasive perspective in social theory by adeptly synthesising the notions of agents and structures. It promotes the reassessment of their dynamic interaction and enhances understanding of social exchanges (Kolasi, 2020: 4).

Kolasi's statement is noteworthy because it underscores this study's fundamental premise: society is intricate and impactful, and its operations are shaped by diverse interactions and relationships among individuals and organisations. Kolasi (2020) asserts that the power dynamics within a social system arise from the relationships and interactions among its structures and agents. In this framework, social theory guides the research, suggesting that power dynamics and relationships within the social system can catalyse social transformation and alter the curriculum review process through educational research.

The Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) are vital players in shaping the future of education in Namibia. They face various challenges, such as time constraints and geographical differences, but their commitment to reform is clear. The Ministry of Education is responsible for

overseeing the entire national education system, ensuring that policies and programs are effectively implemented. Meanwhile, NIED serves as the key center for evaluating the curriculum and conducting educational research, especially focused on basic education.

By collaborating closely, these two entities work to ensure that education is cohesive and interconnected at all levels, from schools to national policies. Their efforts are not just about meeting educational standards; they aim to create a supportive and effective learning environment for all students in Namibia (Kolasi, 2020). This dedication to improving education is crucial for the country's development and the empowerment of its youth.

The Ministry is dedicated to formulating policies and guidelines that meticulously direct the activities and responsibilities of educational professionals. These regulations establish a supportive framework that enables educators, administrators, and support staff to execute their roles efficiently. By providing explicit guidance, they aspire to foster a collaborative and productive learning environment, ensuring all stakeholders cooperate to enhance student outcomes and overall educational quality. In this regard, curriculum reviewers are expected to engage with stakeholders, conduct research, and solicit expert counsel before making determinations about curriculum revisions. Cambridge sets standards for the syllabus content under review and delineates specific criteria that must be met for the curriculum review to be approved.

Education is intricately woven into the social fabric and is regulated by protocols and structures that dictate necessary actions and their implementation. In this context, the Ministry of Education established the foundational constitution and devised the preferred educational framework, with the curriculum serving as the primary mechanism for achieving educational goals. Consequently, structuration theory examines the decision-making regarding the rationale, timing, and methodology of curriculum review, as well as the incorporation of research into the comprehensive review process. This approach facilitates understanding the complex relationships between various players in the education sector. It highlights how the Ministry of Education interacts with the NIED curriculum division and how the latter's research outcomes inform curriculum changes. According to Smith and Johnson (2023), this framework helps clarify how each entity influences the others, ultimately shaping the educational landscape. By examining these interactions, stakeholders can better navigate the processes of curriculum development and implementation, thereby leading to more effective educational strategies and outcomes.

### 2.3.1 The Power Dynamics Between Structures and Agents

Many social theories examine how individuals (agents) and broader societal systems (structures) influence one another. They examine the dynamic relationship between people's actions and the frameworks within which they operate. Nonetheless, Kolasi (2020) observes that while Giddens is frequently

cited, theorists such as Roy Bhaskar and Pierre Bourdieu have also formulated frameworks that address these dynamics. This study focuses on the ideas of Giddens, as it effectively illustrates how the social structure of the Ministry of Education, especially NIED, which oversees curriculum reviews, interacts with the individual actions of those involved in the review process. Giddens' theory offers important insights essential to understanding and analysing the dynamics at play in this research.

#### **2.4 Giddens' Structuration Theory and the Function of Research in the Curriculum Review**

This research utilises Giddens' structuration theory, as existing interpretations of social structures in social theory are considered inadequate. Giddens makes an important distinction between structures and social systems. He sees them as ongoing patterns of human behaviour that aren't tied to specific times or places. According to Kolasi (2020) and Giddens himself (in works from 1981 and 1990), it is not the social relations that shape social structures. Instead, social structures consist of the rules and resources that are crucial for maintaining social systems over time. This differentiation is pertinent to the work of curriculum reviewers, who are shaped by policies and guidelines that can either support or hinder their ability to apply research across different curriculum review processes and to the outcomes of those reviews.

When examining a curriculum, it's important to view it as a living, evolving process that changes over time, rather than something set in stone. The concept introduced by Giddens in 1989 emphasises that revisiting a curriculum isn't something we do once and then forget. Instead, it is an ongoing process where we continuously assess what's working, implement necessary changes, and make adjustments along the way. This approach helps ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and effective over time.

This study examines structuration theory, which analyses how individual choices and actions interweave with broader social structures, particularly in education. It points out the dynamic relationship between people and their environments as they navigate their learning journeys. Giddens (1984) argues that personal freedom and choices are influenced by existing structures, which are shaped and altered through individual actions.

The research connects the ideas of structure and agency, suggesting that individuals play a significant role in reshaping these structures. Jones and Karsten (2008) further emphasise that, while individuals aim to understand their practices, they often encounter limitations stemming from various influences. Ultimately, this study views social actors as knowledgeable participants who can impact institutional structures through their everyday involvement in the curriculum review process.

Collaboration among diverse institutions is crucial during the curriculum review process to attain shared objectives. This collaboration engages multiple stakeholders in the review process, either as members of curriculum panels or as researchers. Recognising the interdependence among these entities is vital for effective curriculum development and implementation.

Tiefenbacher (2020) notes a lack of thorough research on new approaches to understanding how different actors engage with their surroundings. He emphasises the importance of exploring how these interactions can lead to changes over time. Giddens (1984) suggests that structuration theory could bridge the gap between perspectives that view phenomena as shaped by structures versus those shaped by human agency.

The theory provides a framework for addressing questions commonly raised in organisational theory regarding the understanding of change (Tiefenbacher, 2020). Jones and Karsten (2008) recommend that researchers examine Giddens' structuration theory within the framework of information systems research. Doing so can offer important insights into enduring large-scale social phenomena in institutions. Structuration theory is really relevant to this study because it acknowledges the structures already in place that guide individuals within organisations in understanding their roles. It is all about how these frameworks help people navigate their responsibilities and interactions in a meaningful way. It demonstrates how their actions can shape and sustain organisational structures

and practices. Furthermore, structuration theory helps members of organisations identify opportunities and challenges arising from the interaction between structures and agencies within organisations.

## **2.5 The Structuring Role and Importance of Research in Curriculum Review**

Research is essential in shaping decision-making and driving educational change from a structuration perspective. According to Giddens' structuration theory (1979, 1984, 1991), the function of research is evident in the interactions between individuals, such as curriculum reviewers, and the foundational structures that establish the regulations and policies governing the curriculum review process. Furthermore, the integration of research serves as both an essential resource and a pivotal instrument for cultivating and sustaining a dynamic educational framework.

Tiky (2019) emphasises that the curriculum review process is crucial for educational reform, providing a structured approach to enhance learning outcomes. It involves a careful and methodical selection of knowledge, skills, and values, based on thorough research. As a result, the review reflects society's socio-political goals while also considering local needs, national standards, and global trends. To ensure the curriculum aligns with international benchmarks, reviewers need to research both national requirements and global practices.

A 2021 study by Gichuru et al. on Kenya's shift to Competency-Based Education found that, despite adherence to research recommendations, there were significant concerns about the failure of basic education to meet expectations for job creation among school leavers. Additionally, contrary to initial assumptions, the revised curriculum was found to be deficient in the requisite knowledge to foster self-employment. Soudien and Chisholm (2021) highlighted that any changes to the curriculum in South Africa need to acknowledge and address the lasting impacts of apartheid. At the same time, they emphasised the importance of preparing young people for the challenges they face in today's world. However, there is limited agreement on the essential knowledge needed to fulfil these aims. Alvarado (2017) emphasises that educational research is vital for improving teaching methods, underscoring the need for ethical standards when working with human participants to preserve the integrity of the research and its outcomes.

Within the framework of research's role in structuration, educational research involves various stakeholders, each with different perspectives, values, and norms. Despite these differences, research must be conducted within established structures and frameworks to ensure the validity of results. The importance of research lies in its ability to produce outcomes; without adherence to research ethics, these results may be compromised, negatively affecting those who rely on them.

Giddens asserts that social action can arise as a reaction to preceding actions. Tiky (2019) argues that individuals with agency must comprehend the regulations governing their conduct to effectuate change. Once they understand this they can collectively decide to contest these established regulations, thereby co-creating a new social structure founded on newly devised and mutually accepted principles. Within the context of structuration theory, Giddens clarifies how social action can evolve by providing actors, particularly curriculum reviewers, with relevant information. This empowers them to apply diverse research methodologies and concentrate on enhancing various facets of education through research. Through the duality of structures, agents can generate and reproduce new knowledge via research, which can subsequently be employed to augment the effectiveness of the curriculum review process.

Alvarado (2017) emphasises that educational research should focus on improving educational practices. This requires a thoughtful, reflective, and professionally-driven approach aimed at enhancing the overall learning experience, aimed at 1) investigating issues and seeking solutions, 2) disseminating policy, and 3) refining practice. He warns that a researcher's grasp of these aspects can significantly shape the study's focus and outcomes. Their ontological and epistemological views influence their methodological decisions; thus, research results should be carefully scrutinised and understood within the context of the knowledge generated.

Giddens (1984) argues that the unequal allocation of power in a social structure is crucial, as it provides some individuals with greater authority to influence social dynamics frameworks. The possession of power, contingent upon an individual's comprehension of the rules governing social interaction, empowers those individuals to actively influence social structures. This dynamic functions independently of the significance of educational research in structuration; researchers and curriculum evaluators operate within established rules and policies. While they possess the capacity to make informed decisions based on research, their authority is constrained by their designated roles and job descriptions. Thus, certain facets of their authority are subject to change, while others remain beyond their influence.

## **2.6 The Critique and Implementation of Giddens' Structuration Theory**

Despite the widespread acceptance of Giddens' structuration theory among academics, it has nevertheless faced considerable criticism. Jones & Karsten (2008) identified ambiguities within Giddens' theoretical framework, observing that the author's terminology and concepts frequently overlap and create confusion, leading to misunderstandings and thus impeding the practical implementation of the theory. This lack of clarity limits researchers' capacity to utilise the framework effectively.

Equally, Englund, Gerdin, and Burns (2020) criticised structuration theory for its inadequacy in addressing the human condition and its superficial examination of

societal dynamics. Furthermore, Archer (2016) contended that the theory's focus on human agency overlooks the substantial impact and significance of social structures and institutions, which may result in a constrained comprehension of the frameworks within which individuals function.

Clegg (2015) asserts that Giddens' theory is deficient in understanding power relations, thereby impeding its capacity to illuminate social inequality and justice. Additionally, some scholars have raised concerns about the paucity of empirical evidence supporting Giddens' theoretical assertions. For instance, Scholte (2018) remarked that Giddens' theory lacks substantial empirical support. Some critics point out that while Giddens' structuration theory is a helpful way to think about how social institutions and individual actions interact, it's also essential to recognise that it has its limitations and potential downsides when applied as a theoretical approach.

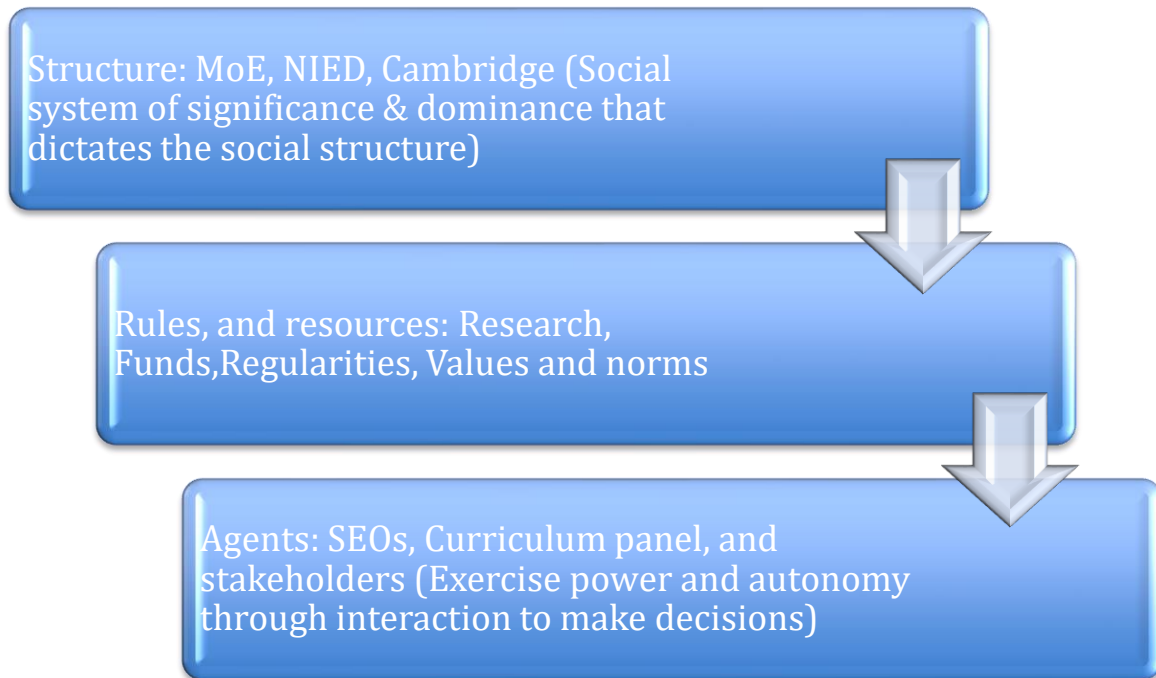
Despite these criticisms, Giddens' structuration theory upholds rigorous standards and remains a formidable presence within the social sciences. It is one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding how social structures and individual actions influence one another. Kort and Gharbi (2013) note that several alternative theories, including those of Berger and Luckmann (1966), Bourdieu (1977), Archer (1995), and Foucault, offer distinct perspectives on structure and agency. Nonetheless, Giddens' structuration theory is distinguished by its ability to analyse agency and structure independently. The authors contend that this theory is

practical and have effectively utilised it in exploring management information systems, thereby facilitating an innovative conceptualisation of information technology artefacts.

Tiefenbacher (2020) has assessed the influence of structuration theory on managers and professionals in leadership positions. He appreciates Giddens' theory for its foundational framework in comprehending social systems that encompass management teams, their organisations, and the wider societal context. He contends that this theory enhanced his understanding of structures such as dualism and of the social constructs comprising conventions, symbols, and tangible elements that facilitate social practices. It also clarified how agents perpetuate these structures, resulting in diverse social practices.

Tiefenbacher's analysis of the interplay between structures and agencies revealed numerous novel perspectives pertinent to organisational management. He determined that structures and agencies are interdependent, indicating that structures alone do not dictate behaviour; rather, actors shape and define conduct. He emphasised that organisational norms, procedures, and contextual factors can affect an organisation, enhancing the interconnectedness of its decision-making processes. He maintains that norms, rules, and contextual elements are established by the participants who engage with and enact them, thereby lending them validity and legitimacy through human agency. This notion underscores the necessity for critical thinking within organisational frameworks.

Despite this, I have utilised Giddens' structuration theory to address the widespread criticism of the interplay between the Namibian curriculum review framework and the government's political power, particularly through the Ministry of Education. This methodology facilitated a more intricate understanding of the social milieu surrounding curriculum reviews, encompassing essential stakeholders such as subject specialists, educators, parents, students, and non-governmental organisations. I further examined the organisational context in which research informed the development, maintenance, and transformation of the curriculum through collaborative social interactions over time. Whittington's work in 2010 highlighted how social theory helps clarify the relationship between professional institutions and broader social structures. Analysing this interplay reveals how these organisations are shaped by the society around them, providing deeper insights into their roles and functions. Moreover, I analysed the significant influence of curriculum reviewers' power and autonomy, which enabled them to exercise agency in making informed decisions regarding the curriculum review process. This thorough analysis tackled existing challenges and established a foundation for enhancing curriculum development in Namibia.



*Figure 2.2 The duality of structure in curriculum review in Namibia. Adapted from Giddens (1984)*

This figure illustrates how the Ministry of Education and NIED act as frameworks for the curriculum review process. They establish the protocols, timelines, and objectives for the review. Research is perceived as both a resource and a mechanism for introducing modifications in the curriculum review process. The curriculum reviewers acted as agents within professional, social, and organisational frameworks to advance practices, standards, and policies that utilised research as a tool for curriculum review. This facilitated my examination of the structures, agency, resources, and interconnections involved in employing research during the curriculum review.

This study employed structuration theory in accordance with Giddens' (1984) ideas along the following lines:

- The analysis of the educational research's role in shaping the Basic Education curriculum review in Namibia was guided by structuration theory. This approach helped illuminate how various structures and individual agency work together to foster an effective curriculum review process.
- Through this lens, I examined the kinds of knowledge produced by educational research concerning curriculum review in Namibia. I also looked into the views of curriculum reviewers on how educational research influences their evaluation efforts. It was fascinating to see how these reviewers drew upon their social class, positions, beliefs, and identities to navigate and sometimes challenge the established power dynamics during the curriculum review.
- Additionally, structuration theory offered insights into how to enhance the application of educational research in a way that could maximise its impact on curriculum updates. By applying this duality framework, I could identify existing gaps, problems, and even opportunities for better integrating research into the curriculum revision process.
- Structuration theory offers valuable insights into how people interact within social structures, emphasising the ways in which these relationships are interconnected. In the context of Namibia's curriculum review efforts, it sheds light on how individuals influence and shape these changes,

highlighting the importance of human agency in the process. Ultimately, it helps us appreciate the complex dynamics at play in transforming education in Namibia.

## **2.7 The Application of Structuration Theory in Curriculum Research**

Although Giddens' Structuration Theory is widely used in educational research, its application generally occurs at two levels: the micro-level, which focuses on teacher agency (Datnow, 2012; Priestley et al., 2015), and the macro-level, which examines institutional governance (Trowler, 2008). Similarly, management researchers like Whittington (2015) and Rosenbaum (2010) have employed this framework to analyse organisational strategy and the limitations imposed by professional rules. However, a notable gap remains: the theory is seldom applied to meso-level intermediaries, especially Senior Education Officers (SEOs), who operate in the transitional zone between broad policy directives for curriculum review and the integration of research in curriculum review. Currently, national curriculum reviews are predominantly analysed using implementation theories or change management frameworks (Fullan, 2007, 2016). This study diverges from this tradition by situating the duality of structure directly within the bureaucracy of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). By redefining curriculum review not merely as an administrative duty but as a process of social reproduction, this research suggests that both the structure (NIED protocols) and agency (SEO decisions) must develop in concert to break colonial legacies. This perspective shifts the focus from curriculum implementation to its design and

review, offering new theoretical insights into how evidence is interpreted to support a more inclusive education system.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter explores Giddens' structuration theory, which serves as a crucial foundation for the philosophical, methodological, and analytical aspects of my study. I apply this theory throughout my research to shed light on the interplay between structure, agency, and power dynamics in the context of research's role in curriculum review in Namibia. Here, I break down the core concepts of Giddens' structuration theory and explain why it is particularly relevant for my investigation. Moreover, I discussed how research functions within the broader framework of curriculum review. In the next chapter, I dive deeper into this topic, highlighting the significance of research in the process of curriculum review and improvement.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RELATED LITERATURE ON THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN CURRICULUM REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter dives into the important role that educational research plays in the curriculum review process, emphasising that it's a well-structured activity. Paul & Criado (2020) highlight that the core purpose of a literature review is to analyse, summarise, and clearly convey all the insights gathered on a specific topic. In this discussion, we focus on curriculum reviews, particularly for Basic Education in Namibia. The chapter showcases the perspectives of curriculum reviewers and other key stakeholders on how educational research can be seamlessly woven into the curriculum review process, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective for all involved. Furthermore, it examines how the decisions and actions of curriculum reviewers shape their incorporation of educational research within the review framework. Finally, the chapter offers suggestions on enhancing the utilisation of educational research to enrich the curriculum review process. The above aspects are discussed and organised into six sections as outlined below:

1. The initial section addresses curriculum and curriculum review interpretations as elements of social structures.

2. The second section highlights the impact of research on curriculum review from various viewpoints, namely international, regional, and local aspects.
3. The third section delves into how politics shape the curriculum review process, examining the various ways in which political factors influence decisions and outcomes in education.
4. In the fourth section, the focus shifts to the curriculum review process itself. This section highlights the types of knowledge and insights that emerge from educational research on curriculum review, emphasising lessons learned from the evaluation of educational programs and practices.
5. The fifth section identifies the challenges in applying educational research to curriculum review.
6. The final section examines strategies for effectively using educational research in the curriculum review.

### **3.2 Understanding the Concept of Curriculum and the Process of Curriculum Review**

The notion of the curriculum in general, as well as the curriculum review in particular, is reviewed below:

#### **3.2.1 Understanding Curriculum as a Social Structure**

A curriculum is a framework that influences social structures within educational environments. According to Gichuru et al. (2021), a curriculum serves as a fundamental transformative instrument designed to achieve high-quality learning outcomes by thoughtfully and systematically selecting knowledge, skills, and

values. Additionally, Courtney (2024) describes curriculum review as a critical aspect of the education system that can affect students' knowledge and skill acquisition, as well as the teaching philosophy and methodology employed to instruct learners.

The text highlights the significant role of a well-designed curriculum in fostering social change and enhancing learning in formal education. It's essential not just for imparting knowledge but also for supporting individual growth and personal development. By shaping what and how we learn, the curriculum helps create a more informed and engaged society. Rasco (2016) argues that the curriculum functions as a cultural selection, reflecting society and culture, and is passed down to subsequent generations through social constructivism. Formal education is organised around a structured curriculum that must meet specific educational objectives; therefore, the curriculum and teaching are inherently linked, as the curriculum provides the foundation for education, while education contributes to the country's development. Karseth et al. (2023) note that the term curriculum has multiple definitions; however, in all cases, it refers to the goals of education, the content to be delivered, the strategies employed, and the assessment methods used.

Gouedard (2020) characterises the curriculum as a set of guidelines that outline what should be learned, along with associated methods, policies, materials, learning objectives, and assessment procedures. The Namibian Ministry of Education (2021) emphasises that the curriculum is designed to nurture a healthy

society. It aims to cultivate positive attitudes, knowledge, and practices that contribute to both physical and mental well-being. The curriculum is designed to support students throughout childhood and adolescence, helping them reach their full potential, including students with special needs. Essentially, it acts as a roadmap for education, guiding learners on their journey to growth and self-discovery.

Karseth et al. (2023) discuss the complexity of curriculum development, emphasising that it provides diverse opportunities for various individuals. The curriculum is crucial in understanding the duality of structure, serving as a resource that is continually shaped to fulfil societal objectives through social practices. While organisational frameworks may influence the type of curriculum being created, it is the individuals within these systems who actively shape the social framework through their actions and interactions. These individuals play a vital role in the development, evaluation, and execution of the curriculum. Ultimately, curriculum development is a collaborative endeavour that adapts to meet the educational standards of society (Giddens, 1984).

### 3.2.2 Understanding the Conception of Curriculum Review

Lock, Hill, and Dyjur (2018) describe the curriculum review as a process that documents the direction of programme objectives, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment guidelines. This review is important for ensuring the curriculum is implemented effectively. It helps identify challenges and develop

strategies to address them. Countries have different ways of reviewing their curricula, but as Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen, and Huang (2020) point out, there are common themes across many countries, such as focusing on student well-being, encouraging independent learning, and enhancing problem-solving skills. Both local and global factors influence how curriculum reviews are conducted. While these reforms are mostly driven by national interests, they ultimately reflect what societies value as essential knowledge and skills for the future.

As the world continues to evolve, curricula need to be adapted to meet societal demands, prompting various countries to reassess their educational frameworks to tackle contemporary issues. Soudien and Chisholm (2021) examined the reform process of the South African curriculum, stressing the importance of curriculum review. This process involves revising and rethinking existing curricula, incorporating new knowledge, and setting clear learning objectives. However, they noted that there is no clear consensus on what constitutes valuable knowledge for helping young people navigate the complexities of today's world. Dyjur and Lock (2019) emphasise that curriculum review provides an opportunity for evaluation and quality assurance, thereby contributing to the achievement of curriculum objectives. They also note that this process relies on evidence-based decision-making and encourages critical and analytical reflection on the curriculum's processes.

Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen, and Huang (2020) argue that reviewing the curriculum is essential to keeping education relevant to contemporary needs, thereby greatly

improving its quality. However, they point out a significant disconnect between the review's objectives and the extent to which the updated curriculum is implemented in practice. While updating the curriculum has the potential to address important social issues such as globalisation, economic challenges, and pandemics such as COVID-19, there's no guarantee that these goals will be met.

Reviewing the curriculum is crucial for meeting societal needs and empowering the various stakeholders involved in educational decision-making across different structures. Likewise, Halinen (2018) outlined the curriculum review process conducted in Finland, in which the national curriculum underwent a four-year reform (2014-2017). This initiative aimed to strengthen the education system in response to global challenges. The agents involved in this review developed innovative approaches to promote educational equality, lifelong learning, and sustainable development for learners and the nation, utilising various social-relational patterns within educational institutions.

In 2019, Barrot conducted a systematic review of the basic education curriculum in the Philippines, taking into account various developments at both regional and national levels. This review aimed to expand the traditional curriculum by adding two years of technical and vocational training. The goal was to better prepare students for the challenges posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the rapid changes in areas like production, entrepreneurship, and information technology. Despite these developments, Morgan (2023). raised concerns from teachers themselves about implementing the revised curriculum, highlighting significant

difficulties in understanding the new changes. This situation highlights Giddens' (1984) concept of structuration, which emphasises how certain structures and constraints can impede people's ability to act freely and make informed choices in their interactions with others. It illustrates that, although individuals have agency, their ability to navigate social situations can be constrained by external factors (Giddens, 1984). To address these issues, curriculum reviewers must actively engage teachers, ensuring that individuals at different levels of society can contribute meaningfully and provide valuable input throughout the social process of curriculum development.

Ruth and Ramadas (2019) describe curriculum review as a global trend aimed at identifying the most effective educational methods for addressing contemporary challenges and needs. This practice of reviewing curricula is not new to Africa. Many African nations bear a legacy of colonisation, during which they were subjected to an imposed educational framework that denied them the authority to make their own decisions. Consequently, they inherited an apartheid education system that was discriminatory and perpetuated injustices across various social structures. Following independence, a transitional education programme focused on curriculum review. This initiative focused on improving the organisation of our educational system, refreshing the curriculum to make it more relevant, and ensuring that the necessary resources were available for its successful implementation. The initiative also focused on bringing together various organisations and agencies in the education sector. The goal was to encourage

collaboration, enabling them to work together for the benefit of both students and teachers.

Many African nations have a long-standing tradition of regularly evaluating and revising their curricula to tackle national and global challenges. As Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018), Mahabeer (2018), and Ruth and Ramadas (2019) point out, several African countries adopted a knowledge-focused approach to reviewing their curricula after independence. Following this process, several countries, including South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania, expressed dissatisfaction with the knowledge-based curriculum and criticised it for failing to develop the skills and expertise required for the job market. Consequently, these nations have felt the need to reassess their curricula with expert input. They have restructured the curriculum into a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) through a dual approach, aligning with global trends toward developing learners' essential workplace skills.

Ruth and Ramadas (2019) highlight that many African countries have embraced a competency-based curriculum (CBC) inspired by Western models. However, they face significant challenges, including limited resources and inadequate educator training. This situation underscores the complexities these nations face in implementing educational frameworks that may not fully align with their unique contexts and needs. Existing power dynamics within social structures can influence the creation and maintenance of social change, either by empowering or restricting individuals' ability to utilise available resources to achieve desired outcomes. This situation occurred in Eastern Africa, for instance, where countries

had to adopt the East Africa harmonisation policy, which compelled them to implement a CBC.

In 2010, the South African government adopted a new approach to education, driven by emerging technological advancements in Southern Africa. This led to the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which aimed to better align the education system with these developments. According to Mahabeer (2018), CAPS focused more on competencies than on content, resulting in a new curriculum, updated teaching materials, and revamped assessment methods.

This shift sparked my curiosity about how other African countries were using research and curriculum review processes to ensure their educational changes were effective. Inspired by this, I decided to explore how research influences the review of the basic education curriculum in Namibia through the lens of structuration theory. I genuinely believe that these educational changes can be transformative, positively affecting other areas of the country's development, especially in pursuit of the goals outlined in Vision 2030.

Inyega et al. (2021) highlight the pressing need for a significant overhaul of Kenya's basic education curriculum. They argue that this change is essential to ensure that the curriculum meets the demands of the job market as well as aligns with both local and international educational standards. The authors appreciate the updates made to the curriculum, noting its shift toward a more inclusive and practical,

learner-centred approach that aims to provide equal opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds.

However, there is notable dissatisfaction with the depth of these revisions and with the methods employed by those responsible for the curriculum review. Some stakeholders have voiced opposition to the new curriculum, underscoring the importance of involving teachers in future reviews. The authors also suggest that upcoming revisions should prioritise the use of document analysis and research to guide the process, ensuring it is well-informed and effective.

Crato (2021) noted that a curriculum is a fundamental document grounded in local or international standards. Nevertheless, no education system can progress without clear learning objectives. A curriculum review should set specific goals that prioritise knowledge as the basis for developing skills and values, ensuring consistency around curricular aims. The curriculum review process should support educational operations, establish strategic guidelines, and set achievable goals that can be achieved within specific timeframes. This perspective emphasises the centrality of time and space in structuration theory, particularly in how agencies operate within specific temporal constraints that shape the outcomes of curriculum reform.

In Namibia, the government's dedication to offering fair and high-quality education drives the curriculum review process, aligning with the aspirations of Vision 2030 (MoEAC, 2021). Since independence, the Ministry of Education and the Namibia Institute for Educational Development (NIED) have consistently evaluated the curriculum. However, achieving the intended educational outcomes has remained a challenge. The most recent review cycle, which ran from 2012 to 2022, led to a restructuring of school phases and changes to curriculum content.

Inyega, Arshad-Ayaz, Naseem, and Elsayed (2021) conducted a thorough analysis of how curriculum reviews are produced and reproduced in Kenya, highlighting the need to revisit the Kenyan basic education curriculum to better align with labour market demands and comply with local and international education laws. The authors contend that the curriculum has undergone significant changes to become more inclusive and focused on practical applications. This change has enabled us to focus more on the needs of each learner, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or the challenges they may face. It's all about creating an inclusive environment that supports everyone's journey.

Despite these advancements, there remains notable dissatisfaction around the scale and scope of the revised curriculum and the methods employed by the curriculum review team. There has been strong resistance from various stakeholders, prompting the authors to advocate prioritising teacher inclusion in

future curriculum reviews. Furthermore, they suggest that subsequent reviews integrate document analysis and research as primary methodological orientations.

Rasco (2016), Basu (2020), and Courtney (2024) highlighted the importance of research in curriculum review, which encompasses effective planning and the communication of research findings to promote change. The curriculum review process should support educational functions, establish strategic frameworks, and outline achievable objectives that can be met within designated timeframes. This perspective emphasises the significance of temporal and spatial considerations within structuration theory, in which agencies operate within specific time frames that ultimately shape the outcomes of curriculum change. In Namibia, the curriculum review is actively endorsed by the government's commitment to ensuring equitable and high-quality education, in alignment with the aspirations outlined in Vision 2030 (MoEAC, 2021). Since achieving independence, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with NIED, has conducted regular reviews of the curriculum; however, the desired educational outcomes have not yet been fully realised. The most recent review cycle lasted from 2012 to 2022 and resulted in restructured school phases and revised curriculum content.

Riley (1983) emphasises that at the heart of structuration theory is the need to understand what drives both change and stability in social systems. When it comes to curriculum review, the complex interactions among various knowledgeable individuals involved can significantly alter the relationships and structures within

society. This process of reviewing the curriculum is not just a bureaucratic exercise; it's a vital means for educational progress. It empowers education ministries and governments to implement the teaching methods and practices they envision, underscoring the important role that research plays in shaping effective curricula.

### **3.3. The Role of Research in Curriculum Review**

Reviewing a curriculum is an important process that involves people and various resources. One of those resources is research, which can really help inform decisions and improve the whole system. It plays a key role in how we develop curricula. For instance, Courtney (2024) emphasised the importance of research in shaping effective curriculum development. It highlights how understanding educational needs and trends can lead to a more relevant and impactful learning experience for students. It provides the evidence needed for educators and policymakers to make informed choices about what should be included in the curriculum. Research helps ensure that what we teach is grounded in best practices in education, enabling curriculum developers to identify the most effective ways to teach different subjects. Additionally, it ensures that the curriculum is culturally responsive and considers all aspects of human development. Different countries have their own approaches to curriculum review, and research helps identify potential issues, guiding appropriate actions to address them. The role of education research in curriculum review is discussed below:

### 3.3.1 International Studies on the Role of Research in Curriculum Review

Research plays a crucial role in education and curriculum review. Consequently, all major decisions and changes in education must be informed by research. In 2018, Zapp, Helgetun, and Powell evaluated educational research in Norway; they assessed the role of research regarding the quality of education provided, capacity development, educational focus, relevance of subject content, and the overall societal impacts of research on education. In this context, the study raised concerns about how educational research has influenced educational policies and practices in the country. Some research was neither published nor accessible to the research division, which hampered their findings. The authors expressed concern that some research was conducted merely to fulfil graduation requirements rather than for publication, thus robbing the curriculum process of much valuable information.

Similarly, Kim (2019) notes that while research provides the foundation and reveals new insights, its findings are not always helpful. In some cases, many research studies go unpublished, resulting in limited information. A similar study by Basu (2020) in India found that research offers original and first-hand information that can provide evidence on the complexities of an inquiry practice. A curriculum is grounded on a clear purpose and opportunities, as suggested by research. Research can be used at various stages of curriculum review, focusing on education structures or agents within and outside the classroom. UNESCO (2018)

considers curriculum review a key strategic goal of education, which should be undertaken regularly with current, reliable research evidence. However, few countries are currently using research to inform their curriculum reviews. Research should be integral to all social structures, including the experiences, norms, and values of human agents.

Structures and agencies are interconnected and rely on one another, even in research by interpreting research findings, and making informed decisions about curriculum review. Failure to establish effective interdependency can lead to poor outcomes. Steiner (2017) raises concerns that research on curriculum effects has not provided in-depth details on what makes a curriculum effective. Steiner (2017) shares that there is not a lot of research focusing on what truly makes research successful. He mentioned that when different functions within the same framework do not interact or rely on each other, it can lead to important elements being neglected. This often results in producing content that feels repetitive or too similar. Thus, there is a need to emphasise promoting the duality of structures to make educational research accessible to all stakeholders. Kaupp and Frank (2014) highlight an important aspect of the educational landscape in the United States: most policymakers rely on research to guide their decisions. This reliance underscores the government's commitment to supporting and promoting active involvement in education research. However, they also point out a significant challenge: when there is not enough quality research or when research findings aren't shared effectively, it can contribute to failures in education. Essentially, good

research is crucial for making informed decisions that ultimately impact students and schools.

Karseth et al (2023) emphasise the vital connection between education research and its practical applications. They point out how research plays a crucial role in shaping and improving curriculum development, ensuring that what is taught in classrooms is grounded in solid theory and research insights. Airaksinen, Halinen, and Linturi (2017) highlight that the curriculum review is a process resulting in various research projects and policy evaluations that are collected, analysed, and shared with the curriculum team. This requires human agents to perform social actions through mental models, which serve as tools to guide everyday social actions. The curriculum team published and shared drafts with the general public to allow contributions and feedback on the successes of the reviewed curriculum. The feedback was published on an open website accessible to stakeholders.

Basu (2020) highlights the importance of research as it produces new knowledge and evidence. Kumar, Singh, and Ratnakar (2018) share a similar view to Basu (2020), arguing that although various sources of information can inform and transform education, research can assist educators in uncovering the truth and revealing unknown facts. The research concentrated on existing concerns to produce innovative and insightful knowledge that can be utilised to improve and address issues in education, such as underperformance.

Alvarado (2017) explains that educational research lays a foundation for new knowledge that can be used to improve educational practices; thus, research

findings should be reliable. Meanwhile, Levy et al. (2018:5) emphasise the importance of educational research as a perspective that allows various educational aspects to be examined, questioned, and reflected upon, providing evidence that can impact decision-making and changes. He highlights that an academic lens can offer a platform to examine the ontological views and applicability of education research through structuration. Karseth et al. (2023) highlight the importance of curriculum-derived knowledge, emphasising how research influences human perceptions of reality. Insights drawn from educational research inform decisions regarding the types of knowledge created and shared by various stakeholders in the education system. These insights have impacted the curriculum review process, influenced social structures, and fostered improved relationships among stakeholders in the organisational context. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the effectiveness of the application of research within this curriculum review process.



*Figure 3.1 The role of research in curriculum review. Adapted from Basu (2020)*

Research plays a crucial role in shaping the curriculum. It lays the groundwork of knowledge that provides the philosophical and conceptual tools needed for the curriculum team to enhance and refine the educational framework. This ultimately helps foster better social structures within the education system, ensuring it meets the needs of all students. Through critical and logical analyses, research identifies gaps and needs that must be addressed to achieve the desired curriculum outcomes. Moreover, research enables decision-makers such as policymakers, implementers, and reviewers, to make informed decisions (Basu, 2020). However, Akkerman, Bakker and Penuel (2021) question the relevance of research, suggesting that the focus on outcomes and impacts has overshadowed the need

for in-depth ontological conceptualisation. Dündar and Merç (2017) took a closer look at how research influences the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum in Turkey. They emphasised that research plays a crucial role as a reflective tool for teachers, helping them improve their practices and better understand their students' needs. The authors noted that teachers, as implementers and participants in school activities, felt they were merely carrying out token research for curriculum panels, rather than actively engaging in rigorous educational research. As a result, teachers are often limited in what they can research, and their studies are rarely consulted or published. Therefore, teachers need encouragement and empowerment to participate in educational research.

Educational research can serve as an instrument to enlighten and guide curriculum panels and reviewers regarding the best practices that will lead to effective review and implementation. However, this is not guaranteed; as Fullan (2008, 2015, and 2018) has highlighted, despite the research on curriculum, the implementation process remains a challenge. The author pointed out the gaps between curriculum policies and classroom practices and the lack of teachers' empowerment during the curriculum review. Nevertheless, they are expected to implement the revised curriculum. Similarly, Godfrey & Brown (2019) note that while universities are seen as institutions that produce knowledge through research, there are persistent debates about the importance, impact, and role of educational research in how curricula are reviewed and put into practice. Knowledgeable individuals make personal decisions, and their values, norms, and beliefs can shape their actions.

Shah's (2022) study on education in Pakistan highlights the considerable challenges involved in curriculum review. While most stakeholders support revising the curriculum, the implementation has been criticised for lacking a robust research foundation. It appears to be strongly affected by the country's political climate and financial constraints. One of the main concerns raised was that the reform process felt unrealistic due to a disconnect between the initial planning stages and the actual rollout of the new curriculum. Additionally, the study highlighted that those responsible for implementing the changes often felt excluded from the review process, leaving them unprepared and uncertain about how to implement the new curriculum updates effectively. This disconnect between setting policies and implementing them raises important questions about the practicality of these reforms in the education sector and their impact on broader societal development.

### 3.3.2 The Role of Research on Curriculum Review in the African Context

Numerous studies have examined the role of research within the African context. For instance, Burrill, Lappan, and Gonulates (2015) conducted a survey across eleven countries, looking at both developed and developing nations in Africa, including Namibia. These findings highlight the specific challenges and opportunities that research encounters in this diverse setting region. Although their

survey focused solely on a curriculum review for Mathematics, they discovered a gap between the policies and frameworks of the mathematics curriculum review concerning the implementation process. They acknowledged that many participating countries had policies establishing standards and guidelines for the review process; nevertheless, the use of research to inform the curriculum reviewers was not considered in many countries. The authors recommend the practical application of research in reviewing the policies, educational materials, and all subject areas.

February et al. (2022) reviewed research on learning support in Mathematics education across Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. They discovered that these countries exhibited weak Mathematics performance and limited research on teaching and learning subjects. This suggests that a lack of research can lead to educational shortcomings, making intervention crucial to emphasise the importance of research at both micro and macro levels of education.

Recent studies from Sub-Saharan Africa consistently show that 'evidence-based' curriculum reforms often struggle because of structural issues. In Kenya, the shift to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has been widely examined. Mutai et al. (2024) and Cheruiyot (2024) suggest that, while the policy has sound pedagogical principles, the 'structural' rollout overlooked teachers' 'agency,' leading to resistance due to insufficient training and resources. Similarly, in Ghana, the Standards-Based Curriculum faced similar challenges. Takyi et al. (2025) highlight that, despite the government's claims of alignment with global standards

(SDG 4), limited allocative resources (funding and materials) constrained implementers' agency. In Zimbabwe, Manokore (2022) found that negative teacher attitudes weakened the Competency-Based model, reflecting what Giddens describes as 'signification' (shared meaning). These examples from Tanzania (Komba & Mwandangi, 2023) and South Africa (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019) support the current study. They show that across Africa, curriculum reform is often viewed as a technical policy change rather than a process shaped by social structuration, leading to the same 'implementation gap' seen in Namibia.

Educational research brings many benefits, but there are still concerns about how these findings are actually put into practice. While research is crucial for reviewing curricula, Steiner (2017) points out that there isn't enough research on how different curricula really impact learning, especially when it comes to defining what makes a curriculum effective. A study by Inyega et al. (2021) in Kenya highlighted the role of research in assessing educational program reforms. They noted that Kenya's curricula have adapted over time to meet shifting labour market demands. Overall, countries that have made notable advances in education systems typically achieved this through effective implementation of revised curricula.

### 3.3.3 The Role of Research on Curriculum Review in Namibia

In Namibia, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) is the primary body responsible for reviewing the curriculum. The MoEAC (2018) has also

established a reform forum journal focusing on research that can transform basic education. The Reform Forum (MoEAC, 2016) is a publication of the NIED. It is open to researchers to publish and share their findings after conducting educational research at various levels. The journals are distributed to local universities, Regional Education Offices, and schools in Namibia. Although the initial plan was to publish the journal three times a year to promote dialogue around educational reform and enhance educational development in Namibia, this has not always occurred due to the limited research work submitted to NIED by educators and researchers. Consequently, issues of the journal have only appeared irregularly.

There was a transformation and increased interest in the NIED research journal after different approaches were used to inform the public how to publish their research papers for educational purposes from 2018 to 2024:

- *Reform Forum Volume 26, Issue 1 (2018) six articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 27, Issue 1 (2019) seven articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 28, Issue 1 (2020) seven articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 28, Issue 2 (2020): six articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 29, Issue 1 (2021): six articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 29, Issue 2 (2021): eight articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 30, Issue 1 (2022): nine articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 30, Issue 2 (2022): five articles*
- *Reform Forum Volume 31, Issue 1 (2023): nine articles*

- *Reform Forum Volume 31, issue 2 (2023): ten articles*

Following an analysis of The Reform Forum, it is clear that numerous articles on education in Namibia have been submitted and published. Notably, the majority of authors are lecturers from the University of Namibia, with many articles co-authored by colleagues or students. A distinct pattern emerges in terms of article representation, with some authors appearing in almost all journals, while others have multiple publications in a single journal. Although the articles cover various aspects of education, primarily focusing on implementing the curriculum and classroom practices, none specifically address the role of research or aspects of education related to curriculum review. There is a noticeable lack of studies coming from the NIED's research or professional development division. Many of the authors are academics who are not directly engaged with the day-to-day challenges of the basic education curriculum. This gap highlights the need for more voices and perspectives that are closely connected to the practical realities of education.

Apart from the NIED journals, researchers and academicians can use different platforms to publish their work and share their findings with the public, such as university journals, international publishing agencies, and educational conferences. So far, I have not found any studies investigating how research is incorporated into curriculum review, particularly in the Namibian context. This makes my study important, as it aims to highlight how research can assist the

curriculum division at NIED. I hope the results will improve the use of research in the curriculum review process.

Most research has focused on the implementation process. For example, Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2022) studied how the revised History curriculum was adopted in secondary schools within Namibia's Khomas region. Teachers criticised the curriculum, claiming they had no input during its review and were simply expected to implement it. They voiced worries about being asked to implement a curriculum they did not fully comprehend, feeling unprepared due to insufficient training and limited educational resources such as textbooks.

In a study conducted by Jatileni and Jatileni (2018), in their research, they looked into the perspectives of primary school teachers in the Omusati region regarding the integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in their classrooms. They sought to understand how these educators view the role and impact of technology on teaching and learning experiences. With ninety teachers participating through a questionnaire, the results revealed some important insights. While the teachers acknowledged the need to incorporate ICT into their teaching as outlined in the revised curriculum, many reported facing significant challenges, primarily due to a lack of available ICT tools in their schools. Some even expressed feeling underprepared to make the necessary changes. These findings shed light on a crucial disconnect between the ideal outlined in the curriculum and what is happening in practice. To tackle this gap, it is helpful to explore how research can influence the process of reviewing the curriculum. This approach can ensure that

the teaching methods are grounded in evidence and better meet the needs of the students. This study aims to uncover effective strategies to encourage collaboration among researchers, teachers, and students, enabling them to share their research findings and recommendations, especially when it comes to improving curriculum practices.

### **3.4 The Role of Politics in Curriculum Review**

Politics has significantly influenced curriculum review. Global research highlights various ways political factors shape this process. One key influence is through policy decisions. For example, Basu (2020) in India found that the government is the main authority over education, with political powers shaping educational goals. Basu also noted that curriculum reviews follow government-mandated policies and standards.

Similar results were observed by Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen, and Huang (2020) in their study of OECD countries, which include over 40 developed nations such as Japan, France, Singapore, Portugal, and the USA. They pointed out that, although countries differ in their methods of curriculum review, a common pattern exists: it is seen as a sensitive cultural and political process, as political leaders influence society's vision and decide what knowledge and skills are considered valuable. The authors advocated for a connection between curriculum policy and political support. They argued that without political backing, a curriculum policy would struggle to gain public support, which could hinder successful implementation. Conversely, the authors contend that research findings are sometimes overlooked

by politicians when making decisions; their choices are predominantly influenced by their political ideologies, which often result in blaming the previous administration for deficiencies in the educational landscape.

Burrill, Lappan, and Gonulates (2015) conducted a further study in Brazil. They found that curricular standards were influenced by political timing and election campaigns, with political mandates dominating the education agenda. The authors also discovered that in Hong Kong, decisions about educational curricula were motivated far more by political considerations than educational research. Changes in political leadership can also result in curriculum reviews. The new government may wish to reassess the curriculum to align it with its own political agenda. This may involve reviewing existing curricula by either removing or adding subjects or introducing new teaching methods. Roberts (2018) found that politicians' political beliefs can significantly influence which topics are included or excluded from school curricula. This highlights how personal ideologies can shape education and the subjects that students learn about. A similar study was conducted by Gamage, Sasahara, and Chen (2021) in Sri Lanka. They examined the impact of political ideology on the curriculum in Sri Lanka, and discovered that the ruling party's political ideology significantly shaped the selection of content, particularly regarding the inclusion of patriotic and religious values. They suggest educational principles rather than political ideologies should steer curriculum development.

A recent study by Manzon (2023) conducted in Singapore highlighted some interesting parallels with other research on curriculum review. The study revealed

that political ideology significantly influences the curriculum, with the government actively determining review content and educational resources. The authors stressed the importance of basing curriculum reviews on sound educational principles, as well as considering the actual needs and future directions of education.

Additionally, other researchers like Roberts (2018) and Karseth et al. (2023) pointed out that while research is essential for informed decision-making, it can be met with scepticism or even hostility at times. When research findings challenge prevailing beliefs or the established order, those in power may feel threatened, creating pushback against proposed changes. Unfortunately, instead of fostering an environment where independent voices can contribute to educational discussions, some politicians attempt to limit researchers' access and influence. This creates a chilling effect, leading to fewer studies being published for public consideration, which in turn diminishes the potential impact of research on curriculum decisions.

Africa is no exception regarding the influence of political power. During their international research on education, Vavrus and Pekol (2015) examined the impact of politics on the curriculum in Africa. They found that the politics of international aid agencies and donor organisations significantly influenced curriculum reviews in Africa. The authors emphasise that, in curriculum development, prioritising the needs and values of local communities is essential, rather than allowing

international aid agencies to dictate the content done. Inyega et al. (2021) also point out that one major obstacle to successfully implementing the curriculum in Kenya is the political interference in education. Despite the country's commitment to democratic principles, politicians have muddied the waters of the curriculum review process with their decisions and have not given the curriculum review team the support it needs to be effective. All decisions and reforms were finalised and endorsed by the political leader of the management team, leaving the curriculum review team without the freedom to make independent choices. This implies that, even if research is conducted on various areas of education, politicians can interfere with the decision-making processes, compelling review panels to align with their preferences rather than adhere to research findings and recommendations. This may discourage researchers from presenting their findings to the Ministry of Education.

Mwenda (2023) highlights that a major obstacle to educational reforms in Kenya is political influence. Despite Kenya's commitment to democratic governance, political leaders often interfere in the curriculum review process, compromising the independence of education experts and institutions. The research suggests that many decisions regarding educational reforms are shaped more by political considerations than by solid research or effective practices. This situation creates hesitancy among researchers, who may hold back their recommendations from the Ministry of Education, worried that their insights might not mesh with the prevailing political interests.

Research by UNESCO (2018) reveals that most current educational and classroom practices differ from research recommendations. The study further points out that genuine learning necessitates the active engagement of research, which can aid learners in effectively constructing knowledge and enhancing their skills and understanding of the subject content. However, this was not observed. A study by Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2017) explored the role of research in Social Sciences and found notable and surprising findings. They discovered that research didn't really have much impact when it came to making decisions or implementing changes. This was largely due to the influence of politics, which often overshadowed the evidence that researchers provided. In Namibia, the laws are formulated by the legislative branch (parliament), which includes the education system; the authority to implement changes lies within the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, one of Namibia's executive branches (MoEAC, 2018).

In 2022, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) made a statement highlighting the significance of revising the curriculum as a critical step towards meeting the Education for All objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 for Education, with a target of 2030. Namibia is committed to realizing these aspirations. The new Basic Education curriculum is designed not just to address the current needs of students, but also to align with the broader aims of SDG 4, focusing on providing quality education that reflects the ambitions outlined in Vision 2030. The initiative aims to ensure that every child has access to enriching learning experiences that support their growth and success. However, there has been a concerning trend in the performance of students taking the

Namibia Secondary School Certificate (NSSC) and the Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) examinations, with only a limited number achieving results sufficient for progression to tertiary education. This situation suggests that despite efforts to revise the curriculum, student performance is lacking, prompting questions about the interplay between the political framework and educational structures at both macro and micro levels, as well as the role of research in informing decision-making.

In a nutshell, the literature above illuminates the influence and power of politics on curriculum review. Politicians should be directed by evidence-based research and work cooperatively with the agents involved in the whole process to ensure a comprehensive and successful curriculum review that meets educational needs locally and globally.

### **3.5 The Curriculum Review Processes**

Research shows that curriculum review does not occur by chance, and there are clear processes involved. In this section, I examined the literature on how curricula are reviewed across different countries, beginning with the international context and then moving to regional and local settings.

#### **3.5.1 International Trajectories on Curriculum Review**

Different countries use different systems and structures in which the agents operate. The curriculum review process varies from country to country due to

different education systems, structures, rules, resources, and educational approaches. Various countries review their curricula, following specific processes.

Research by Gouëdard, Pont, Hyttinen, and Huang (2020) highlights the many challenges facing modern societies across political, social, economic, environmental, and technological domains. Given these complexities, it is increasingly crucial to continually review and adapt educational curricula, ensuring students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in the 21st century, as underscored by the OECD (2019).

Countries like Estonia, Finland, Japan, Norway, and Wales are paving the way with innovative reforms aimed at fostering essential competencies in their students. Through initiatives like Education 2030, more than 40 countries are collaborating to identify and define the skills needed for success in the future. While each nation brings its unique perspectives, shaped by its individual cultures and values, a shared focus has emerged around themes like well-being, learner independence, and effective problem-solving. This approach not only tackles local educational needs but also aligns with the global context we are currently navigating. Together, these curriculum reforms foster an enriching learning environment that enables students to succeed in an interconnected world.

Lock, Hill, and Dyjur (2018) conducted a year-long curriculum review of education in Canada and shared their experiences of the review process. Similarly, Halinen's (2018) study in Finland, as well as DüNDAR and Merç's (2017) study in Turkey, showed that the curriculum review process includes the objectives/reasons and

specific content to be reviewed, the approach of the review, including the stakeholders, the collection of data and providing feedback. In a nutshell, the authors agree that the curriculum review process should include the following processes:



*Figure 3.2 Curriculum review process. Adapted from Lock et al. (2018: 15), Sabah (2020), as well as Dündar and Merç (2017)*

Several authors agree that the initial step in the curriculum review process involves recognising the need for a change review. Aydin and Adiguzel (2016) highlighted that the need for a review can arise due to various factors, such as changes in the educational system, societal expectations, technological advancements, and shifting demographics. Lock et al. (2018:15), Sabah (2020), and Durndar and Merc (2017) state that the first stage mainly deals with organisational structures. The structure involves the processes that should be followed in all stages of the curriculum review, including the allocated time for the review.

Sabah (2020) emphasises that the authority is responsible for setting objectives and creating a timeline for the review. This involves the duality of structures and how the agents will monitor and act throughout the process to ensure a successful review. The next stage involves planning and communication, and having resources in place, including budgeting and research. After data collection, the curriculum team should engage in data analysis, verifying the findings, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations. At each stage, the team should provide feedback, identifying the strengths or achievements and weaknesses or challenges. Kipchumba (2019) found that setting clear and specific objectives for the review process was critical for its success. The review team should also define the scope of the review. Sabah (2020) indicated that stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation is crucial at each stage, as it helps the team gain a broader perspective of the success of the curriculum.

Halinen (2018) and Lavonen (2020) described the curriculum review in Finland as successful due to the strength of its education system. They also noted that the review process was goal-oriented, with careful planning of all activities, and well-designed and timed periods. Collaboration and networking played a key role, as did piloting and disseminating the pilot outcomes, using a reflective approach. According to Halinen (2018), collaboration and networking provided opportunities for discussing challenges in schools and teacher education, involving the curriculum committee, policymakers, teachers, educators, parents, universities, stakeholders, and the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, collaborative classroom practices encouraged students to engage in multidisciplinary, phenomenon-based, and project-based studies. Hughes and Lewis (2020) explored the challenges surrounding curriculum reform and how it impacts teachers' professional autonomy at the University of Wales. They found that while those responsible for reviewing the curriculum wanted to include teachers in developing new teaching methods, many teachers felt overwhelmed by their current workloads and a lack of empowerment. Consequently, they were hesitant to take part in the curriculum review process or engage in research that could affect it.

Similarly, Barrot (2019) studied the review of the English curriculum in the Philippines. He noted that the revisions focused more on aligning with 21st-century learning ideals than on introducing meaningful changes. Barrot pointed out that there was a noticeable lack of comprehensive research and effort from curriculum reviewers, education agencies, and teachers, which hindered effective implementation of the proposed curriculum changes.

The above discussion indicates that, internationally, curriculum review processes are structured but complex. They are influenced by different aspects, such as the stakeholders' empowerment, the autonomy of the curriculum team, and how they exercise their authority. Therefore, research may be used to provide needed guidance and information which will lead to an effective and successful curriculum review.

### 3.5.2. Curriculum Review Processes in Africa

As with the international community, so too African countries follow established processes for their curriculum reviews. For example, researchers Pamela and Mwila (2022), Inyega et al. (2021), and Cunningham (2018), in their studies within the Eastern and Southern African region, described the curriculum review as an ongoing process. This process involves planning the review activities, designing and mapping the review, implementing consultations, evaluating, and reporting. Each stage leads to the next, with various structures and agents exercising their power and authority in decision-making to ensure the successful execution of each stage. In their comprehensive investigation of curriculum review processes across Sub-Saharan Africa, Shimenyenge, Hamukwaya, and Jatileni (2022) highlighted the diverse methodologies employed by various nations. Their research elucidates that, despite the heterogeneity in approaches, a common framework emerges, characterised by a series of structured activities that unfold before, during, and after the review process. This framework not only reflects the unique educational contexts of the countries involved but also underscores the importance of systematic examination and iterative refinement of curricular designs to address

the evolving educational needs within the region. Cunningham (2018) reported tensions among different departments, agencies, and stakeholders during the curriculum review process; thus, he recommended teamwork and cooperation among all parties involved at every phase.

The social structure of different countries differs because they are all influenced by their own particular backgrounds, values, and norms, as well as the objectives of their review. Despite these differences, all curriculum reviews were spearheaded by an organisational structure that took the lead in ensuring that the agents/actors tasked to review the curriculum were supported and provided with available resources and structural rules on which the agents could act. The curriculum reviewers were expected to exercise autonomy and authority to establish practices such as curriculum meetings and consultations and use research in reviewing the curriculum.

### 3.5.3 Curriculum Review Processes in Namibia

The Namibian curriculum review is not an exception to the African curriculum review process and it has been a critical topic among scholars and researchers in education. According to ministerial policy (MoEAC, 2018, 2020, and 2022), the curriculum review is conducted by a structure of curriculum panels. These panels mainly consist of NIED curriculum and research division officials and selected stakeholders, such as subject experts, researchers, members of educational higher institutions, parents, and representatives from the Ministry of Education. Josua, Auala, and Miranda (2022) and Mabokela and Mlambo (2016) explain that

the Ministry of Education conducts a needs assessment to determine the framework for the curriculum review by specifying what needs to be revised. MoEAC (2020) reported that the current review arises from the recommendations made at the 2011 educational conference, where different scholars and representatives from various sectors of education, including Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) representatives, researchers, national and international experts, parents, teachers, and learners, participated. Through the NIED, the Ministry of Education utilised various platforms to engage stakeholders through consultative meetings to assess the necessity of a curriculum review.

In their 2022 study, Josua, Auala, and Miranda explain that creating a curriculum involves two distinct phases: design and piloting. The process starts with a needs assessment, which helps the Ministry understand what learners require at different grade levels. Once the needs are established, the Ministry goes on to develop a curriculum that clearly outlines the essential content, skills, and knowledge students should acquire. After the curriculum is created, it enters the pilot testing phase. During this stage, the Ministry not only puts the curriculum into practice but also provides crucial support materials, including textbooks, teacher guides, and assessment tools, to ensure that educators have everything they need to help students succeed. The MoEAC (2022) requires the curriculum review to be piloted in a selection of schools before it is implemented nationally in order to test its effectiveness and to make adjustments. Once the curriculum is finalised, it is implemented in all schools nationwide. As the leading actor, the Ministry continuously monitors and evaluates the curriculum's effectiveness, making

adjustments as necessary to ensure that it remains relevant and practical. In a 2017 study, Ponce highlights the curriculum review process in Namibia, emphasising how it brings together a diverse range of stakeholders in the education system. This collaborative effort showcases Namibia's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that various voices and perspectives are considered in shaping the education landscape.

While the literature references various stages and processes of curriculum review internationally, there is limited evidence of research utilisation at regional and local levels in Africa and Namibia. Researchers are considered key stakeholders, yet their contributions are often overlooked during implementation. This highlights the necessity for a detailed analysis of the role research plays at each phase of curriculum review. I aim for this study to help bridge the gap and make a meaningful contribution to existing knowledge in education.

In Namibia, the constitution holds ultimate authority over all basic education matters. The Ministry of Education and the NIED are responsible for overseeing all aspects of curriculum review. The Ministry sets the rules, policies, and provides resources to guide and supervise all related activities. Curriculum reviewers engage with various stakeholders to foster positive social relationships, which can contribute to social system improvements.

### **3.6 Constraints in the Utilisation of Education Research in Reviewing the Curriculum**

Many challenges hinder the effectiveness of research as a tool for curriculum review and restrain the success of the reviewed curriculum in general. One can question the legitimacy of the learning objectives towards the economic emancipation and general development of countries; why are countries still struggling after their curricula have been reviewed over time? Some of the challenges that contribute to the failure of the reviewed curriculum are discussed below:

#### 3.6.1 Inadequate Research to Inform Curriculum Review

Courtney (2024) highlights the importance of using research to evaluate and improve the curriculum, but he points out that there are significant obstacles that can make this process challenging. One major issue is the lack of sufficient research to guide curriculum decisions. Furthermore, even when research exists, it might not always be relevant to the specific needs of a local context, as education systems differ greatly between countries. What works well in one setting may not have the same effect elsewhere, so it is essential for research to be customised to address the unique challenges faced by different communities. Courtney (2024) also notes that various factors, such as funding, political influences, and personal biases, can significantly influence research outcomes, making it even more complex to apply findings effectively to curriculum development.

#### 3.6.2 The Pressure on the Education System

Cunningham (2018) reported that most curriculum reviews complicate the education system since they put pressure on the fragile learning process. He

reported that countries like Namibia, Botswana, Ethiopia, and others already faced overcrowded curricula with fundamental flaws in their education systems, such as crowded classrooms, low academic achievement, and insufficient teacher skills. This suggests that inadequate coordination among various educational system components can create barriers and challenges during curriculum review.

Pamela and Mwila (2022) and Kim (2019) highlight a common concern about revised curricula: they often miss the mark, leading to disappointing learner performance. This issue is particularly pressing in many African countries, where a variety of challenges must be tackled through effective education. Furthermore, the way institutions are structured and operate within a country can significantly impact how well new educational policies are implemented. If these policies are not clearly communicated or lack sufficient funding and support, it may prevent teachers and administrators from acting in students' best interests. It's important to recognise how organisational hierarchies and government regulations can either facilitate progress or restrict educators from implementing meaningful changes.

A study in Namibia by Mabokela and Mlambo (2016), along with Josua, Auala, and Miranda (2022), examined the curriculum review process since independence. It found that, despite shifts from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching methods, most subject content has remained unchanged. The researchers noted that the current curriculum was only marginally grounded in research and recommended conducting impact studies at each stage of the review to promote successful implementation. This raises a concern that without a critical analysis of

the current research, one might not address the existing challenges, which can lead to tension between the curriculum reviewers and implementers (teachers). This is not solely a Namibian issue. Cunningham (2018) reported that academic performance remains stubbornly low despite attempts to review the basic curriculum in Eastern and Southern African countries. He viewed the shift from the traditional to the new curriculum as disappointing, noting only superficial changes. Therefore, significant effort is necessary for the successful implementation of the revised curriculum. Unlike others who see the main issue as a lack of research, Cunningham (2018) and Stein (2017) pointed out that problems like overcrowded classrooms, inadequate training, limited resources, and low teacher motivation and skills are the primary challenges faced by many Eastern and Southern African countries. Despite this, these issues are often overlooked and not incorporated into the curriculum review process.

For structuration to produce and reproduce social structures, the focus should be on their duality; structure and agency should be given equal opportunity and empowered to carry out social practices through interaction, not in isolation. They should collaborate to reproduce a social system of effective curriculum review and educational research

### 3.6.2 Stakeholders Involvement

Various stakeholders were involved in reviewing the curriculum. Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen and Haung (2020) emphasise that various stakeholders tend to push their own agendas, either supporting or opposing curriculum reform, which then affects

the organisations or communities they are embedded in. The expectations for a successful curriculum review lie within the duality of structures, whereby all stakeholders, students, teachers, schools, the community, education systems, and related authorities are included. Barrot (2019) highlights the fact that aligning the reviewed curriculum with 21st-century learning principles is challenging; thus, stakeholders must collaborate and share the responsibility of implementing the reviewed curriculum. The author indicated that if teachers are not well informed and trained in the changes within the intended curriculum, it might lead to a gap in implementation.

Similarly, the OECD (2020) indicated that if there are no clear guidelines and policies on how changes should be implemented, it might lead to misunderstandings and criticism. It is therefore suggested that there should be a clear roadmap, model, or theory that guides curriculum reform to avoid confusion and failure of the curriculum goals. This study aims to develop a user-friendly model that encourages all stakeholders to utilise research. Stakeholders can access various types of research conducted in the education sector and share their findings to inform the curriculum review process.

Fullan (2015) argues that curriculum review is demanding; it is a lengthy process, and individual views and organisational structures can influence the decisions on which aspects are to be reviewed. Consequently, Fullan suggests that curriculum review requires investment in training and capacity building for all stakeholders; it also requires financial provision and new approaches. He also indicated that there

is limited research or a comprehensive analysis of the reviewed content. To implement the curriculum successfully, teachers require comprehensible curriculum guides that designate what to do and why and adequate training in the use of the prescribed materials (Likando & Wolhuter, 2013).

Teachers should also be provided with easy-to-follow resources, plus regular support and supervision, to effectively implement education (UNESCO, 2020). Stakeholders, especially curriculum reviewers, can only determine the necessary training, content, and innovative approaches for successful curriculum implementation through research. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the role of research in the curriculum review process.

Lock et al. (2018) suggest that curriculum review should focus on areas of concern in education, which can be addressed through curriculum mapping. The authors highlight that curriculum mapping involves the entire process of curriculum review, giving all stakeholders a chance to contribute through various platforms, such as discussions, presentations, and research. However, if there is a lack of proper consultation and communication, the mapping process can be hampered. For instance, if only a select group of people, such as urban teachers, are consulted, the process might be seen as unfair to rural teachers. Curriculum review is a comprehensive process that goes beyond simply modifying the curriculum. Smith, Rogers-Draycott, & Bozward (2022) point out that it requires the combination of educational research results with the contributions and involvement of educators and specialists. They emphasise that a lack of support, teamwork, and cooperation

can significantly hinder the effectiveness of the curriculum review process. In educational settings, agents function within and impact social frameworks through a process of structuration, depending on these frameworks to aid social interactions. This dynamic allows educators and stakeholders to work together to determine the necessary changes, including who should implement them, when they should happen, and the methods that should be followed.

### 3.6.3 Lack of Funding and Availability of Resources

Financial support and essential resources are key components of structuration theory, functioning as rules and resources. These can either enable or obstruct the effective implementation of the curriculum review process. Ortiz-Ospina and Lippolis (2017) highlighted that, as education is a fundamental right, it is the government's responsibility to ensure access to quality education for all citizens. Many African countries struggle to achieve their educational goals due to insufficient funds. This issue is not confined to Africa; Hahnel, Hough, and Willis (2020) conducted a study in California and found that even though it is the fifth-largest state in the USA, its school funding was inadequate to meet educational objectives. The curriculum review process includes financial management and effective budgeting. The success of the review process relies on the funds allocated.

Cunningham (2018) documented the lack of resources experienced by the curriculum development division within many ministries of education. He further

pointed out that the staff employed for the curriculum review team had limited access to professional development. Although current budgets cover staff salaries and basic costs, funding for thorough research and development remains limited, especially as teachers are expected to implement new curricula. The curriculum review process is structured to be completed within a set timeframe to avoid delays. Akin and Sezgin (2024) examine the persistent challenges related to the review timeline in educational contexts. The study highlights that curriculum review teams often work under tight deadlines, which can compromise the thoroughness of their work. In contexts similar to those in Bangladesh, teams have reported difficulties in involving subject matter experts due to time constraints. Furthermore, the process of curriculum mapping remains resource-intensive and requires substantial time for effective execution. When faced with limited time, curriculum teams may find themselves balancing the pressure of deadlines with the need for comprehensive research to inform their decisions in curriculum reviews. Giddens (1984) characterises human actors as competent agents capable of applying their skills and knowledge to use and control other agents and social structures to bring about change.

### **3.7 Understanding the Methodologies used in Educational Research Presents an Opportunity to Enhance the Review Process of the Curriculum.**

Curriculum reviews are integral to the Education for All (EFA) goals, which aim to promote quality, access, equity, and democracy in education in Namibia, as

outlined by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1993. Thus, they are expected to meet global standards. Yates and Young (2010) confirm that curriculum reviews are considered necessary to address the current global challenges in countries such as China, Turkey, and Uganda. However, they noted a gap between reform policies and educational (classroom) practices. They suggested that a single complex approach to curriculum review is not the answer and that countries should rather adopt approaches which match their specific contexts and challenges. The following approaches are discussed below: evidence-based approach, curriculum mapping, and a collaborative approach.

### 3.7.1 Evidence-based Curriculum Review Approach

Good research can provide reliable evidence. Lock et al (2018) demonstrated that an evidence-based approach focuses on curricular practices and procedures that are based on contemporary literature, practices, and research. It lays the foundation for concrete and credible information that can be used to review the curriculum. UNESCO-IBE (2018) advised that proper evaluation is necessary when using this approach, as it can employ various methods for gathering evidence; the evidence-based approach can be qualitative, quantitative, experimental, as well as practical.

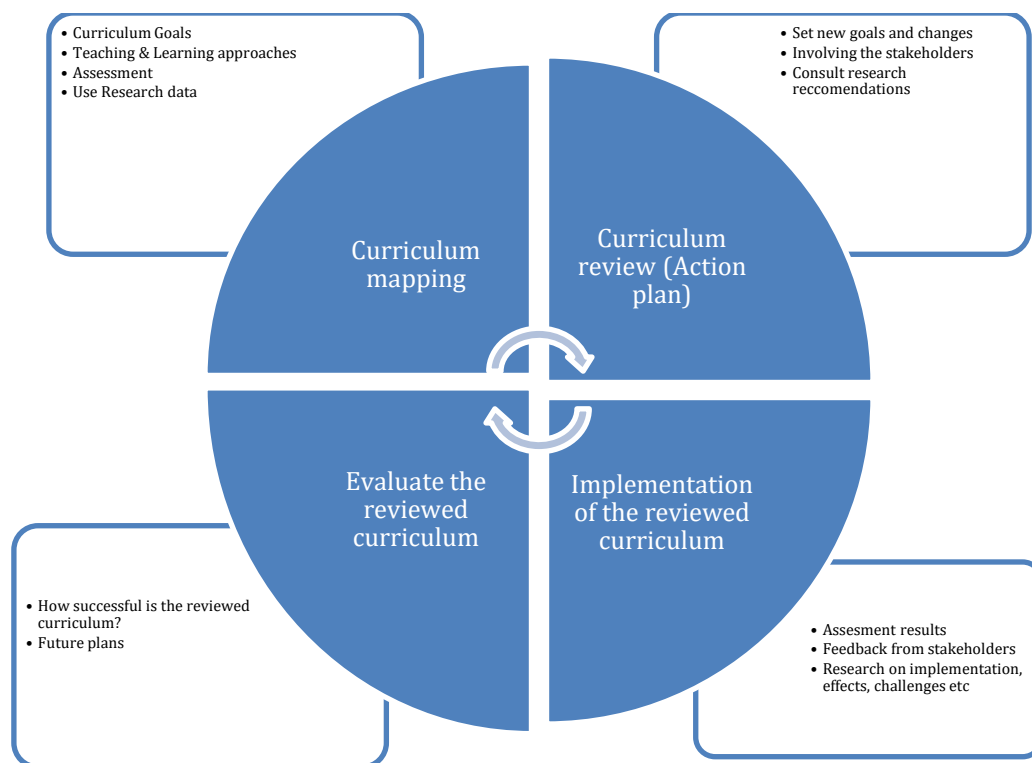
The curriculum review team can draw on local and international research as part of an evidence-based approach. Recent studies stress the need for developing countries to boost their research capacity by nurturing local researchers, aligning

themselves with national priorities, and maintaining sustainable research practices. A UNESCO Science Report (2021) highlights the urgent need for universities in Africa to evolve into research and innovation hubs, making a significant contribution to training skilled researchers. Likewise, a World Bank publication from 2022 underscores the importance of setting up robust institutional frameworks to support research initiatives and encourage collaboration among academia, industry, and government to drive sustainable development.

### 3.7.2 Curriculum Mapping and Benchmarking

Another way to review a curriculum is through curriculum mapping. Metzler, Rehrey, Kurz, and Middendorf (2017), as well as Dyjur et al. (2018), recommend using curriculum mapping to review the curriculum, which involves incorporating research findings to guide the process. Dyjur et al. (2018) explained that curriculum mapping covers the entire review process and strategic plans. According to the authors, mapping provides a roadmap and steps to achieve the review's desired goals. Furthermore, Johnson (2022) stresses that mapping the curriculum review process is essential; it offers a strategic framework that can be visualised using maps, charts, and graphs, allowing reviewers to identify gaps and weaknesses while finding solutions to existing problems.

*The mapping approach is highlighted in the diagram below*



*Figure 3.3 Curriculum mapping. Adapted from Dyjur et al. (2018)*

The above diagram shows the role of curriculum mapping as the foundation/base of curriculum review. It impacts other curriculum review processes, where panels are expected to use research data to guide their revision decisions. Recent research by Descartin et al. (2023) in the Philippines underscores a key benchmark for evaluating educational performance: the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The Philippines is at a pivotal moment, with PISA results revealing significant gaps, especially in reading literacy.

The K to 12 educational reforms mark a significant change in the country's approach to education. These reforms aim to align the Philippine education system

with global standards and provide students with a more complete and competitive learning experience.

However, the 2022 PISA results indicate that, despite these initiatives, reading literacy challenges remain a concern (OECD, 2023). CSAI (2018) highlights the significance of benchmarking, stating that a well-designed curriculum should offer students numerous opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies specified in educational standards. While these standards define what students need to learn, the curriculum outlines the methods and pathways for achieving that learning. When the curriculum is well-aligned with the standards, it helps ensure that students can effectively access and master the content and skills necessary to meet those educational goals. This alignment is essential for enabling students to reach the milestones their education sets for them.

### 3.7.3 Collaborative Approach with the Stakeholders

Aside from curriculum mapping, it is essential that education stakeholders, including researchers, are actively involved in the curriculum review process. Lavonen (2020), Rasco (2016), and Mahabeer (2018) all argue that collaboration among stakeholders at various stages of curriculum review is crucial for ensuring support and teamwork. Mahabeer (2018) also suggests empowering stakeholders, particularly teachers, parents, and learners. Similarly, Lavonen (2020) suggests that stakeholders like teachers, parents, and subject experts can contribute to research and share ideas based on the findings. Fullan (2016) proposes that revised curricula should be thoroughly examined to ensure they align with existing

policies to avoid contradictions between the old and new curricula. Giddens (1979) notes that individuals can choose the most suitable approach based on their worldview, personal beliefs, and interactions with others. By using research, stakeholders can make informed decisions that will be valued by those involved at various levels of the social hierarchy, from policymakers to the Ministry of Education, NIED, and all stakeholders.

#### 3.7.4 Combined Approach to Review the Curriculum

According to Cunningham (2018), a combined approach to reviewing the curriculum is essential, highlighting the need for teacher training, orientation, and resource development. Often, the blame for unsuccessful changes is placed on a single component, as curriculum departments can overshadow other crucial areas. Cunningham also stressed that curriculum reforms must be aligned with the broader education system in Eastern and Southern Africa, where teachers frequently lack adequate preparation and support. By involving teachers in the revision process, implementation issues can be identified early, and their commitment to the changes can be fostered.

Although curriculum review holds value, the OECD (2017) noted that implementing reforms is difficult because it often conflicts with deeply held beliefs and subjective realities within individuals and organisations (Fullan, 2015). Challenges include high costs, uncertain results, and stakeholder risk aversion, which hinder the initiation and execution of curriculum changes. Additionally, significant investments in training, capacity building, and resources are typically necessary for schools and

teachers to adopt new curricula, develop innovative teaching methods, and acquire necessary materials. As observed in many countries, educators and institutions often choose to maintain the status quo instead of seeking change (OECD, 2017).

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Curriculum review is a crucial issue in education today. Global changes, modern trends, and technological advancements compel governments to regularly update their curricula to address current needs. As an ongoing process, the success of curriculum review must be ensured. The literature explores research as a key tool for enhancing curriculum review. This chapter introduces the ideas of curriculum and curriculum review, explores the influence of research and politics in the process, and describes the steps involved in conducting a curriculum review. It concludes with a discussion of the challenges faced when applying research to curriculum review. The next chapter will concentrate on research methods.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This study aims to examine the role of research in curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia through structuration theory. Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen, and Haung (2020), Lock, Hill, and Dyjur (2018), and Dyjur et al. (2019) explained that curriculum review is one of the most pertinent issues in ensuring the duality of structure to respond to current needs and challenges. As reviewed in Chapter Three, according to Giddens (1979), research is one of the resources within social practices that should be considered when reviewing the curriculum. Thus, this research was carried out to address the following research questions:

1. What is the structuration role of educational research on curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?

#### **Sub-questions**

1. How is the knowledge produced through the duality of structures in education research related to curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia characterised?
2. How do curriculum reviewers, acting as agents, perceive the integration of educational research into the review of the Basic Education curriculum in Namibia?

3. How do the curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the structure of curriculum review in Namibia?
4. How can the utilisation of education research be enhanced for optimal contribution to curriculum review?

This chapter outlines the research methodology that directed the data collection process for the study. It is organised into several key sections:

- Initially, it discusses the research paradigm that influenced the approach.
- Then, it details the research design, overall methodology, target population, sampling strategies, and specific data collection methods.
- The chapter next reviews the data collection process, emphasising key concepts such as transferability, conformity, credibility, and dependability.
- Finally, it explains how the data collection procedures, research tools, and analysis techniques were articulated, along with a discussion on the study's trustworthiness and the ethical considerations involved.

## **4.2 Research Paradigm**

Research paradigms influence decisions regarding the researcher's ontology, epistemology, and methodological perspectives. For Oates (2006), research paradigms enable key theoretical considerations of individuals' decisions about the

realm they inhabit and the studies they question. Guba and Lincoln (2005) explain that paradigms are perspectives that guide the researcher throughout an investigation or study. Abdul Rehman and Alharthi (2016) explain that a paradigm goes beyond merely being a collection of beliefs or a theoretical framework rooted in specific assumptions about reality (ontology), knowledge acquisition (epistemology), and research approaches (methodology and methods). It also serves as a way to understand and study our surrounding world. In structuration theory, both social perspectives and personal viewpoints of individuals can greatly influence their behaviour, interactions, and actions within their social environment.

Ontology is essentially about understanding our beliefs regarding reality. It raises questions like whether there's one single reality, multiple realities, or perhaps none at all (Smith et al., 2022; Jones, 2021). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) suggest that researchers tend to have underlying assumptions about what reality is and whether it even exists, prompting them to explore the nature of that reality. The environment in which researchers work can also shape their perspectives on ontology.

Epistemology, on the other hand, deals with how we acquire knowledge and come to understand the world around us. Mertens (2015) highlights that it focuses on the methods we use to gather and interpret knowledge. Enworo (2023) emphasizes its critical role in guiding research, especially when it comes to selecting appropriate approaches and methodologies. A researcher's worldview—its epistemological stance greatly influences how they design and carry out their

projects. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) argue that methodology is crucial in generating, producing, and analysing data. Enworo (2023) describes methodology as a strategic plan that directs researchers in conducting their studies, outlining how to collect data effectively.

Having a solid methodology is vital, as it forms the backbone of research by detailing the strategies and processes required for data collection; without a methodology, there is no structured way to produce data. Researchers can choose from various philosophical approaches to shape their projects, such as positivism, constructivism, interpretivism, pragmatism, and transformative paradigms. Giddens' (1979) structuration theory contributes to this discussion by suggesting that individuals are knowledgeable agents who not only navigate but also create and recreate the social structures around them through their interactions and learned skills. This study employs an interpretivist paradigm, as explained below:

#### 4.2.1 Interpretivism Paradigm

Schwandt (2015) highlights that interpretivism questions the idea of a single, objective reality existing independently of our perceptions. Instead, it posits that our understanding of reality is influenced by social experiences and can differ based on individual perspectives and contexts. This view is consistent with structuration, which underscores the significance of social constructivism and the dynamic relationship between structure and agency.

According to Cresswell (2013 b), those who adopt an interpretivist approach understand knowledge as inherently subjective and socially constructed.

Therefore, it's crucial for researchers in this paradigm to grasp the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences and the contexts in which they unfold. Interpretivism recognises that people from different backgrounds may have unique viewpoints and interpretations of the world around them.

This study concentrates on the insights and perspectives of curriculum reviewers, who offer essential feedback when assessing Namibia's basic education curriculum. It involves acknowledging the variety of values, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds of the participants, and how these factors impact the review process. Sprake & Palmer (2022) point out that an interpretive approach focuses on how knowledge and meaning are created through interpretation, implying that objective knowledge does not exist independently of human thought and reasoning.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 21) describe the interpretative approach as one that urges researchers to see social phenomena from the participants' perspective, rather than through a purely academic view. This approach aims to grasp social events within their specific contexts (Gephart, 2019). The data gathered in this study are mainly verbal, often captured in audio or video recordings to maintain the authenticity of the setting for subsequent analysis. Consequently, an inductive analysis is employed, where the researcher looks for patterns in the data that can be categorised into broader themes. This process enhances our understanding of the phenomenon and may lead to the development of new theories.

Recent critics have claimed that the interpretive paradigm lacks generalisability and objectivity. However, modern scholars argue that it remains a rigorous and essential approach for understanding complex social phenomena. Smith and Nizza (2022) stress the importance of clarity and rigour in interpretive research, emphasising the need for transparency in methods, accuracy, and a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Their work is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, informed by current ideas about epistemology (what is known), ontology (what exists), and how people comprehend these concepts within social research.

Ontology sheds light on a researcher's beliefs about the nature of truth and its emergence in different settings (Creswell, 2017). Considering these philosophical foundations helps researchers address the complexities of social inquiry more effectively. The interpretive ontological perspective suggests that reality is socially constructed, enabling individuals to generate meaning and knowledge through their interactions and personal experiences. Within this framework, the social world is seen as fluid, shaped by individuals' varied perceptions and experiences. Differences in circumstances, beliefs, cultures, and experiences mean people might not perceive or understand reality in the same way. I believe that there isn't a single, absolute truth; instead, multiple truths exist. I engaged with participants, listening carefully to their unique perspectives and experiences, which deepened my understanding of how research can evaluate and improve curriculum development (Scotland, 2012).

When exploring epistemology, the emphasis is on how knowledge is gained and communicated (Audi, 2015). From an interpretive perspective, I see truth as subjective, shaped by individual perceptions and interpretations of reality. Consequently, I deliberately avoided generalising my findings beyond the specific context of my study (Creswell, 2017). Various factors like organisational structures, rules, resources, and environment may influence how people develop and reproduce new realities and meanings over time. Sprake & Palmer (2022) clarify that interpretivist epistemology holds that reality requires interpretation, and knowledge emerges from these interpretive, value-influenced social and subjective understandings. I relied on participants' shared experiences to understand their perspectives and the impact of research on curriculum review for basic education in Namibia, as expressed by the participants.

An interpretive structural social reality aided me in interpreting and analysing the evidence collected. It also enabled me to develop a model that could enhance the dualism of structures and relationships among researchers, implementers, and curriculum reviewers (Bahrudin, 2020, p. 14).

The interpretive paradigm centres on how curriculum review involved the interaction of structure and agency in utilising research as a tool to inform decisions about curriculum review, focusing on the following aspects:

- An interpretation of how curriculum reviewers use research as an evidence-based method to examine and improve the learning outcomes of academic programmes.

- An interpretation of how research influences curriculum mapping in aligning the programme outcomes with course content, materials, and assessment methods.
- An interpretation of how the curriculum review cycle ensures a systematic and continuous process of evaluating and revising curricular areas and programmes.
- An analysis of how structure and agency interact in utilising research during curriculum review.
- A comprehension of the rules and resources- like norms, values, institutions, and power- that influence curriculum review as a social activity.
- To interpret how curriculum reviewers create and reproduce structures through their actions, and how they use and modify structures to enable or constrain their actions in using research to review the curriculum (Giddens,1984).

Smith and Nizza (2022) highlight the challenges of the interpretive research paradigm, particularly in managing large datasets and maintaining data quality and validity. They stress the importance of establishing credibility and trustworthiness in findings, as well as addressing ethical concerns such as informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Furthermore, they acknowledge the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty in data interpretation and presentation. Choosing to work within an interpretive research framework was a thoughtful decision for my study, especially because it resonated with the structuration theory that guided my investigation. I found that this approach allowed me to gather rich, detailed insights

into the social issues I was exploring (Collins & Stockton, 2018). During my research, I dived into the complex social interactions within the NIED and the curriculum review division. I was particularly interested in the diverse experiences of individuals who were working to incorporate research into the curriculum. By adopting an interpretivist approach, I sought to understand how research influences the process of curriculum review.

This involved more than just collecting data; it required me to listen to personal stories, appreciate varying perspectives, and acknowledge the power dynamics that influence decision-making in the review process. Through this journey, I uncovered a rich, socially constructed understanding of the vital role research plays in enhancing educational practices.

### **4.3 Research Approach**

Research can be conducted using different approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Stockton and Collins (2018) note that qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numeric data like texts, videos, or audio to deepen understanding of concepts, perspectives, or experiences. This method is especially useful for in-depth exploration of topics or generating new research ideas. Creswell (2013a) highlights that qualitative research differs from quantitative research, which focuses on collecting and analysing numerical data for statistical purposes. Additionally, qualitative research can be aligned with various paradigms such as positivist, interpretative, critical, and postmodern, each providing unique perspectives to investigate the subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

This study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the role of research in reviewing Namibia's basic education curriculum. By gathering and analysing data in its natural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders involved in the curriculum review, using structuration theory as a framework. Daniel (2016) highlights that qualitative research is especially useful because it enables a detailed exploration of events and employs diverse methods to collect comprehensive qualitative data. In this context, I examined human behaviours like interactions, reasoning, and personal experiences, together providing deeper insights into the curriculum review process.

Cresswell (2014) highlights several challenges that come with using qualitative research design. One significant hurdle is ensuring that the data collected is of high quality and validity, particularly when dealing with a small number of participants. It's also crucial to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals involved. Furthermore, both researchers and participants bring their own perspectives and biases into the mix, which can complicate the findings. Lastly, applying the results to various contexts or populations can be difficult, as noted by Biesta (2010). Overall, while qualitative research offers valuable insights, it also comes with its share of complexities.

In my own work, I chose qualitative research methods because they enable me to delve into complex and intricate phenomena that cannot be measured with numbers. This method allows me to embrace the richness and variety of human

experiences and interactions. I aimed to grasp the meanings and viewpoints of the participants, which can lead to new insights and theories that might inform practice or policy. Most importantly, I sought to empower the participants by providing a platform for them to share their stories and perspectives.

#### **4.4 Research Design**

Research design functions as a roadmap for any scholarly investigation. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), it provides a structured approach for collecting and analysing data, which ultimately helps researchers address their specific questions. This plan encompasses everything from gathering data to presenting findings and interpreting results. This study employed a phenomenological research design to gather insights from participants. Its goal was to examine how different structures and agencies interact and influence each other, particularly in the context of using research to assess the curriculum.

Phenomenology is an intriguing concept that dates back to 1931 when Husserl first introduced it. Alase (2017) states that this method provides a framework for researchers to explore individuals' lived experiences and understand their significance. Langdridge (2008, p. 10) describes phenomenology as a method that allows us to view things as they are perceived in our consciousness. This means researchers can uncover deeper meanings by exploring participants' personal experiences, feelings, and memories.

Both Noon (2018) and Quest (2014) emphasise that a phenomenological approach equips researchers with the means to interpret and comprehend the detailed,

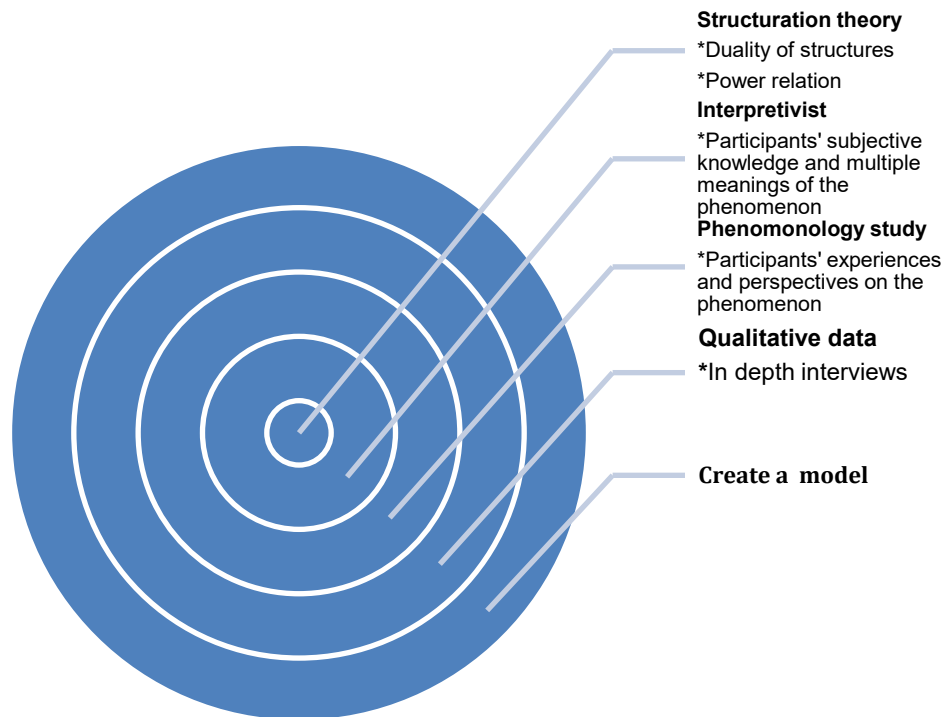
experiential knowledge participants possess about the phenomenon under investigation. Essentially, the data is sourced directly from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, offering valuable insights into their perspectives and emotions.

This study focused on exploring agents' expertise and experiences concerning curriculum reviewers' perspectives on the role of research in Namibia's curriculum review process. I gathered insights from their shared experiences, looking at their perceptions of how the curriculum review works, who is involved, the challenges they face, and how the curriculum division operates, specifically concerning the research's role.

I selected a phenomenological approach because it focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they assign to them. As Smith & Nizza (2022) described, this method goes beyond merely identifying relationships or outcomes; it aims to capture the essence of personal perspectives and the depth of human experience. In her 2021 analysis, Finlay emphasises that phenomenological research is a reflexive process. This means it is not just about gathering data; it involves working closely with participants to understand how their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds shape their experiences. This collaborative approach significantly enriches our understanding of the phenomenon we are investigating. I genuinely believe this method is essential for navigating the complex emotions and perceptions that often surface in today's research environment.

Phenomenological design aligns well with structuration theory, as both examine how human actions play out in social contexts. Creswell (2013b) also points out that while examining the shared meanings of participants' lived experiences, the phenomenological approach incorporates a structured method for analysing data. I chose this approach for my study because it uniquely suits the exploration of participants' lived experiences (Noon, 2018).

Using a phenomenological design allowed me to delve deeper into how social structures influence the ways individuals interpret and find meaning in their experiences related to curriculum review. This blend of perspectives facilitates a better understanding of the dynamic relationship between individual agency, interpretation, and social structures, ultimately leading to a more nuanced view of our social world (Giddens, 1984).



*Figure 4.1 Research methodology*

This diagram illustrates the study's philosophical and methodological perspectives as previously described. The study is philosophically framed within structuration theory; therefore, structuration is central to the research process, adhering to an interpretive paradigm. It was designed using phenomenology within a qualitative approach to enable thick descriptive and interpretive data. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, leading to the development of a model to improve how research informs curriculum review.

#### **4.5 Sampling**

The research population consists of the individuals central to this study (Cresswell, 2018). To gather valuable insights, I employed purposive sampling, selecting

participants with relevant experience and knowledge regarding the role of research in curriculum review. Selection was based on their specific positions, roles, and expertise (Palinkas et al., 2015). As Creswell (2014) notes, purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique that enables researchers to select a sample aligned with the study's objectives and the characteristics of the population.

To ensure a representative duality of perspectives as required by the study's theoretical framework (Structure and Agency), I employed a stratified purposive sampling strategy. As noted by Creswell (2014) and Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling allows for the selection of information-rich cases. However, to address the complexity of NIED's structure, I integrated stratification to ensure representation from both the curriculum and professional development divisions.

- Stratum 1 (SEO Curriculum developers and reviewers): Agents responsible for knowledge production and framework design. I selected nine (9) participants. This included the six Chief Education Officers representing the six core subject areas (Languages, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Commerce, Technical Subjects to ensure multidisciplinary coverage.
- Stratum 2 (SEO researchers from the Research Division): I chose all three (3) Education Officers from the Research Sub-division, since they fit the criteria.

This stratification prevented the sample from being skewed toward a single type of officer, thereby capturing the interplay among different structural roles and expertise levels. The selection within the strata followed specific criteria to

minimise bias and ensure validity (Morgan, 2014). Participants were required to hold decision-making authority (Chief or Senior level) and possess institutional memory of the previous curriculum review cycle. While the sample size of 12 was pre-planned based on the sampling frame, its sufficiency was confirmed through data saturation. In qualitative research, saturation is reached when the collection of new data no longer yields new theoretical insights or reveals new properties of the core categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During the data collection process, specifically between the 9th and 12th interviews, I observed that themes of structural constraints, resource limitations, and political pressure became repetitive. The final three interviews confirmed these established patterns rather than generating new codes. This indicated that the sample had sufficient informational power to answer the research questions comprehensively without redundancy.

Patton et al. (2015) highlight that purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgment, which can introduce bias. To mitigate this, I adhered to the strict inclusion criteria outlined above (Division, Rank, and Experience) rather than personal preference. By using NIED's formal organisational structure (the six subject areas and the research sub-division) as the basis for selection, the process remained objective and transparent, ensuring that the selected participants were truly representative of the institution's expert body.

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame of Senior Education Officers (SEOs) at NIED, adapted from (MoEAC, 2021)

| Division                            | Participant code | Job title                                                 | Core Responsibility                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Curriculum Research & Development   | SEO 1-9          | Chief Senior Education Officers/ Senior Education Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and revision of national curriculum policy documents, school curricula and syllabuses.</li> <li>• Development and revision of teachers' guides and training manuals.</li> <li>• Development of subject-specific teaching and learning materials.</li> <li>• Evaluation of teaching materials</li> <li>• Small-scale research to inform curriculum and syllabus revision.</li> <li>• Continuous professional development for curriculum implementation.</li> </ul> |
| Professional & Resource Development | SEO 10-12        | Chief Senior Education Officers/ Senior Education Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and revision of programmes for teacher continuous professional development.</li> <li>• Professional development of TRC staff members.</li> <li>• Policy and evaluation research to inform programme and policy reviews.</li> <li>• Printing, layout and distribution of curriculum materials to schools and the Teachers' Resource Centre.</li> <li>• NIED website and Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.</li> </ul>                                     |

This approach was suitable for this research, as participants were chosen based on their backgrounds and experiences as curriculum reviewers, curriculum panel members, and researchers. Beyond reviewing the curriculum, they also led all activities related to curriculum review and research for Basic Education in Namibia.

The members were regarded as experts per Giddens' structuration, and thus sampled for their expertise and experience. Using clear, established criteria made the process more objective, minimising personal biases that could have arisen from personal opinions or relationships. This consistency ensured that all participants were judged by the same standards, preventing favouritism. I was conscious of my personal beliefs and assumptions that might influence the sampling process. I used different instruments to collect data, but concentrated mainly on interviews.

#### **4.6 Data Generation Methods**

Various methods for data generation were used, consistent with the qualitative interpretive approach. Johnson (2022: 112) emphasises that utilising multiple data sources allows researchers to collaborate and strengthen their evidence. This strategy improves data consistency and persuasiveness by enabling comparative analysis across different sources.

##### **4.6.1 In-depth Interviews**

To explore how research is incorporated into curriculum reviews, I primarily used in-depth semi-structured interviews. Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) note that interviews provide valuable insights into people's experiences, beliefs, and understanding of particular subjects. Through these interviews, I sought to collect detailed qualitative data insights.

Boyce and Neale (2006) explain that this method enables researchers to hold detailed discussions with a small group of respondents, aiming to understand their views on a specific concept, program, or situation. Similarly, Thompson (2000) considers in-depth interviews as conversations where participants freely share their personal experiences and perceptions regarding an issue.

I had the opportunity to interview twelve members from the Curriculum, Research, and Development division and the Professional and Resource Development team at NIED. This allowed me to connect directly with participants and gain in-depth insights into their perspectives. To create a comfortable atmosphere, I conducted individual interviews with each participant.

Johnson (2002) highlights that interviews can provide deeper insights through thorough questioning, leading to greater clarity and understanding. To accurately capture the nuances of the conversations, all sessions were recorded with a voice recorder. The logistics of arranging these interviews were managed with assistance from the director's office at NIED. Cresswell (2012) mentions that conducting in-depth interviews can be demanding and time-consuming, so I allocated a month to interview the twelve participants.

Johnson (2002) advocates for conducting in-depth interviews with a small group of individuals, as this approach enables a thorough exploration of their perspectives on specific phenomena, providing detailed and comprehensive insights into their views and experiences.

During the interviews, I used a semi-structured approach, relying on open-ended questions and prompts that encouraged participants to share their thoughts and experiences about the role of research in the curriculum review process (see Appendix 1). The one-month period I allocated proved invaluable, allowing sufficient time to gather qualitative and descriptive data. Using a semi-structured interview guide, each session typically lasted between 50 minutes and two hours. Although each participant was interviewed once, I conducted follow-up interviews as needed for additional clarity, which underlined the importance of being prepared for unexpected developments. Cresswell (2012) advises researchers to be ready to adapt their plans, emphasising the significance of having enough time for any necessary additional interviews.

In my research, I found that in-depth interviews offer a powerful way to delve into the nuances of curriculum review. Cresswell (2012) highlights how these interviews can be instrumental in understanding how research informs this process. Through my conversations with participants, I had the opportunity to hear their individual stories, perspectives, and interpretations related to curriculum review, which enriched my understanding significantly.

Showkat and Parveen (2017) highlight that in-depth interviews are crucial for collecting primary data, as they help researchers explore detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. I employed this approach to engage with curriculum reviewers to understand their thoughts and experiences related to their role in the curriculum review process.

According to Alase (2017), in-depth interviews are especially effective for gathering rich, detailed data and creating a comfortable environment where participants feel safe to share their honest opinions. I was dedicated to maintaining research ethics throughout this process. Before starting our discussions, I coordinated with the offices of the executive director and the NIED director to ensure that all participants were properly informed and gave their consent. After obtaining ethical approval, I prepared a permission letter for both NIED management and the participants, ensuring a respectful and transparent procedure atmosphere.

After obtaining the necessary permissions, I worked with participants to find suitable times for our discussions, ensuring that the process was convenient for them. This careful preparation allowed me to conduct interviews that were both meaningful and respectful, giving me valuable insights into their experiences and opinions regarding curriculum review.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Maxwell (2005:22) defines qualitative data as “facts carried through arguments and manuscripts; the emphasis is not statistical but relates to transcript and sense.” Data analysis was an ongoing progression that began after data gathering. Creswell (2013b) indicates that data analysis and interpretation are necessary to establish facts, using coding and themes while presenting the themes in categories.

While collecting data, I kept field notes to record reliable evidence from the participants. I organised the collected data into personal computer documentation

and files and used Otter software to transcribe the interview data. Gupta (2024) describes Otter AI transcription software that uses artificial intelligence. It captured the dialogue and began stacking the words. I analysed the transcribed data using Atlas.ti.24 alongside the thematic analysis.

I listened to each interview, edited them, and compared participants' responses with Otter transcriptions to ensure accuracy. Then, I conducted a thematic analysis to examine the data, which was used for the following purposes:

- Grouping and coding the data sources in one file.
- Importing the data and organising it into folders and cases; assigning characteristics and values, and then coding it with nodes.
- Looking for patterns, categories, similarities and differences among the codes to identify themes and patterns from the interview transcriptions.
- To analyse, enquire and visualise data, using charts and models to present the collected data.
- To write a thematic analysis to present the findings. (Elster 2020:5).

#### **4.8 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness ensures that proper standards for evaluating qualitative research are followed (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, and Eyto, 2018). To ensure the research process is trustworthy, four key values are used: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These are explained below:

#### 4.8.1 Credibility

This study maintained research credibility through various means. Even though qualitative studies focus on independent experiences and explanations, there is a need to ensure credibility in research (Cresswell, 2014). Credibility allowed the research to be carried out as planned and accurately. This study established credibility through the following processes:

##### 4.8.1.1 Triangulation

I used interviews as a method to gather data and establish findings (Cresswell, 2014). Individual interviews helped collect information and allowed for triangulation. The results from these interviews were used to authenticate and support the overall findings. Gathering data from multiple sources improves the credibility of interpretations (Eyton, 2018). This study primarily relied on interviews, supplemented by Data Source Triangulation (Denzin, 1978), to verify participants' accounts from different levels within NIED. I compared the views of SEOs from the Curriculum Research Division with those from the Professional Development Division. Identifying where their perspectives align or differ provided a more comprehensive and validated understanding of the curriculum review process, minimising bias from relying on a single data source.

##### 4.8.1.2 Member Checking

Norman, Avey, Larson, and Hughes (2020) defined member checking as sharing findings with participants to allow them to confirm and provide feedback. Patton (2002) adds that it also involves sharing the final report with participants, allowing

them to offer alternative interpretations based on their experiences. I asked the participants to review the compiled report and interview transcripts from our discussion to verify the accuracy and ensure their original input was reflected. To reduce the risk of misinterpretation, I used member checking (Patton, 2002). After transcription, a summary of key findings along with the raw transcripts was provided to the 12 Senior Education Officers. Participants were asked to confirm whether their views were accurately captured and to clarify any unclear points. This process helped ensure that the final themes accurately reflected their voices rather than the researcher's biases.

#### 4.8.1.3 Thick Description and Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that offering detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and data analysis methods boosts credibility. Thick descriptions help readers grasp the research process and assess the trustworthiness of the results. Conducting a qualitative study allowed me to produce comprehensive descriptions and analyses, aiding in interpreting the findings and data.

#### 4.8.1.4 Reflexivity

Maxwell (2008:220) describes reflexivity as a process where researchers critically reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and values during the research. By acknowledging potential biases and considering their effects, researchers can improve the credibility of their interpretations. I maintained transparency and truthfulness throughout to prevent personal bias; my assumptions and background

did not influence the research process or results. I practised reflexivity to be fair to the interviewees, especially since I come from a different background in Higher Education. The study focuses on Basic Education, and I was not involved in reviewing the curriculum.

#### 4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to how effectively a study's findings can be applied across different settings (Merriam, 2009, p. 247). It enabled me to extend the findings, patterns, and descriptions from one context to another, deepening the understanding of research's role in curriculum review. Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe transferability as the extent to which conclusions remain useful from diverse perspectives and with various participants. To improve transferability in this study, the following should be considered:

##### 4.8.2.1 Thick Description and Comparison of Findings

The study offered detailed descriptions of the research context based on individual interviews. Insights from the in-depth interviews with the 12 participants helped me grasp the study's progress and complexities. Additionally, they enabled me to compare the research context with my own experiences, supporting the transferability of the findings (Patton, 2002).

Data collected from participants and documents were compared with existing literature and analysed using structuration theory. This method indicates that common patterns and themes can be identified across different sources, which enhances the confidence in the transferability of the findings (Loh, 2013).

#### 4.8.3 Dependability

Cresswell (2009) and Merriam (2009) stress that dependability is crucial in qualitative research because it ensures the reliability and consistency of both the research process and its findings. Loh (2013) further explains that dependability pertains to the trustworthiness of the research tools and procedures. During my research, I followed ethical guidelines and established procedures to ensure professionalism, consistency, and credibility of the results. My focus on dependability aims to use the collected data to build trust as events unfold (Enworo, 2023).

Norman and James (2020) explain that dependability encompasses all the steps that guide how the research should be conducted, including the methodology, data collection, and analysis strategies. To maintain the integrity of the study, I shared the evidence I gathered with the participants to ensure it accurately reflected their input and was of high quality. I also planned to include detailed information on data collection to support transferability. During interviews, I recorded participants so their responses could be accurately transcribed. After transcribing, I took time to review and edit the findings before analysing and interpreting the data.

#### 4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is an important concept that helps minimise the likelihood of researchers unintentionally swaying their research findings with personal biases (Norman & James, 2020). Through this lens, I made a conscious effort to ensure that the insights gathered reflected the genuine thoughts and experiences of my

participants, rather than my personal opinions. I included direct quotes from participants during the interview process to highlight their voices in the findings.

As Anney (2014) emphasises, confirmability centres on ensuring that research findings can stand on their own, independent of any biases from the researcher. To uphold this principle, I collaborated with a trusted research editor who played a crucial role in validating the data I gathered. Together, we conducted a thorough audit, examining original documents such as field notes, interview transcriptions, emerging themes, findings, and the final report itself.

Throughout the data collection journey, I diligently maintained all audio recordings of interviews, as well as my field notes and any documentary analyses I performed. These records proved invaluable when it came time to compile the final report. They allowed me to cross-check the data meticulously, ensuring that the results were not just accurate but also trustworthy and reflective of the participants' authentic voices.

#### **4.9 Research Ethics**

Silverman (2001) argues that research ethics are the principles guiding research activities. He emphasises that researchers must remember they are entering participants' private spaces during their studies. Edwards et al. (2002:171) describe research ethics as the standards and principles, such as confidentiality, respecting privacy, and fairness, that are maintained throughout the research

process. Since my study on the role of research in curriculum review involved human participants, I followed ethical guidelines by ensuring these key aspects during my research.

#### 4.9.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a vital component of research that Shamim & Qureshi (2018) emphasise, as it involves providing potential participants with a comprehensive understanding of the study so they can make an informed decision about whether to participate. To conduct my research, I first obtained ethical approval from UNISA, and once I received approval, I contacted the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education for permission to carry out the study at NIED. Thankfully, I received approval and moved forward by contacting the management at NIED and the Education Officers to obtain informed consent from the individuals I wanted to include. I made sure to clearly communicate the goals and objectives of my research to all potential participants.

Throughout the research process, I adhered to UNISA's ethical standards and approached the study with a commitment to professionalism. I treated every participant with dignity and respect, ensuring that I conducted the study without causing any harm. Privacy was a top priority; I handled all responses confidentially and refrained from sharing any personal information without explicit consent. I also ensured participants knew their rights, stressing that participation was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw at any moment.

Participants knew that recordings of interviews were solely for research purposes and that they could access the findings. I took extra precautions to securely store all data, such as field notes and interview transcripts, using it exclusively for the study. Participants who agreed to take part were asked to sign an Informed Consent form, providing written proof of their voluntary participation.

#### 4.8.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality is vital in research, and I treat it with great importance. Babbie (2010) underscores that research findings must be handled carefully and used solely for research purposes. When conducting interviews, I made it a priority to reassure participants that their contributions would remain confidential. I took extra steps to protect their identities and personal information. The data collected was anonymised and securely stored to ensure their privacy (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p. 61). In the reports and publications, I made sure to remove or alter any identifiable information to safeguard participants' anonymity. During data collection, I used unique codes for each participant instead of names, enhancing security. This method safeguards privacy and fosters trust, encouraging participants to share openly.

#### 4.9.3 Minimising harm and distress

Throughout my research, I was very conscious of protecting my participants' well-being (Olson, 2023). During the interviews, I deliberately fostered a comfortable

and respectful space where participants could openly share their stories. I selected my words carefully, employing a tone that expressed empathy and understanding.

I firmly believed in honouring each participant's independence, rights, and dignity. It was crucial for me to treat them with respect and recognise their unique experiences and insights. I consistently encouraged them to share their preferences on how they wished to participate in the data collection. Furthermore, I aimed to maximise the benefits of my research by adhering strictly to UNISA's ethical guidelines in data gathering, reporting outcomes, and making informed choices. This commitment allowed me to prioritise the participants' welfare while striving for meaningful outcomes in my study.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the philosophical and methodological framework guiding the research. It highlights the adoption of an interpretive research paradigm focused on understanding participants' experiences and their perspectives on research's role in assessing Namibia's Basic Education curriculum. To collect comprehensive and detailed data, a qualitative approach was employed, specifically using a phenomenological research design. The empirical part of the study was based on interviews that captured these important insights. The following chapter will discuss the research findings.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 explore curriculum review as a form of structuration through educational research. These sections highlight how curriculum review functions within dual educational systems and demonstrate how agents, known as curriculum reviewers, have used educational research to improve Namibia's education quality, supporting the goals of Vision 2030. This chapter starts by presenting findings from detailed investigations into the perspectives of the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) curriculum reviewers. These insights are drawn from one-on-one interviews with twelve participants. The primary research question the study aimed to answer was

- What is the structuration role of education research on curriculum review for basic education in Namibia?

The findings in this chapter are presented in relation to the following sub-questions:

- What kind of knowledge has been produced through the duality of structures in education research related to curriculum reviews for Basic Education in Namibia?
- What are the curriculum reviewers' views on integrating educational research in reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia?

- How do curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the structure of curriculum review in Namibia?
- How can education research be enhanced to make optimal contributions to curriculum reviews?

The participants were the Senior Education Officers, some of whom were eventually promoted to the position of Chief Education Officers. For the purposes of ensuring anonymity, the study collectively refers to them as Senior Education Officers. These individuals served as the prime actors and agents in reviewing and researching curricula at NIED, as the main structure within the Ministry of Education responsible for curriculum review and research. The study successfully engaged 100% of the targeted population, with all twelve participants contributing as anticipated. The participants also included the Professional Development division at NIED. They represented key subject areas, including Languages, Commerce, Natural Sciences, Technology, Arts, and Mathematics across three educational phases: Junior Primary, Senior Primary, and Secondary Education.

The participants in this study were qualified educators who had taught for at least five years before being promoted to Senior Education Officers at NIED. Notably, six of the twelve participants had been engaged as curriculum panel members and reviewers for over ten years, while three had been involved with the curriculum panel for over 20 years. The findings highlight the participants' deep experience and expertise in curriculum review and educational research. Their

insights provide a valuable understanding of how educational research influences the curriculum review process in Namibia's basic education. The participants were assigned codes, as shown in the table below.

| Code  | Description                                           |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| SEO1  | Senior Education Officer 1 <sup>st</sup> participant  |
| SEO2  | Senior Education Officer 2 <sup>nd</sup> participant  |
| SEO3  | Senior Education Officer 3 <sup>rd</sup> participant  |
| SEO4  | Senior Education Officer 4 <sup>th</sup> participant  |
| SEO5  | Senior Education Officer 5 <sup>th</sup> participant  |
| SEO6  | Senior Education Officer 6 <sup>th</sup> participant  |
| SEO7  | Senior Education Office 7 <sup>th</sup> participant   |
| SEO8  | Senior Education Officer 8 <sup>th</sup> participant  |
| SEO9  | Senior Education Officer 9 <sup>th</sup> participant  |
| SEO10 | Senior Education Officer 10 <sup>th</sup> participant |
| SEO11 | Senior Education Officer 11 <sup>th</sup> participant |
| SEO12 | Senior Education Officer 12 <sup>th</sup> participant |

*Table 5.1 Participants' codes*

## 5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The key findings are summarised in the table below. Themes were identified based on the research question. These results provide an overview of how educational research impacts structuration, highlighting the dual nature of the structures involved in reviewing Namibia's basic education curriculum. The

primary findings show that the NIED and its officials, including Education Officers, were central to the curriculum review process and educational research.

| Research question                                                                                                                                              | Themes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What kind of knowledge has been produced through the duality of structures in education research related to curriculum reviews for Basic Education in Namibia? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit and tacit knowledge produced through the interaction of individual agency and institutional frameworks.</li> <li>• Knowledge to implement findings from educational research into the curriculum review.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the curriculum review framework for basic education in Namibia.</li> <li>• Knowledge of formal and informal research for informed decisions.</li> <li>• Benchmarking knowledge to inform curriculum review.</li> <li>• Knowledge of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in Namibia's Basic Education curriculum review.</li> <li>• Contextual knowledge of the research findings published in the NIED research journal.</li> </ul> |
| What are the curriculum reviewers' views on integrating educational research in reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia?                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research is fundamental in reviewing the curriculum.</li> <li>• NIED Research and Curriculum Divisions play a central role in education research and curriculum review.</li> <li>• The curriculum panels played a significant role in using research to review the curriculum.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and curriculum review activities are planned and budgeted for.</li> <li>• There is a need for external curriculum experts and researchers to join the NIED curriculum reviewers.</li> <li>• There are challenges to integrating research in reviewing the curriculum for basic education in Namibia.</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| How do the curriculum reviewers influence the utilisation of education research when reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They conducted further research.</li> <li>• Collaborative research enriches perspectives and informs curriculum review.</li> <li>• Established new policies and issued circulars.</li> <li>• Strengthen collaboration with institutions of higher learning.</li> <li>• Communicate research findings to the NIED and MoEAC management.</li> <li>• Balance Education research with other factors to review the curriculum.</li> </ul> |
| 1.How can the utilisation of education research be enhanced for optimal contribution to curriculum review?                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower SEOs to integrate research when reviewing the curriculum.</li> <li>• Strengthen ongoing professional development and training.</li> <li>• Enhancing research capacity and agency among the SEOs.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular empirical research and make education research accessible for curriculum review.</li> <li>• Ensure the allocation of adequate funds and resources for research initiatives and the comprehensive review of the curriculum.</li> <li>• Promoting independent research to transform educational practices.</li> <li>• Strengthen research mandates for informed decision making.</li> <li>• Facilitating effective communication of research findings in the educational curriculum review process.</li> <li>• Establish a localised assessment governing body to implement and enforce standardised practices to curriculum standards, rather than relying solely on the Cambridge system.</li> <li>• Addressing critical gaps in educational research and curriculum review practices.</li> <li>• Use the structuration model to enhance research to contribute optimally to the curriculum review.</li> </ul> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*Table 5.2 Research themes*

### **5.3. What Kind of Knowledge has been Produced Through the Duality of Structures in Education Research related to Curriculum Reviews for Basic Education in Namibia?**

The findings position the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) not just as an administrative body but as the main institutional site where the dual structure of Namibia's education system is manifested. As the holder of key resources and decision-making authority delegated by the Ministry of Education, NIED offers the structural foundation for curriculum review processes.

The duality of structures in education research, particularly regarding curriculum review in basic education in Namibia, has yielded several insights and forms of knowledge. This duality refers to the interaction between research conducted or utilised by Education Officers (SEO) at the NIED, which serves as the primary agent, and the application of research findings in the curriculum review process within the Ministry of Education, which constitutes the main institutional framework. Participants shared their perspectives on the knowledge generated through the interplay of structures. Their insights were organised and presented here in eight key themes.

#### **5.3.1 Explicit and Tacit Knowledge Produced through the Interaction of Individual Agency and Institutional Frameworks**

The study revealed that explicit and tacit knowledge emerged through the interplay of structures. The majority of participants (8 out of 12) reported that their fundamental understanding of educational research was gained through research carried out at various higher education institutions. As they entered the teaching

profession and took on the role of Education Officers, responsible for research and curriculum development, they built upon this knowledge. SEO9 explained that:

We learnt about research during my university years. Many of us continued our education, which further broadened our understanding of educational research concepts and backgrounds. It is clear that when you apply to become a Senior Educational Officer (SEO), you already possess a foundational awareness of research concepts.

Educational institutions are the main source of the interpretive frameworks and knowledge that Senior Education Officers (SEOs) rely on to interpret research data. However, the results show that the diversity of their academic backgrounds creates a structural barrier to collective action. Since SEOs come from different methodological traditions, there is a fragmentation in the shared understanding of what counts as valid evidence. This epistemological gap hampers their ability to act effectively; many SEOs lack the confidence or awareness needed to strategically integrate research findings into the curriculum review process. As a result, their varied training limits their capacity to use research as an authoritative tool for driving structural change. SEO9 notes that:

I have accumulated knowledge to integrate research from past experiences. My primary focus is on utilising research to understand its relevance to other countries rather than identifying what content should be added or removed. As part of a panel of experts, we make those decisions based on the curriculum goals. I do not need to research whether the content on Great

Zimbabwe and Egyptian Civilisation should be removed, as it is outdated; as a subject expert, I recognise that this content no longer holds relevance.

By identifying outdated content, the participant recognised the impact of external social structures on curriculum relevance, while also asserting their agency in recommending changes grounded in professional expertise. This suggests that, rather than simply following the existing curriculum structure, the SEOs actively engage with it, seeking to modify it to enhance its current relevance. This reveals how they can both uphold and transform practices in education, research, and curriculum review. Utilising the structuration lens can enable future research to develop integrative approaches that build on the strengths of diverse educational backgrounds while addressing the methodological inconsistencies that hinder cohesive education, informed by a curriculum review grounded in educational research. In contrast, SEO4 highlighted:

We rely on various studies on our subjects, both nationally and internationally. Although we are not provided with specific NIED guidelines for the research format, our job description entails serving as researchers, curriculum developers, reviewers, and mentors to oversee implementation. All these roles require a solid foundation for research.

From a structuration perspective, research roles are shaped by individual efforts and broader institutional frameworks. Researchers' abilities are influenced by the availability of resources, including access to studies, institutional support, and collaborative networks. This raises questions about their autonomy and agency

within existing structures, such as cultural norms and policies. The lack of specific NIED guidelines for research formats represents a structural gap that could compromise the quality and consistency of research. Structuration theory explains that structures offer rules and resources that either enable or restrict actions. Without clear guidelines, researchers may face limitations in framing their studies. To develop curricula effectively, it's essential to ensure strong alignment between research initiatives and educational objectives.

SEO8 pointed out that, “Our job revolves around research, curriculum review, and implementation monitoring. We were exposed to various research concepts, which helped us understand different curriculum review approaches. You cannot review the curriculum without research.”

The text discusses how participants engaged with research ideas and their roles as researchers and curriculum reviewers. This raises concerns about the assumption that everyone has the same knowledge and understanding gained through interactions and research. While discussing shared knowledge is essential, it overlooks the benefits that diverse perspectives can bring to curriculum review through individual traits. This could lead to a one-size-fits-all approach that limits creativity. Overall, while the text offers a basic overview, it does not fully recognise the impact of individual differences on understanding research concepts. Future research could investigate how to balance agency with structural support and foster innovation in educational practice.

### 5.3.2 Knowledge to Implement Findings from Educational Research into the Curriculum Review

Participants reported that their interactions with stakeholders and insights from educational research informed the development of knowledge relevant to implementing the research findings. A range of research approaches and methodologies were employed in their studies, and the findings were integrated to some extent, facilitating a review of the curriculum. SEO2 shared that,

Apart from the Ministry of Education's professional development workshops and training that we attended, I was privileged to participate in national and international educational conferences, which prepared me to apply research findings in reviewing the curriculum.

The training sessions and workshops organised by the Ministry of Education reveal an interplay between individual agency and the framework provided for SEOs, allowing them to interpret and implement the curriculum. While SEOs were empowered to conduct research and review the curriculum, the effectiveness of their training and its impact on their work remains uncertain. This raises questions about their ability to bridge knowledge gaps and conduct meaningful reviews, highlighting the need for further investigation of the impact of professional development initiatives.

This was evident as EO3 shared the following:

We were not engaged in a detailed study or academic research; instead, we conducted a desktop study to compare our findings with reports from other countries or school visits on implementation. This type of study does not require specific research elements, such as a literature review or a particular research methodology.

The researchers analysed educational research from various countries and conducted school visits, blending existing knowledge with observed practices. This approach generated new patterns from comparative data, which could enhance future educational methods. One study participant noted the limitations of academic research, highlighting the differences between empirical investigations and desktop studies. This distinction highlights how structural constraints can limit the depth and breadth of research. Although desktop studies provide valuable insights, the lack of rigorous empirical investigations into academic curricula reveals a significant knowledge gap that may hinder the effective implementation of curricula and educational innovation.

One participant explained:

We employed various research instruments, primarily document analysis, which included a comparative document study to relate Namibian issues to those of other countries, examiner's reports from several years to identify

areas for improvement within the subject area, and ministerial policy analysis (EO4).

Research instruments serve as both a resource and a constraint within the research framework, providing essential methodologies for in-depth analysis while limiting the scope of inquiry to the available documentary evidence. This highlights the influence of established structures on research outcomes. Using examiners' reports as diagnostic tools reveals a reflexive aspect of the structuration theory, demonstrating the interaction between agency and structure. Additionally, overlooking certain research features can lead to significant knowledge gaps, undermining the integrity of the curriculum review processes. The following section examines the curriculum framework that these interactions have shaped.

### 5.3.3 Knowledge of the Curriculum Review Framework for Basic Education in Namibia

A curriculum framework is a foundational set of guidelines that directs a review of curriculum objectives and processes. The participants stated that educational research informed their curriculum review and contributed to the development of a framework for curriculum review in basic education in Namibia; however, SEO4 noted that:

We had to adhere to the national curriculum's rules and requirements, which are the official policy that guides our research and curriculum review. Other

plans were also considered, such as the government's strategic plans and objectives, primarily the Harambee Prosperity Plan and Vision 2030.

While these frameworks aim to initiate changes in the education system through curriculum review, resistance may arise from those attached to traditional methods or who may lack the necessary training for new approaches. This situation illustrates the balance between maintaining existing practices and adopting new curricula. The outcomes can inform future revisions as changes are implemented, highlighting the cyclical relationship between curriculum review and educational reform. The Ministry's strategic planning ensures that effective curriculum reviews can inform future policies, thereby shaping Namibia's educational landscape. Future research should emphasise the role of knowledge in transforming teaching practices during the review process, highlighting its impact on academic outcomes and questioning established frameworks. Structuration theory can connect the curriculum review framework with the agents involved through educational research. One participant noted,

*We conducted desktop research and compared our education system with those of other countries using our framework. Initially, we focused on sub-Saharan African nations like South Africa before expanding our analysis to other countries globally. This process enabled us to transform the existing educational structure and policies, as suggested during the 2011 Education Conference (SEO5).*

The curriculum review framework was designed to highlight exemplary practices. However, when considering the context of other nations, it is essential to assess

whether their elements align with Namibia's unique situation. Any component adapted from other curricula should be modified to meet local needs. Ultimately, the framework aims to be adaptive and reflect Namibia's distinctive educational landscape while ensuring alignment with global standards. Thus, it encompasses various knowledge developed through research by the Ministry of Education and the NIED. Using a systematic and collaborative approach, this initiative has transformed the country's educational policies and structures. Transformational knowledge became integral to the review process, ensuring that the content aligned with research findings and contributed to achieving the country's educational goals.

#### 5.3.4 Knowledge of Formal and Informal Research for Informed Decisions

All participants reported engaging in formal and informal research to guide their decision-making during the curriculum review. The majority, 11 out of 12 participants, indicated they had the authority to influence certain aspects of research and the curriculum review process. Their findings played a crucial role in their decision-making, highlighting a reliance on this information to inform their choices. One participant shared the following insight:

*We are the accounting officers responsible for reviewing the curriculum. Our main goal was to ensure success through thorough research. Before making decisions, we conduct our research or consult experts to ensure that we have solid evidence to support our conclusions (SEO9).*

The text highlights that while accounting officers are in a position to make evidence-based decisions, their ability to act is limited by a lack of clarity regarding research methods, findings, and available resources. This lack of transparency can restrict their decision-making, as they may proceed without a complete understanding of the evidence. Consequently, the structures that govern the research and review processes both enable and constrain the actions and choices of accounting officers. Their decision-making capacities are often compromised by unclear information. This relationship between structure and agency highlights the importance of clear communication and accessible information in facilitating informed decision-making within the field.

Similarly, one participant highlighted the following:

*We are not office-bound; we go into the field to visit schools and regions, familiarise ourselves with on-the-ground practices, and stay informed about the needs and challenges that must be addressed. In the field, we conducted research by interacting with teachers and learners. Unfortunately, we do not do that often due to other responsibilities and limited funds (SEO6).*

The emphasis on field visits highlights the importance of localized knowledge and the need to understand the lived experiences of both teachers and learners. Such visits are driven by a desire to address the complexities and challenges faced in practice, demonstrating reflexivity, which is crucial for organisational learning and adaptation. However, the infrequency of these visits due to competing responsibilities and a lack of funding illustrates how resources and organisational priorities can hinder effective agency.

This duality of structure suggests that while individual efforts can drive change, systemic barriers must also be addressed to foster ongoing engagement with the field. A lack of funding limits the frequency of field interactions and may create a gap between educators' perceived needs and the actual challenges they face in schools. This misalignment can worsen existing issues within educational systems, as decisions made at the institutional level may not accurately reflect the realities observed in practice. The following section provides a review of the curriculum.

#### 5.3.5 Benchmarking Knowledge to Inform Curriculum Review.

All participants reported that curriculum reviews were embedded within Cambridge benchmarking to maintain international standards and values. One participant stated the following:

*Namibia established links with Cambridge in 1993 to set global education standards. We submitted our reviewed curriculum and subject syllabi to Cambridge for assessment, approval, and improvement suggestions. This process led to the creation of the Namibian Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary Level (NSSCO) and Advanced Subsidiary (AS), which aligns with the accredited Cambridge curriculum. (SEO6).*

While Cambridge's establishment as a global education standards body brings a structured evaluation system, it raises concerns about the potential imposition of foreign educational standards in local contexts. The influence of a distant institution, such as the University of Cambridge, can overshadow Namibian students' unique cultural and social needs. While integrating local experiences into

curriculum development is essential, the extent to which these adaptations truly reflect local reality is critical. There may be a risk of superficial compliance with standards rather than a genuine transformation of educational practices. While aiming to create a comprehensive assessment framework, this duality in structures could lead to a disconnect, if not carefully managed, hindering the potential for meaningful educational outcomes. Ultimately, the interplay between authoritative standards and local input must be navigated cautiously to ensure that education is relevant and effective for Namibian learners.

Similarly, another participant stated,

Benchmarking subjects helped us establish a strong foundation for our curriculum without restricting our approach. We do not offer Cambridge subjects or syllabi directly. We examined and connected the overarching concept to our local context to incorporate local knowledge. We discussed how our teaching concepts apply to Namibia's mining and salt-refining industries. While we utilise broader principles, we also contextualise them through research that we conducted, following the Cambridge equivalent syllabuses (SEO11).

Educators exercised agency by benchmarking curricular subjects against Cambridge criteria while considering local knowledge. This choice reflects an understanding of the social structures in education, including national and regional standards. By connecting overarching concepts to their environment, educators dynamically engage with knowledge and industry practices in Namibia, embodying Giddens' idea that structure can enable and constrain. Acknowledging local knowledge enhances the curriculum's relevance, supporting regional identity and

economic development. Educators may experience tensions between following established frameworks, such as those from Cambridge, and innovating to meet local needs, which are influenced by educators, regional stakeholders, including industry representatives and the community.

Additional empirical research can be conducted to investigate how educators and institutions manage the complex relationship between regional and global influences. This research could also examine the application of the Cambridge criteria in adapting subject areas beyond science. Notably, 75% of participants (nine individuals) expressed concerns that the Cambridge criteria and associated standards and expectations hinder the localisation of Namibian content, particularly in local languages. One participant articulated this concern as follows:

The syllabi for local languages are written in the vernacular. Still, to meet the Cambridge requirements, we must translate them into English so that an English speaker can understand my language, which is rooted in African contexts. This is disheartening, difficult, and time-consuming. No one can better understand our cultural and traditional context; we are losing our cultural values, and I'm not too fond of that (SEO3).

In the text, the individual expresses frustration with translating local language syllabi into English to meet Cambridge requirements. This can be understood through Giddens' duality of structure, which posits that while structures shape human behaviour, they are simultaneously created and sustained through that behaviour. Although the individual has the agency to translate, that agency is constrained by existing power dynamics where English represents academic

authority and legitimacy. This situation highlights a struggle between local agencies and external structures. The agent (SEO) recognises a change in their local educational context driven by institutional requirements established by Cambridge. The individual's perspective reflects an active engagement with the educational system. They possess knowledge of their cultural context and the content of their local language materials. This agency is crucial as it illustrates the desire to retain cultural specificity and relevance within educational frameworks. The individual advocates for their cultural values and seeks to navigate the systemic pressures that external institutions impose.

#### 5.3.6 Knowledge of the Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration in Namibia's Basic Education Curriculum Review

The review of the Basic Education curriculum in Namibia was shaped by interactions among stakeholders involved in the review and in research practices.

Participants shared:

Teamwork and human interaction are crucial in curriculum review, as we relied on diverse contributions from individuals. Various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and learners, participated in research and consultation meetings to share their insights. The curriculum panel, comprised of subject experts with diverse experiences and skills, shared their knowledge to inform the review (SEO3).

The above highlights the interaction between the leading actors (the SEOs) and the stakeholders, including curriculum panels, parents, community members, and other relevant parties. It highlights stakeholders' different roles, authority, and power in conducting research, participating in research, and contributing to the success of the curriculum review. However, other individual perspectives, values,

and expectations can constrain stakeholders' ability to participate actively and contribute positively, leaving some stakeholders feeling neglected. Consequently, this can lead to complaints and finger-pointing rather than mutual support and cooperation. In this case, curriculum review and education research were regarded as a mandate for the SEOs, rather than stakeholders sharing the praise or blame for the curriculum review process and its outcomes.

Another participant highlighted:

Despite the public complaints and criticism of the recently concluded curriculum review, we acknowledge the assistance and support we received from the general public. Many people were supportive (SEO7).

The findings revealed an interdependency between the Education Officers, the Ministry of Education, and other stakeholders. Curriculum review and research were continuously refined and modified through the participants' engagement in curriculum review activities and participation in educational research at various phases and stages of the review process. Individuals involved in constructing the curriculum review process had diverse expertise, worldviews, beliefs, norms, and values. Operating within a guided framework, the SEOs ensured that the institution's action plan reviewed the curriculum. However, the extent of stakeholder involvement in this process is not specified. Additionally, the text does not explain how the SEOs handled criticism as primary reviewers.

### 5.3.7 Contextual Knowledge of the Research Findings Published in the NIED Research Journal

The knowledge produced through this duality also reflects an awareness of Namibian education's local context, as evident in research published in the NIED journal. Participants recognize the importance of aligning curriculum content with Namibian students' cultural, social, and economic realities, which can lead to more relevant and impactful educational experiences.

The participants acknowledged using research that was published in the NIED research journal. 72% (8) of the participants reported using information from the research journal's findings when reviewing the curriculum. The fact that participants used the NIED research journal shows that they relied on credible academic sources. Using research in curriculum review is a positive practice, but it raises questions about which specific findings were used and how they affected the curriculum changes. Connecting evidence to practice is crucial to ensure that educational materials are practical and relevant. Although SEO2 stressed that:

Before articles are published in the journal, they undergo a review to assess their suitability. Are they trying to improve our education system? We also evaluate whether the article meets the standard requirements for publication in this journal (SEO2).

Reviewers make judgments on research papers by choosing to accept, revise, or reject them. Their decisions are shaped by personal preferences, previous experiences, and academic backgrounds, alongside formal rules and resources

like NIED guidelines, ethical standards, and methodological norms to maintain research quality and integrity. This subjectivity can influence the knowledge that emerges and is utilised in curriculum review, possibly leading to inconsistent or unfair results. The interaction between reviewers' agency and the existing rules and resources illustrates the duality of structure, where reviewers' actions both reproduce and potentially alter these frameworks. The reliance on established rules can sometimes hinder innovation. Authors may feel compelled to conform to traditional methodologies and perspectives to meet publication standards, which may limit the diversity of research approaches and findings. Balancing the need for quality control with encouraging innovative research is crucial. Thus, future research should explore how the research published in the journal review can be integrated with a curriculum review to ensure that the knowledge produced is credible and innovative. This integration can help address the current system's limitations and promote a more inclusive and accommodating curriculum review process.

One participant explained it as follows:

In recent years, we have faced challenges because the journal was supposed to be published three times a year, but we have not received enough articles. Thus, we published only once or twice yearly instead of three or four. Things changed when we started advertising the journal in the newspaper and on Facebook; now, there is an increase. However, the publication by the NIED Education Officers is quite disappointing. We hardly publish there because our research primarily focuses on school visits, which are not always made public. We are not academics; we don't write academic papers (SEO3).

The situation highlighted the pressing need for curriculum reviewers to take the initiative in conducting thorough research. This endeavour should not be undertaken in isolation; instead, it can be effectively pursued through collaborative efforts with fellow educators within the NIED and in external educational communities. They can enrich their research perspectives and share innovative practices by fostering these partnerships. Additionally, curriculum reviewers should be encouraged to collaborate on joint publications to further enhance the academic impact of their findings. This promotes a shared knowledge culture and amplifies the reach and influence of their work in the broader educational landscape. The following section focuses on integrating education research into the review of school curricula in Namibia.

#### **5.4 What are the Curriculum Reviewers' Views on Integrating Education Research in Reviewing the Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia?**

To answer this question, six themes emerged from the interviews with all 12 participants who are curriculum reviewers and researchers. NIED was described as an educational and social institution that played a central role in curriculum development, review, implementation, and education research.

##### **5.4.1 Research is Fundamental in Reviewing the Curriculum**

A standard view among participants is that research is vital in enhancing the quality and success of the reviewed curriculum. Two participants shared similar ideas:

Research is essential; one of our primary duties is to conduct research. Integrating research into curriculum review can help address current challenges by providing informed insights (SEO2).

Another participant expressed that:

Research is crucial in curriculum review; it integrates local context and indigenous knowledge. When you research, you invest in education, as they say, “information is power.” (SEO1).

The participants emphasised the importance of research in curriculum review, highlighting the agency’s role in educational practices. Educators and curriculum reviewers served as agents who utilised research to inform their decisions. By incorporating local context and indigenous knowledge, they exercised their agency to develop a curriculum aligned with the community’s needs and values. This approach reflects their awareness of the existing structures in which they operate, such as educational policies, cultural norms, and societal expectations. Referring to research as an investment indicates that the resources allocated to it can yield significant returns in the form of new knowledge, technological advancements, and improved practices, ultimately benefiting society and driving economic growth. However, the participants did not mention the strategies used to integrate research into the curriculum review process, nor did they consider the type of indigenous knowledge, given that Namibia is a multilingual and multicultural society, which

raises questions about the effectiveness of this practice. This process was more challenging than it sounded, as SEO5 expressed concern that:

Although incorporating research into the curriculum review process is essential, doing so often proves challenging due to time constraints. We typically review the curriculum according to our yearly plan, focusing on specific deadlines and programs that outline what needs to be completed during designated periods. Furthermore, with additional responsibilities such as teacher training, there is limited time available to conduct research or to spend sufficient time reviewing the literature and making comparisons.

The text highlights the tension between agency and the constraints SEOs face. While they have the agency to conduct research, their actions are constrained by time limitations and other responsibilities. Structuration theory posits that individuals act within the confines of existing structures but also have the potential to alter those structures through their actions. The challenge is for SEOs to utilise their agency to advocate for changes that will allow for more flexibility in the curriculum review process. Redefining how time is conceptualised in the curriculum review process could foster a more research-informed approach. The lens of structuration theory reveals the complex interplay between structure and agency in the curriculum review process, highlighting the need for the SEO to critically assess existing structures, advocate for changes that facilitate the integration of research, and recognise the interconnected roles within educational practices. By doing so, they can create an environment that is more conducive to an informed curriculum review process that ultimately enhances educational outcomes.

Although 11 participants indicated that they used research to some extent only, they expressed a desire to use more research more often in reviewing the curriculum. A participant shared that:

Research provides information on which to lay a foundation before making any changes. It is crucial in developing, reviewing, and implementing the curriculum; however, there are many obstacles to effectively using it during the review process. The most obvious and readily available type of research we conduct is document analysis (SEO8).

In the structuration framework, rules (norms, guidelines) and resources (material and non-material assets) shape social behaviour. In educational settings, the availability of research resources (e.g., access to current studies or data) can either facilitate or hinder a robust curriculum review process. Document analysis is a key resource, but its effectiveness can be limited by institutional rules or prevailing attitudes towards research.

The participants emphasised the significance of research in curriculum development, including document analysis and comparative studies with curricula from other countries. Two participants advocated that research is a valuable resource and a powerful tool that can be utilised to transform education. One specified that “research makes things happen; it guides, directs, and provides evidence as long as it is done correctly” (SEO6). The other stated:

Research is fundamental. You cannot do without it. Research enables you to gain knowledge outside your jurisdiction, and research techniques and methods can also help us understand within our institution; unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in successfully using educational research to inform curriculum review (SEO2).

The struggle to effectively utilise educational research to inform curriculum review highlights a gap between knowledge production (through research) and its practical application in decision-making processes. Structuration theory would suggest that this gap arises from the existing social rules and resources that influence how research is valued and utilised. It raises the question of whether current practices in educational institutions fail to adapt and effectively incorporate new information.

Structuration theory posits that structures are not static; they evolve through practices. The statement of having "a long way to go" implies that, as the educational field navigates this path, there may be shifts in how research is integrated into curricula, influenced by both internal institutional dynamics and external educational trends.

One participant expressed his satisfaction with the division's current research on using smart boards for schools offering advanced subsidiary Levels (AS) that:

Schools offering AS were equipped with advanced technological tools, such as Smart Boards, to enhance learning. We conducted a study to evaluate

how the teachers and learners used them. We identified the challenges that hinder their practical use and outlined strategies for overcoming them (SEO2).

At its core, structuration theory posits that social structures influence human actions (agency), while those actions can also reinforce or transform those structures. In this case, both teachers and learners possess agency in their interactions with this technology. However, their ability to effectively utilise these tools may be constrained by existing educational structures such as curricula, institutional norms, and available training. The study mentioned highlights that both teachers and learners are active participants in the educational process. Their roles and interactions shape how technology is integrated into learning. A teacher's comfort with SmartBoards could foster an environment where students engage more actively, utilising interactive features. Conversely, if a teacher feels inadequately trained or unsupported, they may underutilise the technology, which can hinder student engagement. SEO5 explained:

I value research because it informs us of reality. Before making any curriculum changes, we analysed research and compared the designed curriculum to that of SADC member countries, such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. We then compared the reviewed curriculum with that of other African nations, such as Seychelles and Malaysia, and with curricula from countries in Asia, Europe, and America.

Researchers and policymakers are not merely passive participants in existing structures; they also engage with and potentially reshape them through their findings. The research serves as a resource that influences their actions and decisions, thereby affecting the curriculum's design. The text describes a multi-

layered approach to curriculum review and education research. By examining various countries, the agents involved are not only seeking inspiration from other nations but also engaging in a broader dialogue about educational practices. This suggests a reflexive process where external structures (from different countries) inform local structures, and local agents may adapt these learnings to their context

The SEO2 expressed that:

We ensure the genuineness of the findings. We give findings and evidence as they are. We are not in favour of the ministry nor against it; if it were in law, we would be like the investigator. We are just neutral people. We do research and present the data as it is; we are not biased. It is up to the Curriculum Division's colleagues to decide what should be changed or introduced based on the provided evidence.

The researchers describe their approach as based on "findings and evidence as they are," which refers to the rules of evidence-based research and the ethical standards governing academic inquiry. These rules guide their actions and give legitimacy to their claims. The resources they utilise (e.g., data, and evidence) also shape the structure of the educational environment, as the Curriculum Division depends on this information to make informed decisions.

Research plays a crucial role in informing changes and decision-making in education systems. It is essential to research to understand the dynamic nature of society and make informed decisions. Research findings should drive curriculum revisions to ensure effectiveness and relevance. Scholars from various countries contribute valuable research that can enhance curriculum development. Research enables institutions to understand their local context and global trends, allowing them to improve their educational systems. Without research, it is challenging to

identify issues, trends, and best practices in education. Incorporating research findings and recommendations into curriculum development is vital to ensure continuous improvement.

#### 5.4.2 NIED Research and Curriculum Divisions Play a Central Role in Education Research and Curriculum Review

All participants emphasised that the NIED Research and Curriculum Division was central to education research and curriculum review. The standard view among most participants (9) was that NIED operated under the mandate of the Ministry of Education as an educational resource centre, where directions and procedures for curriculum review, implementation, and educational research were prioritised. A participant stated that:

NIED's primary responsibility is to develop, implement, and review the curriculum. The curriculum is the heart of education in Namibia, and research is the brain. We mediate between the Ministry of Education Head Office and the regions to achieve the ministry's vision and mission (SEO4).

The text highlights the NIED's role as a mediator between the Ministry of Education and the regional sectors. This positioning provides NIED with agency and a structured role within the educational framework. By actively engaging in the development, implementation, and review of a curriculum, NIED exemplifies how it utilises its agency to influence educational practices while adhering to the mandates set by the Ministry of Education. Their actions not only comply with existing educational structures but also have the potential to reshape them through

curriculum development initiatives. This demonstrates that NIED is a structure within the Ministry of Education tasked with serving as the leading agent in education research and in reviewing the Basic Education curriculum in Namibia.

50% (6) of the participants viewed the Research and Curriculum Subdivision as primarily engaged in research activities. At the same time, the other half felt that both divisions shared equal responsibility for ensuring that the curriculum was reviewed in accordance with the given instructions. A participant said, “In the Research Sub-Division, we collect findings through research and write a report on them. Then, we report back to colleagues in the Curriculum Division, who are responsible for making changes when reviewing the curriculum” (SEO2).

Another participant affirmed that the Research sub-division was mainly intended for research activities: “We are the mastermind behind the research, and we also compile the Research Reform Forum journal; we are involved in curriculum review by researching what other countries are doing, gathering information on specific subjects, presenting proposed changes to panel members for feedback, and ensuring relevance to current issues and society” (SEO4).

The statement highlights the importance of gathering information on specific subjects and presenting proposed changes to panel members. This reflects the rules and resources available to the agents within the subdivision. Doing research into the educational activities in other countries involves leveraging external knowledge (resources) and adhering to institutional norms regarding curriculum

improvement. The participants' ability to compile a journal also indicates the organisational support for enacting these practices.

A participant indicated that:

The Curriculum Division can identify research needs during monitoring and evaluation. Colleagues from the Research Division are approached to research or offer support in researching the identified issues (SEO7).

Similarly, SEO9 strengthened the idea that “the Research Division designs research instruments and helps colleagues when they require assistance throughout the research process. They also assist other divisions with research training.”

The two divisions collaborate, and the Research Division publishes its research findings in journals. The Research Division provided training on online meetings and eLearning. However, a participant reported that:

Although the Research Division supports field research, designs questionnaires and interviews, helps with data analysis, and eLearning initiatives, there are no monitoring strategies on the study conducted by the curriculum reviewers to ensure that the whole process was done as per the research ethics, there are also no guideline or policies to guide us on how we should carry out research (SEO1).

The subdivisions within NIED play a crucial role in the ongoing curriculum review process, ensuring that educational frameworks remain relevant and practical. By using research, they facilitate informed decision-making when reviewing the

curriculum. These divisions' commitment to continuous growth and development promises significant benefits to stakeholders.

#### 5.4.3 The Curriculum Panels Played a Significant Role in Using Research to Review the Curriculum

All the participants acknowledged the role of the curriculum panel. One participant explained that every subject has a panel that assesses and evaluates documents and develops reviewed syllabi, teacher guides, and teaching materials. The panel comprises subject experts, including teachers, academic staff, and Education Officers from different regions (SEO12).

SEO6 indicated that “Even if you create a specific document alone, you still need to share it with your colleagues on the panel, as it would not be very objective if only one person created it.”

This demonstrates that the curriculum panel operated within Ministerial structures and was guided by established rules and standards. They were fully involved in making curriculum decisions and suggesting changes to ministerial documents, such as the syllabus, and ensured that all their practices were guided by ministerial and Cambridge standards. The panel had power, but their power was limited to ensure conformity to the guidelines and quality review.

SEO1 expressed that:

The Education Officers at NIED could select the curriculum panel. They consider the panel member's qualifications, years of experience, and expertise. The Education Officers had working groups that we could choose from different people. They were given a three-year renewable contract, contingent upon their performance.

Interestingly, SEO2 had a different opinion:

Being a curriculum panel member is voluntary work without payment; they act as stakeholders. They usually come twice a year, in February and August, but there is no reward to encourage them to work. Voluntary work can affect the quality of work and commitment of the members. We experienced some panel members being absent from meetings.

The members of the curriculum panel function within an institutional framework that shapes their participation. Their voluntary role indicates a choice made under specific constraints, such as the absence of financial compensation and the infrequent nature of meetings. This lack of financial incentives can be seen as a structural limitation that impacts their motivation and agency. Members may prioritise other commitments that offer tangible rewards over their involvement in the curriculum panel. Additionally, the panel only meets twice per year, which may reinforce a pattern where members do not feel regular accountability or reinforcement for their engagement. As a result, this structure can inadvertently contribute to a cycle of disengagement. Members may justify their absence due to

the low frequency of meetings, ultimately diminishing the overall effectiveness of the panel's work.

SEO3 further shared that:

The curriculum panel is called 'our parliament' because issues and matters related to curriculum review are discussed, debated, and resolved. The panel brings in different views and expertise. These other views are also gathered and examined here, as every view presented deserves to be considered and heard. The panel activities were budgeted; therefore, they could not meet frequently, but they met twice as per the ministerial guidelines.

Through the lens of structuration theory, the curriculum panel can be seen as a site of constant negotiation, where the interplay between agency and structure shapes the curriculum review process. The duality of structure is clearly illustrated by how the panel is both empowered and constrained, signifying that understanding educational governance requires an awareness of how social practices, resources, and rules interact to produce outcomes. Enhancing the structural conditions under which the panel operates could lead to more effective and dynamic curriculum discussions, ultimately benefiting the educational framework it aims to improve.

#### 5.4.4 Research and Curriculum Review Activities are Planned and Budgeted for

The participants expressed the importance of planning and budgeting for research and curriculum activities. Ten out of 12 participants reported on the central part of budgeting. One participant noted that:

Although we are based at NIED, we are responsible for all 14 regions, which is costly and requires us to plan early and budget for all our activities. However, we operate on a monitored and limited budget (SEO3).

SEO6 shared similar sentiments: “We plan annually, from April of each year to the following year. We budget and plan the activities we will undertake. Before the new year begins, we have already planned our activities.”

The findings indicate that the SEOs collaborated and were engaged in creating the budget for the following year. Their involvement as active budgeting team members provided them with a unique opportunity to integrate their planned annual activities into the financial framework. This participation not only allowed them to advocate for the resources needed to support their initiatives but also ensured that their objectives were aligned with the organisation's overall goals. By having a seat at the table, they were able to offer valuable insights and contribute to a more comprehensive and strategic budget, ultimately enhancing the likelihood of successful programme implementation.

#### 5.4.5 There is a Need for External Curriculum Experts and Researchers to Join the NIED Curriculum Reviewers

Subject experts bring a vast amount of experience to educational research and review. Fifty percent of participants (6 out of 12) recommended that national and international curriculum experts and researchers be appointed independently to

collaborate with NIED officials on conducting educational research and participating in aspects of curriculum review. A participant expressed that:

We would appreciate the opinions of other experts to avoid faults and ensure a timely and successful curriculum review that is well-informed by research. Independent bodies and experts must listen to individuals' frustrations and conduct reviews to ensure that research is carried out effectively (SEO8).

The text implies a recognition of established structures in the education system, such as curriculum frameworks, regulatory bodies, and research methodologies. Structuration theory posits that these structures both enable and constrain agency. In the context of the curriculum review, the reliance on "other experts" to inform the process signifies an acknowledgment of existing knowledge structures. However, it also raises questions about whose knowledge is being considered and how power dynamics influence the production of this knowledge. Are diverse perspectives being included, or are the dominant voices overshadowing those of marginalized individuals?

The mention of "individuals' frustrations" highlights the experiences of those on the ground, including teachers, students, and perhaps parents, whose voices might traditionally be excluded from hegemonic educational discourse. From a structuration perspective, it is crucial to consider how these frustrations can be a catalyst for change. If the curriculum review process is perceived as top-down and disconnected from the real experiences of its stakeholders, it risks reinforcing existing structures rather than transforming them.

SEO3 further explained that:

We need to reevaluate NIED's co-mandate, which includes curriculum development, review, and research. However, we have lost focus on the research type and what we are expected to do. By now, we are expected to be at a higher level in research; however, we are significantly behind in that area, and therefore, we require external support.

The individuals within NIED can act and make decisions regarding curriculum development and research initiatives. However, there appears to be a disconnect between their intentions and the organisation's overall goals. The text suggests that NIED seems to have deviated from its expected research focus, indicating a limitation in the agency's operational effectiveness. This may result from rigid structures or expectations that limit the creative and practical application of research approaches.

The existing framework guiding NIED's activities encompassing policies, educational standards, and prescribed methodologies can be both enabling and constraining. While structures provide stability and guidance, they can also inhibit flexibility and innovation in research. The claim that NIED is falling behind in research suggests that its current organisational frameworks may not effectively facilitate adaptation to new challenges or advance the organisation's objectives. If NIED continues to operate under existing paradigms without re-evaluation, it risks

perpetuating ineffective research methodologies. The loss of focus suggests that current practices may not align with the desired research outcomes, thereby further perpetuating average performance. In the same vein, SEO 11 indicated that:

Namibia needs to review its reliance on external accreditation bodies, such as Cambridge, and develop its accreditation processes through the University of Namibia and the Namibian Qualifications Authority. This would help ensure that qualifications are accredited in accordance with international standards and that the education system is better aligned with the country's needs. The current system of relying on external accreditation creates language and cultural barriers that must be addressed.

The existing reliance on international bodies, such as Cambridge, represents a predefined structure that influences educational practices in Namibia. These external organisations impose standards that may not fully align with local educational needs, cultural context, or language. This mismatch can create barriers for students and educators, as accreditation structures may not account for Namibia's specific socio-cultural dynamics. The call for Namibia to develop its own accreditation processes through institutions like the University of Namibia and the Namibian Qualifications Authority reflects an exercise of agency. By establishing a local accreditation system, Namibia aims to reform its educational accreditation framework. This transformation can empower local educators and institutions by enabling them to define the qualifications that should be valued within their specific context, thereby promoting relevance and inclusivity.

#### 5.4.6 The Challenges to Integrating Research in Reviewing the Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia

All the participants expressed that they experienced challenges as curriculum reviewers and researchers. The following challenges were highlighted:

- The duality of structures and self-identity
- Lack of thorough research or of not applying research findings
- Inadequate research on subject matters
- Delay in communicating research findings
- Political influence over decision-making on curriculum review
- Lack of stakeholders' involvement and commitment
- Resistance to change
- Lack of resources and financial constraints
- Demanding Cambridge benchmarks

#### 5.4.6.1 The Duality of Structures and Participants' Self-Identity

Structures include educational policies, curricular frameworks, and socio-cultural norms, while self-identity reflects the individual SEOs' perceptions of themselves within these structures. The interplay between the structures and agents constrained the use of educational research in different ways when reviewing the curriculum. For instance, SEO3 reported that:

Our job responsibilities confine us to conducting small-scale research to guide revisions of the curriculum and syllabus. Consequently, when we review the curriculum, our primary focus remains on our own research

rather than pursuing external studies. While we engage in comparative analyses, these are conducted within a limited scope.

At the heart of structuration theory is the relationship between structure (the rules and resources that guide behaviour) and agency (the capacity of individuals to act independently). In this context, the emphasis on "small-scale research" suggests a structural constraint that limits the scope of inquiry. This restricts the ability of educators or researchers to engage with broader, more impactful studies that could inform curriculum revisions. Consequently, the agency of these individuals is constrained by institutional structures that prioritise a narrow research focus, which may reinforce existing practices rather than promote transformative change in curriculum design.

SEO3 commented that:

I acknowledge my attendance at various work-related training sessions and workshops; however, I strongly desire to participate in training specifically focused on conducting formal empirical research. I seek to develop the confidence to undertake formal research independently without reliance on the Research Division.

The participant desires training to improve their formal empirical research skills, demonstrating a strong sense of agency in their professional development. According to structuration theory, this pursuit allows them to navigate and potentially reshape the structures within the Research Division. While they acknowledge reliance on the division for support, this dependency highlights how

organisational structures can constrain individual agency. Though the participant has attended various training sessions, none have specifically addressed their need for research skills, indicating a misalignment between personal aspirations and organisational priorities. The emphasis on building confidence for independent research underscores the dynamics of knowledge and power within the institutional hierarchy. Acquiring these skills could shift power dynamics, reduce reliance on the division, and reconfigure roles within the organisation.

Ultimately, this analysis reveals the interplay between agency and structure, emphasising the need for training programmes to align more closely with individual needs to foster empowered agency and promote an adaptive organisational culture.

#### 5.4.6.2 Lack of Thorough Research and Not Applying Research Findings

The participants have identified the main aspects of research as a lack of thorough research, failure to apply research findings, inadequate critical evaluation of findings from other nations, and a tendency to adopt frameworks from other nations without critical examination.

SEO7 expressed that:

We still have a long way to go in terms of utilising research. Sometimes, you want to use research findings, but they do not entirely convince you. You would like to conduct extensive research in a specific area, but in most cases, without success. When you are unsure of the findings or conclusions, you won't apply them. There are cases where you are convinced of the findings, but other factors limit your ability to use them as you review them according to the guiding framework.

The text highlights the tension between individual agency and structural constraints in applying research findings. While individuals may want to incorporate research into their work, their ability to do so is often hindered by doubts about the validity of the study and the credibility of sources. This uncertainty reflects a key aspect of structuration theory: trust in research is essential for agency. Where there is scepticism, individuals may choose not to apply knowledge. Additionally, external factors such as institutional policies and professional standards can further restrict their ability to act on research, illustrating how guiding frameworks shape decision-making and are reproduced through social practices.

Additionally, one participant noted that, while research informed the curriculum review, there was insufficient research to guide specific areas of review. He narrated what happened after the review:

No research studies informed us of the specific changes on the subject. Many technical subjects, such as Motor Mechanics, Bricklaying, Metalwork, and Welding, were designed to promote job creation and technological development by 2030. Still, more than 90% of the schools in Namibia do not offer these subjects. If proper research had been conducted, we could have implemented a few technical subjects effectively (SEO6).

Giddens posits that structure and agency are intertwined; structures shape individual behaviour while individuals can also change structures through their actions. In Namibia's education system, the lack of research into technical subjects, leading to a limited offering of technical subjects, illustrates a structural constraint. The existing curriculum reflects systemic choices that hinder agency students, and educators are trapped in a system that does not recognise or meet

the job market needs forecasted for 2030. The notion of power is central in structuration theory. In this scenario, power dynamics within the education policy-making bodies may hinder the introduction of necessary technical subjects. The financial, informational, and institutional resources required to implement these subjects appear to be insufficiently allocated. If proper research had been conducted, it could have empowered stakeholders, teachers, students, and policymakers to advocate for and implement change, thereby reshaping the educational landscape in favour of job creation and technological development.

#### 5.4.6.3 Inadequate Research on Subject Matters

Most participants (9 of 12) reported inadequate research on different subjects, especially Indigenous Languages and newly introduced technical subjects. A participant reported that “Sometimes, even when we want to use research to inform us about what we should do concerning specific subject matters, we can hardly find any research. I think there is research on subject content; most research is based on general education” (SEO12).

The statement reflects an awareness of the limitations of existing research in informing practice. From a structuration theory perspective, the individual’s desire to use research highlights their agency and capacity to act and make choices within a framework of existing structures. The participants’ recognition of the

research gap suggests a desire to use existing knowledge to inform educational practices. However, their inability to find relevant research indicates a struggle against structural constraints that limit access to adequate information.

In the same vein, another participant expressed a need for more research:

We could utilise limited research on Namibian education to review the curriculum; thus, we primarily relied on research we conducted during school visits or on the research published in the NIED journal (SEO7).

The participants express a desire for more research to inform educational practices. This highlights the agency's role as educators seek to influence change through research. However, the limited availability of localised research reflects structural constraints within Namibian education that hinder the ability to make informed decisions.

There may be research studies conducted by students and scholars focusing on various subjects and aspects of education that we could utilise. Still, we have not been informed about their findings and don't have access to them (SEO2).

The text indicates that research studies are available but also points out a lack of access to them. This restriction underscores how structural barriers, including institutional limitations, inadequate communication, and insufficient sharing mechanisms, restrict the agency of students and scholars. Their potential to utilise

these findings for educational advancement is constrained. These dynamics underscore the need for adjustments to institutional policies and practices to promote enhanced communication and collaboration in academic research. By addressing structural barriers, we could improve the agency of all participants in the educational landscape, fostering a more vibrant and interconnected research community. Another participant shared similar views:

Imagine how many people in Namibia have registered and completed their Postgraduate qualifications in different disciplines of education at local and international universities. They are usually required to conduct research, but where is their research? Yet, the same people will complain and blame us for failing the system. We want that research, mainly if it was carried out in Namibia (SEO3).

The information discloses a need for open access to research findings. This might involve cooperation with educational institutions that train teachers. Researchers should be encouraged to make their findings available to inform the academic community, including those involved in curriculum development and review.

#### 5.4.6.4 Delay in Communicating Research Findings

Out of twelve participants, eight indicated that, in most cases, they experienced delays in either communicating research findings that they had carried out or research they had received from the Research Divisions. A participant reported:

Sometimes, research findings had to undergo reporting and feedback. Sometimes, we conduct research, but finalising and sharing the findings will take time. Collecting conclusions from the field is always easy, but transcribing and analysing require more time because we don't have the necessary software (SEO1).

The mention of reporting and feedback processes highlights the structural norms and expectations within the research community. These structures dictate how research findings are disseminated and validated. The time lag in finalising and sharing findings can be viewed as a structural constraint that affects both the researchers' ability to communicate their results effectively and the broader dissemination of knowledge within the field. The dual focus on the ease of collecting conclusions versus the difficulty of transcription and analysis reflects the interplay between agency and structure. Researchers have the agency to collect data, yet structural limitations, such as time constraints and lack of access to appropriate tools or software, restrict their ability to transform it into shareable knowledge. This scenario underscores Giddens' point that while individuals can act, their actions are always situated within a broader framework of social norms, resources, and constraints.

Another participant pointed out that:

Some student research might take time to complete. By the time the study is completed, it may be too late, and the information might not address the pertinent issues as intended. Consider a Master's or PhD research project

that will be carried out over more than five years. The recommendations might be outdated by the time of publication (SEO8).

The concern that the findings may be outdated by the time the research is completed reflects the dynamic nature of knowledge production. Emerging technologies, societal changes, and evolving issues continually impact the relevance of research. This temporal element challenges the effectiveness of research outcomes, suggesting that the structures guiding academic research are not sufficiently adaptable to the rapid pace of change in contemporary society.

Finally, this analysis raises questions about the academic structures themselves. Are they sufficiently responsive to society's changing needs? The desire for timely and relevant research suggests that institutions should reformulate their guidelines and expectations regarding the duration and processes of academic research.

Additionally, SEO6 clarified that if we carry out a study now, in 2025, using the Advanced Subsidiary level (AS), the results and recommendations will only be put into practice during the next review process, which is three years away.

In this instance, the structures of the review schedule and implementation timelines influence the behaviour of those involved in the educational process. Conversely, the study itself could be seen as a means of altering those structures if it leads to significant changes in understanding or policy upon final review. However, the current constraints mean that these potential changes will not be realised for another three years. This delay in implementation suggests a cyclical interaction in which practices are continually informed by past studies but also

constrained by the rigid systems in place. There might be a disconnect between the need for timely responses to new findings and the structural processes that govern when and how such findings are acted upon.

#### 5.4.6.5 Political Influence over Decision-Making on Curriculum Review

Political influence was highlighted as a significant factor constraining the effectiveness of curriculum review and research. Nine participants reported challenges related to political power and influence over curriculum review and research. A participant explained and compared the Namibian education to that of Zimbabwe:

In Zimbabwe, former president Robert Mugabe understood the importance of education and took no chances with it. As a result, Zimbabwean graduates are independent and capable of earning their own income. From an early age, learners in Zimbabwe are trained in practical skills, such as woodwork, which prepares them effectively for the future (SEO6).

The text highlights how education in Zimbabwe is structured to promote independence and practical skills, which can be seen as a positive outcome of agency within a supportive educational framework. Former President Robert Mugabe's approach to education exemplifies how leaders can influence individual agency through structural changes, creating opportunities for graduates to earn an

income and contribute meaningfully to society. Although this approach was regarded as effective, it differed from the Namibian curriculum review.

Another participant also expressed concern about political interference:

We have a serious problem with politicians' involvement in education. Of course, they set the standards and determined the structural power in education in Namibia, but in most cases, they sought to exploit the situation and advance their political agenda (SEO3).

The participant's statement illustrates a less positive aspect of structuration theory. Politicians, while holding structural power, often prioritise their own agendas over the educational needs of the population. This creates tension between the agency of individuals (educators, learners, and the community) and the external structures imposed by political leaders, which may hinder effective educational outcomes. Applying the structuration theory enables us to identify the potential for change. If political involvement in Namibia were to shift towards a more constructive engagement with educational stakeholders, the structures could evolve to support agency in ways that enhance educational outcomes and align with learners' needs.

Similarly, SEO5 argued that some politicians attempted to exploit every opportunity to tarnish the government's image by complaining about the reviewed curriculum for political gain and in their campaigns. He comments that "I am not a politician, but I advise, let us not tamper with education. It is too precious to be tampered with, as it represents Namibia's future. Besides our challenges, I can assure you that our curriculum is among the best."

The speaker demonstrates reflexivity by acknowledging the challenges faced while still proclaiming the current curriculum as one of the best. This suggests an awareness of the broader context in which educational structures operate, indicating that they understand both the limitations and the potential of the existing system. The use of the term "I assure you" conveys confidence grounded in understanding and experience, lending credibility to their position.

The statement also offers a subtle criticism of the power dynamics involved in education policymaking. By calling on his audience to "not tamper with education," the speaker positions himself and his colleagues as voices of wisdom and caution against potentially disruptive changes. This reflects an understanding of the power held by those in political positions and the responsibility they carry in making decisions that affect the educational landscape

Some participants confirmed that tensions and disagreements sometimes arose due to political power and interference in educational decision-making. SEO1 shared the following:

During the consultative meetings with stakeholders, sometimes we find ourselves at the centre of political conflict...like they said, when two elephants fight, the grass suffers; I think some of the politicians are just there looking for challenges to attack the government; in return, the Ministry of Education will end up putting more pressure on us, setting goals that are sometimes unrealistic to be achieved, to demonstrate that they have everything under control.

The stakeholders in the consultative meetings are influenced by both their agency, which refers to their ability to act and make decisions within the political system, and the structures within which they operate, including political dynamics, government goals, and institutional expectations. The mention of politicians seeking challenges suggests that individual actions, such as political manoeuvring, are influenced by the broader political structure, which may prioritise conflict over collaboration. The phrase "when two elephants fight, the grass suffers" illustrates how individual actions, such as political conflicts, can impact the broader system, including stakeholders like the Ministry of Education. The political conflict creates a structure that puts pressure on educational institutions, leading to unrealistic goals. This reflects the duality of structure, where political actors' decisions shape and are shaped by existing social constructs and conflicts.

The statement suggests that some politicians prioritise education primarily in response to pressure from the opposition. When under scrutiny, the government often shifts responsibility for implementing educational policies onto civil servants. This approach views education as a means to achieve political ends rather than a fundamental governance issue. To truly benefit the country, politicians must recognise the importance of investing in education as a fundamental duty rather than waiting for external pressures to prompt action. Another participant commented that:

Every curriculum issue is a political assertion. Politicians cannot give their money if their interests are not addressed. Politicians have the power to

review curricula and conduct education research. Still, in most cases, their decisions are politically motivated, promoting their agenda rather than addressing the community's needs (SEO1).

The assertion that decisions are often politically motivated suggests a normalisation of practices within the educational system that may not fully align with community needs. Over time, these practices become embedded within the educational structure to the point where it is difficult to alter them without significant political change. Giddens' theory posits that these cycles of reinforcement can lead to a stable yet potentially inequitable educational landscape.

The power dynamics between politicians and the community are crucial in this analysis. Politicians may propose educational changes that serve their interests, but if these changes do not align with community needs, they risk resistance or backlash. Therefore, understanding the interplay between political power and community agency is essential for examining how educational policies are formulated and enacted.

#### 5.4.5.6 Lack of Stakeholders' Involvement and Commitment

While all 12 participants recognized stakeholder involvement, seven highlighted issues with the level of participation and commitment from some stakeholders. One participant mentioned that, "although stakeholders had an open-door policy to share their views with the NIED via various platforms, many only took part during regional consultative meetings" (SEO4).

Stakeholder involvement in consultative meetings can be seen as strengthening existing frameworks. By engaging in these meetings, stakeholders might inadvertently reaffirm the main methods of consultation within the NIED structure. Their limited participation could unintentionally support the idea that formal meetings are the sole or primary form of engagement.

Stakeholders often restrict their participation to certain events due to structural barriers like unawareness of other engagement options or perceived challenges such as limited time, resources, or confidence. These constraints influence how they decide to participate and how much they get involved.

#### 5.4.5.7 Resistance to Change

Some participants pointed out misunderstandings about the curriculum, implying it was worse than the previous version, which caused more resistance from teachers, parents, and learners. One participant noted that:

Our reviewed curriculum framework and philosophy are among the best in the world when approached with a positive mindset. However, our nation is too judgmental, with numerous complaints and resistance from various stakeholders (SEO 5).

In support, SEO1 said:

I'm not claiming the reviewed curriculum is flawless. Yet, it's disappointing that the same consultants complain, especially considering that many Grade 11 students failed Mathematics in 2022. That year marked the first time Grade 11 learners sat for the national exam under the revised curriculum,

bringing several challenges, such as insufficient teaching materials and some teachers being uneasy with the content due to the change in phases.

In the text, the reviewed curriculum and its implementation create a structure that influences the behaviour of various stakeholders, including teachers, students, and policymakers. However, the resistance and complaints from these stakeholders also highlight that they, too, are agents who are capable of shaping this structure. The individual referenced as SEO1 displays agency by critiquing the negative response to the curriculum despite acknowledging its imperfections. This perspective reflects an understanding that while the curriculum may have shortcomings, it still serves a purpose and requires support and constructive feedback rather than outright rejection. The failure of Grade 11 learners in Mathematics is an illustrative example of how agency can affect outcomes. The challenges they faced, such as a lack of teaching materials, indicate that educators and stakeholders have the power to address these issues through advocacy or reform. One participant also shared that:

During school visits, some teachers shared information that may not have been entirely accurate, reflecting their concerns about potential repercussions. Understandably, they felt hesitant to express their thoughts candidly, as change can be intimidating. However, embracing the new curriculum offers an exciting opportunity for growth and development! By fostering open communication, we can all work together to navigate these changes positively, creating a vibrant environment that benefits teachers and students (EO4).

This commentary highlights how teachers' actions, including their willingness to share information and express concerns, are influenced by existing structures, such as the school environment, curriculum guidelines, and the potential repercussions for speaking candidly. The teachers are aware of the potential risks

of sharing their feelings about the new curriculum, reflecting the constraints imposed by the administrative framework and a perceived culture of fear. This suggests that, although they are agents capable of change, their agency is constrained by the structures around them.

Teachers' hesitance to voice their concerns may lead to the simple reproduction of existing practices and norms within the school system, without questioning them. If teachers continue to hold back due to fear of repercussions, the existing structures remain intact, and the potential benefits of the new curriculum may not be fully realised. This reflects the systemic nature of power dynamics within educational institutions, where fear can inhibit meaningful change.

#### 5.4.5.8 Lack of Resources and Financial Constraints

All 12 participants reported a lack of physical and human resources, as well as funding. A participant shared this:

The research division lacks resources, including updated software for analysing findings, especially quantitative data. The curriculum division also faces resource challenges, affecting practical activities in schools. Human resource constraints are a significant issue, with unfilled researcher positions and limited research focus at the NIED (SEO7).

The research and curriculum divisions face structural constraints due to limited resources, including outdated software and qualified personnel. These constraints shape the environment in which individuals operate, influencing their actions and decisions. For instance, outdated software limits the capacity to analyse quantitative data effectively, affecting the quality of research outputs. Similarly, the resource constraints in the curriculum division limit practical activities in schools, affecting students' learning experiences.

Similarly, another participant (SEO2) explained that:

Our computers are outdated, and we have limited software resources. We lack tools for analysing quantitative data, and our qualitative data software is challenging. I recently created an online mathematics questionnaire, but I faced challenges processing the data, which forced me to use Microsoft Excel, a time-consuming process given the volume of responses. Bureaucratic hurdles often impede our operations, and purchases for new software have been cancelled due to costs. However, I hope for a reconsideration of resource allocation.

The statement highlights a key element of agency, creating an online mathematics questionnaire. This initiative demonstrates proactive behaviour by leveraging

technology to gather quantitative data within a constrained environment. However, the agency is limited by structural factors, such as outdated computers and insufficient software tools. Structuration theory posits that while individuals have agency, their actions are mediated by the structures in which they operate. Outdated technology and bureaucratic obstacles represent structural constraints that hinder effective data analysis and utilisation.

Additionally, SEO12 made a general remark:

There is no funding available for conducting research. Sometimes, there are no cars available to transport the Education Officers to different regions for research purposes. If the Education Officers had to travel to the other areas on duty, that would be costly. So first, we do not have the money, and then we do not have the capacity.

The text highlights the limited agency of Education Officers due to structural constraints, particularly a lack of funding and resources, including transportation. These factors inhibit their ability to conduct research effectively and fulfil their duties. The SEO may have the knowledge and expertise to conduct valuable research, but these external constraints significantly hamper their agency. Here, structuration theory suggests that while individuals can act (agency), their actions are heavily influenced and often restricted by the structures around them, such as funding availability and transportation logistics.

#### 5.4.5.9 Lack of Monitoring and Support to Integrate Research when Reviewing the Curriculum

One challenge the curriculum reviewer faces is the lack of support and training opportunities. One participant explained that “We facilitated online training sessions utilising Google Meet and established WhatsApp groups for each subject to provide support and foster interaction among teachers. However, some teachers hesitated to allocate training time due to other commitments” (SEO2). In this scenario, the online training sessions and WhatsApp groups represent the structures that facilitate teacher support and collaboration. These structures enable interaction and knowledge sharing among teachers, but also rely on their willingness to engage with them. According to structuration theory, social practices are informed by power and norms that facilitate interaction through social media platforms, leading to the introduction of online training and WhatsApp groups. This shift marks a move toward more flexible and contemporary methods of professional development, potentially altering the norms surrounding teacher training. However, if teachers do not view these methods as legitimate or prioritise them over other commitments, their participation may not align with the expected practices.

Apart from that, SEO8 reported that: “There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the research recommendations are considered when reviewing the curriculum or making decisions, such as developing and reviewing materials.”

This observation highlights a significant gap within the research process. The absence of monitoring mechanisms can hinder the translation of research into practice, ultimately limiting the potential impact of the findings on improving outcomes or informing policy decisions. It is therefore crucial to establish robust strategies for monitoring and evaluating the application of research recommendations in real-world settings to bridge this disconnect.

Similarly, SEO2 explained that “sometimes research is carried out, but there is no input on implementing the recommendations. What is the use? Even those who conduct research for the ministry sometimes provide recommendations, but they are not implemented.”

The text suggests that curriculum reviews should incorporate a broad range of research, highlighting the interplay between knowledge and power. Some subject areas may carry more weight due to their perceived credibility or relevance, influencing which topics are included in the curriculum. Thus, the negotiation of what constitutes valuable knowledge is a site of power dynamics among stakeholders.

The participants expressed a willingness to offer support, training, and research to benefit the educational system and the nation. Indeed, it would be discouraging if the curriculum reviewers conducted research, reported their findings, and provided recommendations that were not implemented. Such useful research should not go unnoticed or unimplemented by decision-makers; therefore, a more effective monitoring and evaluation initiative must be put in place.

### **5.5 How do the Curriculum Reviewers Influence the Utilisation of Education Research when Reviewing the Curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia?**

Regarding the influence of curriculum reviewers on the utilisation of education during curriculum review, it was found that the research findings were used to inform decision-making and shared with others. Seven themes were generated and presented:

#### **5.5.1 Further Research was Conducted**

All the participants indicated that they use the research findings to make decisions on curriculum review and conduct further research. A participant explained that:

We recently researched Clever Touch smart board technology in AS schools in Namibia. The research was carried out as part of the Ministry of Education's monitoring and evaluation strategy. Although many schools were given Clever Touch, not all were successful in using it. Some schools lacked internet access, some teachers were not adequately trained, and some schools had a large number of learners compared to the resources provided by Clever Touch (SEO2).

The Ministry of Education's policy to integrate technology in schools reflects an institutional structure designed to modernise education. However, this policy may not be adequately supported by the necessary infrastructure (e.g., internet access) or resources (e.g., teacher training). The provision of Clever Touch boards serves as a technological framework that can facilitate or hinder teaching and learning, depending on how it is utilised. Schools with limited internet connectivity are unable to exploit the potential of these smartboards, indicating a disconnect between the technology provided and its actual usage. While some teachers may be motivated to integrate new technology into their teaching, the lack of training significantly hampers their ability to do so effectively. Teachers may want to innovate in their classrooms, but the lack of skills and knowledge constrains their ability and agency to use Clever Touch boards effectively.

Another participant expressed that “When we encounter something unclear, we always try to find out more through research, not just our study but scholarly research in Namibia or other countries” (SEO7).

The act of seeking clarification through research illustrates agency. The SEOs demonstrated their ability to navigate uncertainties by actively seeking out information. This behaviour reflects a structured approach to learning, showing that they rely on research as part of their inquiry process. The text implies that established rules govern the acquisition of knowledge, such as the importance of scholarly research. The choice to engage in research rather than relying on personal study alone suggests an acknowledgment of external resources and

norms that can guide acceptable practices in academia. This engagement with scholarly work can be understood as a way to align the educational system with established standards within the academic community, as well as to ensure the reliability of the information sought. The reference to research conducted in Namibia and other countries highlights the importance of context in structuration theory. It suggests that the authors are aware of and are influenced by global academic discourse, which shapes their understanding and interpretation of the world. This broader context can affect their perspectives and approaches to research, showcasing the interconnectedness of local and global structures in knowledge production.

#### 5.5.2 Collaborative Research Enriches Perspective and Informs Curriculum Review.

The participants reported that their collaboration with academics and researchers significantly enhanced the curriculum review process by promoting interaction and facilitating the exchange of specialized knowledge regarding research. Seven participants underscored the educational benefits of collaborative research among external researchers, educators, and Education Officers, although they noted that such collaborations were infrequently undertaken. A participant explained that “We met with academics and researchers from the University of Namibia's School of Education, who requested to sign a memorandum of understanding for collaboration on conducting educational research and curriculum review” (SEO2).

The request to sign a memorandum of understanding for collaboration on educational research and curriculum review underscores the interplay between individual agencies and the broader educational framework in Namibia. Academics and researchers, as agents with unique intentions and expertise, recognise the importance of collaboration in tackling educational challenges. This agreement could establish new norms in research practices within the School of Education at The University of Namibia, promoting shared methodologies and insights that may reshape the local academic culture.

Utilising structuration theory helps to shed light on the interactions between agency and structure in the context of educational collaboration at the School of Education. The memorandum of understanding serves not only as a formal agreement but also as a transformative instrument that can influence both the academic environment and practical educational outcomes. It encapsulates the potential for collaborative efforts to enhance educational quality and relevance in Namibia while also highlighting the complexities of agency, resource access, and structural influences in the academic landscape. Future research should focus on turning such agreements into reality and examining their long-term impacts on regional educational practices and policies.

#### 5.5.3 Established New Policies and Issued Circulars.

The participants highlighted that they reviewed the curriculum in parallel with new policy guidelines. The documents were established and shared with stakeholders, particularly teachers, to enable them to implement the reviewed curriculum. Eight

participants indicated that they had reviewed the curriculum, which included developing policies and circulars. SEO6 said, “We encourage everyone to review the materials carefully and share any feedback or questions. Together, we can make these changes a success.”

SEO8 stated that “Despite the challenges, I reviewed the curriculum as expected. We developed teachers’ guides, including syllabuses, subject policies, and circulars.”

The phrase “we reviewed the curriculum as expected” reflects collective agency by the educators. They exercised their capacity to engage with the curricular structure, indicating they were not merely passive recipients of external mandates. Instead, by reviewing and developing the curriculum, they actively shape and potentially reshape the educational structures within their ambit. The comment that “we developed teachers’ guides, including syllabuses, subject policies, and circulars” indicates an attempt to formalise and codify practices. Educators establish a structured framework that guides teaching practices and curriculum delivery through these documents. However, this institutionalisation can also constrain agency by creating rigid expectations regarding how teaching should occur. In structuration theory, power is not fixed but is negotiated and reconfigured through practices. The act of curriculum development could signify a shift in power dynamics within the educational institution, where teachers who engage in this process may gain influence over how the curriculum is shaped. Conversely, if the

guides and policies are imposed without teacher input, it could reinforce hierarchical structures that limit agency.

Another participant shared that:

Throughout the research process, we learnt and explored other opportunities and solutions to problems. We will encourage and support individuals; collaboration between research and curriculum divisions is vital for progress, and research investment is key to educational development. Other countries are benefiting from prioritizing education research. It is crucial to focus on improving education and conducting more research to empower the nation (SEO11).

The text shows how the current structures of educational research and curriculum design operate within a dynamic framework. The encouragement of collaboration between research and curriculum divisions suggests an acknowledgment that these structures influence one another. For there to be any progress both parties must be actively engaged and reciprocal in their relationship. The text highlights a commitment to supporting individuals, which relates to the agency aspect of structuration. Here, individuals such as educators and researchers are viewed as agents who can influence educational progress. By focusing on empowering these individuals through collaborative efforts and research investment, the structure of academic institutions can adapt and evolve. However, it is important to understand that agency has its limitations; not all individuals will have equal power or the resources to effect change, and existing structures may constrain their actions.

#### 5.5.4 Strengthen Collaboration with Institutions of Higher Learning.

Cooperation with external entities and universities, such as the University of Namibia, helps gather diverse perspectives. A participant explained that:

Through research, we utilised the local knowledge within our community by collaborating with residents, businesses, and organisations to gather insights, perspectives, and expertise that informed our decision-making and programming (SEO3).

The text emphasises the importance of local knowledge in community decision-making, suggesting that collaboration transforms insights into active contributions rather than passive input. It highlights the roles of residents, businesses, and organisations as key participants, demonstrating their influence on outcomes. This approach fosters trust and social capital, illustrating the interconnectedness that enhances social cohesion and collective identity. Through repeated interactions, as noted in the structuration theory, effective collaboration strengthens community engagement and empowers residents.

SEO2 further explained that:

Our division met with academics and researchers from the UNAM School of Education, who showed interest in signing a memorandum of understanding for collaboration. They specifically requested cooperation with the Ministry of Education and NIED to be involved in all curriculum review activities. UNAM also identified a knowledge gap between the content given to students and the program development led by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, UNAM supports a reform forum journal and encourages students to publish their research.

Researchers from UNAM proactively engaged with the Ministry of Education and the NIED, showing their initiative in advocating for educational reform. By

submitting a memorandum of understanding, they are not just passive recipients of policies but actively participating in shaping curriculum choices. The text points out a gap between the content offered to UNAM students and the curriculum laid out by the Ministry of Education, revealing structural limitations that hinder effective learning. These structures may not fully align with current knowledge or meet students' needs, which could compromise both teaching quality and student success.

#### 5.5.5 Make Decisions on Classroom Practice.

The participants reported that they utilise research findings to improve the implementation processes. A participant expressed that:

A comparative study was conducted on curriculum policies in Namibia, focusing on different regions and school settings. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, to gather information on teachers' ability to complete the syllabus and any issues they encountered. Interventions were then designed based on the findings, such as teacher training or adapting the curriculum to better meet students' needs. Training teachers on the revised curriculum requires time and funding (SEO10).

The study highlights the role of teachers in completing the syllabus and their experience of various challenges. Teacher agency refers to their capacity to act independently and make choices within the constraints of the curriculum and educational structures. In this context, teachers experiencing difficulties may seek ways to use their expertise and adapt the curriculum to serve their students' needs better, demonstrating agency within a structured environment. The curriculum itself represents a structure that shapes teachers' actions. The policies,

regulations, and guidelines governing education in Namibia can be seen as institutions that define what is possible within that educational framework. However, these structures are not immutable; they are created and sustained through social practices. For instance, the study's findings led to interventions that aimed to modify the curriculum and enhance teacher training, illustrating how structures can evolve through the actions of individuals and collective practice.

#### 5.5.6 Communicate Research Findings to the Management.

The participants communicated through meetings, research publications, executive management, and various platforms like journals and websites to inform colleagues and schools facing similar issues as well as curriculum partners and accreditation bodies. The focus was on effective communication and dissemination of research findings to drive improvements in education.

SEO7 explained that:

Different platforms were used to report research findings to management, including presenting them to the Director and other education directorates. Reports can also be submitted to the Management Policy Coordinating Committee, which gathers all education directors, including regional directors. Reports are reviewed at various levels within the ministry, and urgent issues can be reported for immediate intervention. Findings may also be presented to Parliament and institutions, such as Cambridge, for scrutiny. Writing truthful and accurate reports is crucial for informing decision-making processes within the education sector.

This comment describes how research findings are shared across various platforms, emphasizing the agency of individuals or teams involved in creating the report. According to Structuration Theory, agency is shaped by social structures,

and the reporting processes to management and committees illustrate this structured environment. Mechanisms such as submissions to the Management Policy Coordinating Committee and presentations to Parliament highlight the duality of structure, which impacts how information is communicated. While individuals can influence how findings are presented and prioritised, the hierarchy in knowledge dissemination suggests power dynamics in education. Ultimately, accuracy and credibility are crucial, underscoring the responsibility that comes with this influence.

SEO8 highlights that:

The importance of having evidence and professional opinions when addressing issues in the education system is emphasised. Proof is needed before making judgments or responding to public criticism. An example of this is the ongoing debate on balancing religious and moral education curricula, with Christian groups advocating for the reintroduction of Bible study in schools. We have learned to listen to constructive criticism and feedback for future improvement, particularly in the need for regular curriculum reviews.

The passage highlights the significance of evidence and professional opinions, implying an acknowledgement of individual agency in education. Educators and administrators are urged to critically engage with feedback and respond constructively to criticism, demonstrating their ability to influence change. Nonetheless, they operate within established frameworks like curricula, policies, and societal norms related to religious education. The text indicates that reliance on evidence and professional input can act as both guiding principles and resources. Teachers and administrators are capable of making informed decisions about curriculum adjustments, such as reintroducing Bible study, but must do so

within the confines of existing institutional structures and public expectations opinions.

SEO5 explained that “During curriculum review, we consistently report to management. This means I will submit my report to my supervisor, who will then submit it to their supervisors, up to the Executive Director, and down to the Minister, to ensure that the findings reach all relevant officers and those in authority who make decisions.”

The reporting process illustrates the duality of structure in practice. The organisation's hierarchical structure influences how reports are generated and disseminated, while individual actions, such as compiling the report, providing feedback, and making decisions based on the report, also reinforce that hierarchy. The individual submits a report, a concrete action that strengthens the existing reporting structure. However, by acting in an accountable and transparent manner, individuals can influence the structure over time, as practices may evolve based on the findings presented in reports. The individuals involved in this reporting chain (SEOs, their supervisor, the NIED director, upper management, and the MoEAC) exercise agency through their decisions. Each level of supervision has the power to shape the content and emphasis of the report, influencing what reaches the Executive Director and, consequently, the Minister.

#### 5.5.7 Balance Education Research with Other Factors.

After conducting research, the participants reported that they had to balance their findings with other factors and demands from various stakeholders. A participant expressed that “we had to balance research findings with other factors, such as reports from consultative meetings” (SEO3).

The reliance on research findings and consultative reports illustrates that knowledge is socially constructed. Research findings can be seen as a product of scientific inquiry and formal structures, while reports from consultative meetings reflect stakeholders' collective experiences and insights. This dual sourcing of knowledge enhances decision-making, enabling a more comprehensive understanding that incorporates empirical data and contextual insights.

## **5.6 How can Education Research be Enhanced for Optimal Contribution to Curriculum Review?**

The reviewers were proud to participate in Namibia's curriculum development, review, and its implementation. They hope the following proposals will be fully implemented, thus using educational research to thoroughly review the Basic Education curriculum.

### **5.6.1 Empower Education Officers to Integrate Education Research when Reviewing the Curriculum.**

To enhance the utilisation of education research for optimal contribution to curriculum review, the Ministry of Education should empower NIED and promote individual agency within the SEOs to integrate education research when reviewing

the curriculum. SEO1 maintained that “our primary responsibility is to review the curriculum. We follow our job descriptions and the guiding policies when reviewing the curriculum to ensure it meets the required standards and is completed within the targeted dates.”

This commentary highlights a structured approach to curriculum reviews, guided by job descriptions and policies that constrain and enable action. While these frameworks suggest a degree of compliance, the phrase "our main responsibility" indicates that individuals engaged in the review process exercised agency and navigated these structures. The mention of "targeted dates" underscores the importance of timeframes in the review process, shaping practices and potentially limiting innovative approaches. This interaction and positive mindset can create negotiation opportunities, reinforcing existing structures. Thus, if the guiding policies serve as a normative framework that legitimises reviewers' actions, innovation can occur to promote the use of educational research within the curriculum review process. This awareness can lead to more equitable and comprehensive outcomes.

According to SEO6:

While I emphasise that we utilise educational research to review our curriculum, the effectiveness of this practice is challenging because it depends on several factors. Beyond research, there are other factors to consider when reviewing the curriculum. Therefore, we require additional training and preparation to ensure that research is integrated as expected.

This statement emphasises the importance of utilising educational research to inform curriculum review. It demonstrates that the SEOs have the authority to make informed decisions based on research findings. However, they experienced some challenges with this approach. Several factors, including curriculum policies and regulations, as well as institutional resistance to change, and varying levels of understanding of education research among educators, can create barriers. The mention of "additional training and preparation" shows the need to empower educators within these existing limitations. This focus on training reflects the idea that enhancing knowledge and skills can help individuals navigate and potentially transform the systems in which they work. By investing in professional development, educational institutions can cultivate an environment where research plays a pivotal role in curriculum review, leading to innovative practices that challenge established norms.

Structuration theory offers a valuable framework for effectively integrating research into the curriculum review process. It fosters a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between educators' actions and the constraints they face, thereby empowering the Senior Educational Officer (SEO) to address the diverse needs of learners while aligning with contemporary educational practices and innovations. Initiatives to support this integration may include workshops, access to research databases, and collaborative forums designed to encourage continuous dialogue regarding emerging pedagogical trends, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience.

### 5.6.2 Strengthening Ongoing Professional Development and Training.

The participants reported that research was used to identify the need for training. Sixty-six per cent of the participants (8) reported that they required continuous training and professional development in their subject specialisations. A participant responded that “We are regarded as subject experts, but we also require further training and continuous professional development to stay current with the latest trends in education” (SEO9). Additionally, SEO2 emphasised that “knowledge is power; thus, we also need to be well-informed about research and the subject content we review to effectively transfer knowledge to teachers.”

These statements emphasise the importance of continuous professional development for educators, highlighting their role as active agents in their own growth. According to structuration theory, their actions are shaped by the surrounding structures. Educators recognise the importance of staying informed about current trends, demonstrating their ability to adapt. The phrase “knowledge is power” illustrates that in education, knowledge serves as both a resource and a framework. Educators utilise this knowledge to empower themselves and others, demonstrating how societal structures, such as institutions and training programmes, can influence their agency by affecting access to professional development opportunities.

### 5.6.3 Enhancing Research Capacity and Agency Among the Senior Education Officers (SEOs).

Some participants highlighted that although conducting research is part of their job description, they were not trained to specifically conduct educational research. A participant expressed that:

When I started my job as an Advisory Teacher (Education Officer), I did not receive extensive training in conducting research. Thus, all I could do now was do school visits. I have never published any research paper; I have only researched to inform us, but not for the public (SEO3).

These remarks highlight the role of SEOs in recognising their agency while noting that insufficient training can limit their research capabilities. Although school visits and interaction with educators are possible, the effectiveness of such efforts may be constrained by a lack of research training. The educational system has established structures that dictate research and practice expectations, which may not support the professional development necessary for SEOs. This limitation could impede contributions to scholarly work and the effective influence of educational practices. Recognising the concept of duality of structure indicates that change is nonetheless achievable. Advocating for enhanced training and resources within an institution may lead to adjustments in the structures that currently restrict agency, fostering an environment where educators are encouraged to engage in research and contribute to the field, thereby influencing the norms and expectations of the educational setting.

Another participant expressed that:

The colleagues in the Research Division are so helpful; it's just that they are understaffed. They try their best to support us; we need more training on conducting research (SEO6).

This statement highlights the supportive nature of colleagues, indicating a strong sense of agency among individuals within the Research Division. Their willingness to help despite being understaffed suggests that they are actively engaging in their roles and attempting to fulfil their responsibilities. However, the reference to being "understaffed" suggests a structural limitation that hinders their ability to provide adequate support. This interplay illustrates how individuals' actions (agency) are influenced by the broader organisational structure, specifically, insufficient staffing. Giddens posits that social structures are both the medium and the outcome of social practices. The Research Division's current state, marked by helpful colleagues but constrained by a lack of resources, serves as a manifestation of this duality. The employees' efforts to support their peers are shaped by the organisational structure that dictates their roles and capacities. Conversely, their supportive behaviours can also contribute to altering the culture and norms within the division, potentially advocating for increased staffing or training opportunities.

Another participant commented that "I need to be trained on various research aspects, methodologies, and designs so that I can become an expert in conducting and presenting research findings using modern technology and software" (SEO3).

The individual expresses a desire to develop expertise in research methodologies and designs. This reflects agency, as the person is motivated to enhance their skills and knowledge. The text implies the presence of existing structures within the field of research, including established methodologies and technologies. These structures guide and shape the individual's learning and research practices. The mention of "modern technology and software" suggests that the individual is aware of the resources available to them. These resources play a crucial role in how they will conduct and present their research findings.

#### 5.6.4 Conduct Regular Empirical Research and Make Education Research Accessible for Curriculum Review.

Conducting ongoing empirical research in education involves regular gathering and conducting empirical research, and analysing data to understand how educational practices and curricula perform in real-world settings. Although all participants indicated that they were involved in conducting educational research, eight participants expressed concern about the frequency with which they conducted such research. SEO7 explained. SEO 7 explained

We rarely conduct formal research that we could use to inform our review of the curriculum. It is not only us; generally, there was little published research available for us to review the curriculum. Only a few studies have been published in the NIED Research Journal or other journals. If research were available, we could use it.

The text highlights a significant issue: there is a lack of formal research to support curriculum reviews. According to structuration theory, curriculum reviewers can

make decisions, but existing rules, including norms and the research available to them, limit their choices. The lack of published research, including that which is available in the NIED Research Journal, makes it hard to make informed decisions about the curriculum. Thus, the Ministry of Education, NIED, and stakeholders should be encouraged to take the lead in conducting empirical research and ensure that their findings are accessible to inform curriculum review and other educational practices.

Giddens argues that social structures shape and are shaped by people's actions. The fact that research is so little used slows down innovation in curriculum practices, creating a cycle of stagnation. Structuration theory emphasises the importance of reflexivity, which means that individuals should recognise and modify the structures that influence their actions. Increased access to research could lead to a more flexible curriculum that better meets current educational needs, ultimately transforming the education sector for basic education in Namibia.

All the participants indicated that they wanted things to change for the better. They displayed the requisite confidence to move Namibian education to the next level, SEO2 expressing that:

The time for change is now; otherwise, our country will continue to rely on outsiders to do things for us. The speakers recommended that different divisions within the educational sector be empowered and trained to operate independently. In other countries, education is evolving as people increasingly utilise research to drive change. Like Cambridge, they are doing well because they focus more on research, unlike us. They invest more money in research and implement the recommendations.

This commentary highlights the urgent need for change in the educational system and critiques the current dependency on external forces. From a structuration perspective, this reflection recognises the agency of various stakeholders in the educational sector. Empowering different divisions indicates a desire for active participation and autonomy, suggesting a shift from passive reliance on outside expertise to an engaged, self-determined approach. This aligns with Giddens' notion that social agents can effect change by altering their practices and drawing on their structuring potential.

Similarly, SEO6 shared:

If we adhere to research standards and ethics, our research work and decisions will be accepted and recognised both nationally and internationally. We should place more emphasis on research, as you have joined the team, and you would like to strengthen the use of research when reviewing the curriculum. Now, I can appreciate its value, and I found it beneficial to participate in this exercise. It will add value to our work for this institution and our education in general.

The quote acknowledges the importance of individual agency and the value of research. This reflects the potential for change and innovation within the curriculum review process. The participants' enthusiasm for strengthening research in curriculum review presents an opportunity for the agency to reshape existing norms within the institution. Giddens emphasises that agents possess the capacity to enact change within the structures that govern their actions. Hence, the involvement of individuals who are proactive in promoting research can be seen as a vital force in revising and updating curricula to reflect contemporary educational demands and standards. The comment about ensuring "everyone is

involved in research and curriculum review tasks" raises questions of inclusivity within the practice of research. Structuration theory posits that structures can perpetuate inequalities, positioning some actors as more empowered than others. It therefore becomes imperative to analyse who participates in the research and decision-making processes. This inclusivity reflects a challenge to existing power dynamics, suggesting that structures must adapt to facilitate wider participation. The sentiment expressed by SEO4 regarding the need for increased involvement indicates a critical awareness of these dynamics and a necessary shift toward collaborative practices.

#### 5.6.5 Ensure the Allocation of Adequate Funds and Resources for Research Initiatives and the Comprehensive Review of the Curriculum.

The participants explained that their work would not be possible without the support and provisions offered by the Ministry of Finance. SEO3 explains that

We require funding to fulfil our tasks. We cannot hold panel meetings, training sessions, and workshops without sufficient funds, and we cannot conduct fieldwork without the necessary facilities, including transportation. The Ministry of Education provides most of the needed resources.

Furthermore, SEO7 commented that:

It is essential to have up-to-date computers equipped with modern software to support the effective transcription and analysis of research findings. This technology will enable the efficient processing of various programmes, allowing us to complete tasks within a short timeframe.

This individual expresses a desire to develop expertise in research methodologies and designs. This reflects agency, as the person is motivated to enhance their skills and knowledge. The comment implies the presence of existing structures within the field of research, including established methodologies and technologies. These structures guide and shape the individual's learning and research practices. The mention of "modern technology and software" suggests that the individual is aware of the resources available to them. These resources play a crucial role in how they will conduct and present research findings. Structuration theory focuses on the relationship between individual agency and social structures. It posits that social practices are shaped by the interplay between agents (individuals or groups) and the structures (rules and resources) that exist within their environment. To critically analyse the need for working computers and modern software in the context of conducting research and analysis, we can apply the principles of structuration theory in several ways.

#### 5.6.6 Promoting Independent Research to Transform Educational Practices.

The curriculum reviewers expressed the need for research support. They acknowledged that although they were willing to conduct research, many constraining factors hindered them from performing this duty as desired and expected. Thus, they welcomed the opportunity to work with independent researchers, sharing their expertise, findings, and recommendations.

SEO3 explained that at the start what you are doing is research. He further stated, "We need an independent person to come and listen to the story of what has happened and find out the truth." He suggested that independent researchers should take the lead in exploring various opportunities to improve our education rather than waiting for NIED to do so.

This text emphasises the importance of independent research in revealing the truth about educational practices. It suggests that these researchers engage proactively rather than passively waiting for authoritative bodies, such as NIED, to act. This independence is a form of resistance against institutional inertia, where researchers, equipped with their knowledge and skills, seek to challenge and possibly transform prevailing educational paradigms.

On the flip side, the structures within which these independent researchers operate must also be examined. By suggesting that NIED has not sufficiently addressed educational improvement, the speaker implicitly critiques the current institutional structure. This structure may have its own set of norms, resources, and powers that condition the actions of those within it. For instance, NIED may operate under bureaucratic constraints or be influenced by funding sources that limit its ability to

innovate or engage with researchers outside its network. Thus, the limitations posed by this structure can stifle the agency of researchers, making it imperative for them to step outside traditional roles to explore and advocate for change.

If independent researchers can mobilize, gather evidence, and present their findings, they not only provide alternative narratives about the state of education but can also influence and reshape the structures of power within educational policy-making.

#### 5.6.7 Strengthening Research Mandates for Informed Decision-Making.

The participants also suggested that the government review the NIED directorate's core mandate and then enforce these mandates.

SEO3 reported that research was indeed happening at every level. He also recommended that the Research Unit ensure that quality research is conducted and that the findings are reported on time. “When I started here,” he said, “my job description required me to conduct research. However, no one trained me to conduct research or asked if I needed help.”

SEO2 concluded that “Research is important in every institution”. He maintained that each institution whether it was a private company, or a ministry, or local authority, should all have a research section. Research is fundamental because whatever decisions you make, there must be evidence to support them through

research. People should conduct research, report the findings, and thus help to inform decision-making. Research is essential for a company or organisation to flourish. Some institutions have research divisions, but these divisions are often undermined or dormant. Institutions must encourage employees to research their areas of interest to inform decision-making, including those related to NIED.

#### 5.6.8 Facilitate Effective Communication of Research Findings in the Educational Curriculum Review Process.

The participants expressed the need to be able to access the research findings in a user-friendly manner. They suggested that research findings should be presented to the curriculum reviewers in a brief and concise form. SEO9 expressed that:

I want the research unit to provide concise summaries of research findings and their implications rather than detailed reports. We prefer to receive information on the research findings that directly impact their work rather than the methodology or extensive details. We want key points highlighted for quick understanding and action rather than a lengthy report that may be overwhelming.

The request for concise summaries of research findings indicates a clear preference for agency within the organisational structure of the research unit. The emphasis on key points reflects an agency-driven need for efficient communication and decision-making, suggesting that the individuals involved prioritise actionable

insights over extensive data. This aligns with Giddens' notion that agents negotiate and create structures based on their needs and preferences.

SEO12 shared that “Researchers should utilize various platforms, such as consultative meetings and educational conferences in local regions, to present their research findings and contribute to the review of the curriculum.”

Researchers act as agents who can influence educational practices and curricula. By utilising consultative meetings and conferences to disseminate their findings, they engage in a reflexive practice that allows them to shape educational discourse. Their agency is pivotal in highlighting the relevance of their research to curriculum development, thus actively participating in the process of educational change.

Educational institutions embody structural elements such as policies, norms, and established curricula. These structures can either facilitate or hinder the integration of new research findings. For instance, if established protocols exist for incorporating research into educational curricula, researchers may find it easier to present their findings. However, rigid or hierarchical structures could obstruct their efforts, making it challenging for innovative ideas to gain acceptance.

5.6.9. Establish a Local Assessment Body to Implement Standardized Curriculum Standards, rather than relying solely on the Cambridge System.

The participants expressed concerns regarding the requirements and standards of the Cambridge system, particularly those related to indigenous languages. Nine

participants proposed that a local institution should be identified to align with the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) to assume responsibility for the assessment and certification of Basic Education. SEO11 explained:

Establishing a national assessment and certification body that receives global recognition is possible. Such an entity would play a crucial role in ensuring the consistent quality of curriculum standards, similar to the accreditation processes adhered to by our local universities.

The establishment of a national assessment and certification body aims to standardize educational quality. Using structuration theory, we can see that its success hinges on the interaction between structure and agency, as stakeholders navigate their interests and the diverse educational contexts. The body must also adopt an agile framework to respond to practitioner feedback and educational realities. Future research could analyse similar organisations worldwide to understand how local contexts influence national assessment structures. This alignment of theory and practice will ultimately shape the body's impact on educational quality and its global recognition.

#### 5.6.10 Addressing Critical gaps in Educational Research and Curriculum Review Practice.

The participants also communicated that more research is needed in different areas of curriculum review. They reported that they want research evidence

because, without it, they will end up making assumptions about good practice, which should be avoided in research.

SEO7 expressed that:

A lot of research needs to be done, for instance, on class sizes and how they are helping our learners. What we see in the field is scary. There have been complaints of overcrowded classrooms, with up to 70 learners in a class. I don't know how the teachers cope with such situations.

SEO11 highlighted the need for more empirical research on language teaching:

There have been reports of poor performance in English as a medium of instruction, especially at the primary and senior primary levels. At secondary school, some learners were unable to qualify for further education at the tertiary level due to poor performance in English; however, upon reviewing the curriculum, we found that nothing had changed - we were repeating the same mistake.

This comment highlights persistent issues with English proficiency among learners, particularly at primary and secondary levels. Structuration theory enables us to examine how the educational structure, encompassing curricula, teaching resources, and assessment methodologies, have remained unchanged despite observable deficiencies in learner outcomes. This suggests a deep-seated systemic issue in which structures, such as an emphasis on English, are

maintained and perpetuated without critical re-evaluation or adaptation to meet students' needs.

SEO1 stated that, "I would honestly encourage more research, as things change every day." What was researched yesterday may not be applicable today; therefore, research should be ongoing.

At the core of structuration theory is the duality of structure, which posits that structures are both the medium through which social practices occur and the outcome of these practices. The assertion that research should be ongoing underscores how knowledge production is not merely a linear process but a dynamic interplay between existing frameworks and emerging data. The ongoing nature of research reflects the idea that structures (e.g., academic disciplines, methodologies, institutional norms) shape the practices of researchers while simultaneously being shaped by the discoveries and innovations that emerge from these practices.

SEO12 shares a similar sentiment:

The Ministry of Education, higher learning institutions, and the National Research Council should collaborate on research to inform decision-making. Curriculum reviewers should be empowered and oriented, focusing on their role rather than multiple duties.

This suggests that curriculum reviews should be grounded in evidence and resources. An increased budget and research, along with a collective effort from

all stakeholders, is necessary for effective education. Consultations, technology, and collaboration with academics and researchers are crucial. Strategies should focus on research coordination, training, and ensuring quality research. Further research is needed on various aspects of education, including class size and language instruction.

Applying structuration theory to the analysis of overcrowded classrooms reveals the complex interplay between structural constraints and individual agency within the educational system. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics contribute to the challenges faced by both teachers and learners while also highlighting potential pathways for transformative change in educational practices. The call for further research into the implications of class size on learning outcomes is not merely a request for data but a critical step toward addressing systemic issues that undergird the current educational landscape.

#### 5.6.11 Use a Structuration Model to Enhance Research That Contributes Optimally to the Curriculum Review.

Applying structuration theory to a critical analysis allows for a rich exploration of the relationship between structure and agency. It can explore how social practices are formed, sustained, and transformed in response to internal and external influences. By focusing on the duality of structure, agency, temporality, and context, individuals can comprehensively examine social phenomena, ultimately contributing to scholarly discourse on how structures shape and are shaped by

human action. This approach fosters a deeper appreciation for the complexities of social life and the continuous negotiations that underpin it.

### **5.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents valuable insights into the role of educational research in the curriculum review for Namibia's basic education system. At the heart of this discussion is structuration theory, which emphasises that structures are both the tools we use and the results of our social actions. It is an ongoing reminder that research is not just a straightforward process; it thrives on the dynamic relationships between established frameworks and new data. Participants in this research shared their experiences and acknowledged the importance of integrating knowledge into curriculum reviews. They recognised that research should play a crucial role in shaping educational decisions, even though this integration doesn't always happen effectively. Key challenges like funding shortages, lack of support, insufficient empirical studies, and concerns about political pressure often stand in the way. Despite these challenges, the participants displayed confidence and a strong desire to contribute to improving education in Namibia. They emphasised that what they truly need is support, be it from the stakeholders such as the ministry, researchers, specialists, or financial resources. With the right backing, they believe that research can become a powerful tool to bring about positive change and elevate the quality of education for all students in Namibia.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the study's findings more closely, using structuration theory as a lens to understand how educational research impacts the review of basic education curricula in Namibia. After establishing the foundation in earlier chapters, where the theoretical framework, methodology, and empirical results were discussed, this section aims to interpret these findings in a meaningful way. The goal is to link them to the wider body of literature and clarify how educational research is crucial in Namibia's ongoing curriculum review process. To shape this analysis, the study is focused on a key primary research question:

- What is the structuration role of educational research on curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?

The study's sub-questions are as follows:

- What kind of knowledge has been produced through the duality of structures in educational research related to curriculum reviews for Basic Education in Namibia?
- What are the views of curriculum reviewers on integrating educational research into the curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?

- How does the agency of curriculum reviewers influence the utilisation of educational research within the structure of curriculum review in Namibia?
- How can educational research be enhanced to make optimal contributions to curriculum review?

This chapter is organised in the following way:

- The structuration role of research in the curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia
- An integrated educational research and curriculum review model to transform Basic Education
- Implications, limitations, and recommendations of the study
- Regarding the theory
- The study contributions
- Research conclusion, and future research

## **6.2 Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the structural role of educational research in the curriculum review process for Basic Education in Namibia. The central inquiry centred on the question: "What is the structuration role of educational research in the curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?" The findings highlight the connection between educational research and its practical applications in curriculum review within Namibia's educational context. The discussion is structured around five key

structural roles of education research on the curriculum review process in Namibia, as discussed below:

- Education research serves as a tool and the primary agent in generating and reproducing knowledge during the curriculum review process.
- Evidence-informed decisions are used to improve curriculum review practices.
- Education research can identify the gaps and address challenges.
- Education research can unify the stakeholders, including political and educational leaders.
- Educational research is an investment in achieving educational and national goals.
- Education structures can enable and constrain the role of research in reviewing the curriculum.

The analysis offers insights into the complex dynamics and how they might influence future educational reforms. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge and highlights the importance of continued research on the connection between research and practice to support effective educational change.

#### 6.2.1 Education Research is a Tool and the Primary Agent in Generating and Reproducing Knowledge During the Curriculum Review.

The findings regarding the function of research as both a tool and a principal agent were largely congruent with the literature presented in Chapters Two and Three. They were underscored by Courtney (2024), Basu (2020), and Kimy (2019) in

Chapter Three, section 3.3, which underscores the significance of educational research in curriculum review. This study delineated four primary functions of research as mechanisms and catalysts in the curriculum review process for Basic Education in Namibia.

Firstly, educational research serves as an essential instrument for stakeholders to guide the comprehensive curriculum review process at all stages and to effectuate informed modifications, as indicated by Akkerman, Bakker, and Penuel (2021), Basu (2020), and UNESCO (2018). Educational research serves as a repository of information that informs and steers the curriculum review framework in accordance with the realities and facts that influence educational practices, as elaborated in Chapter Five, section 5.3.2. The continuous research cycle corroborates facts, promotes introspection, and modifies research outcomes to improve practices. The study emphasises the necessity of conducting research to identify gaps in the curriculum, ensuring that educational practices remain current and meaningful. The study revealed that ongoing research cultivates a reflective culture among educators, enabling them to critically evaluate and adapt their teaching strategies based on empirical evidence.

Secondly, the discourse on knowledge generation and reproduction within educational contexts necessitates an understanding of the epistemological underpinnings of educational research and their application to effectuate desired curricular changes, as posited by Tiefenbacher (2020), Tiky (2019), and Alvarado (2017) in Chapter Two, section 2.5. The study affirmed that knowledge is not static

but is continuously formed and remade within social, cultural, and political settings, as posited by Giddens (1984). In this environment, educational research serves a dual purpose, scrutinising established knowledge frameworks while facilitating the emergence of new insights. The dynamic interaction is essential for evaluating how curricula embody prevailing ideologies and whether they contest or uphold existing power structures within educational systems.

Thirdly, the study indicates that the participatory aspects of educational research should be considered during curriculum review. This entails involving stakeholders, including educators, learners, and local communities (Refer to section 5.3.3 in Chapter Five). This interactive methodology augments the curriculum by integrating multiple perspectives and enhances the validity and utility of research findings, consistent with the work of Kaupp and Frank (2014) and Karseth et al. (2023). Thus, the collaborative essence of educational research serves as a mechanism for social justice, allowing all voices to participate in the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

Fourthly, the ramifications of educational research beyond mere data collection, as outlined in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1, necessitate a rigorous evaluation of ethical considerations in research methodologies. Researchers must prioritise the ethical conduct of investigations. By adopting this ethical framework, curriculum reviewers can guarantee that the knowledge produced is both rigorous and respectful, empowering the communities it aims to serve, consistent with the

perspectives of Rasco (2016), Basu (2020), and Courtney (2024), who support ethical research that fosters transformation. Educational research is crucial in curriculum review since it produces pertinent knowledge necessary for informed decision-making, promotes inclusive practices, and interrogates dominant educational ideologies. Educational research informs curricula through ongoing investigation and enhances the broader dialogue on educational equity and effectiveness, ultimately enhancing students' learning experiences.

#### 6.2.2 Evidence-Based Decisions to Enhance Curriculum Review Methods.

The findings emphasise the complexities of integrating educational research into curriculum review procedures in Namibia, revealing a significant deficiency in comprehension regarding the importance of such research in shaping successful educational policy across five dimensions.

Firstly, educational research serves as an evidence-based instrument for decision-making, as evidenced in India (Basu, 2020). Nevertheless, although SEOs recognise the significance of educational research, they are reluctant to acknowledge its influence on their decision-making, consistent with findings from Kenya (Inyenga et al., 2021). This prompts inquiries into the inflexibility of evidence-based procedures employed in curriculum reviews.

Secondly, Chapter Five (particularly sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.4) presents novel insights from SEOs, highlighting their reliance on a synthesis of desktop analysis and formal and informal research conducted during school visits. This indicates a practical yet disjointed approach to evidence-based research, implying a broader trend in educational policymaking in which empirical data and qualitative insights fail to coalesce into a unified framework for curricular reform. This study advocates a systematic method for aligning research and structure, emphasising the significance of research in directly influencing and shaping curriculum frameworks. This would mitigate uninformed decision-making that could obstruct educational objectives and national progress, according to Lock et al. (2018), in Chapter Three, section 3.7.1.

Thirdly, Chapter Three, section 3.2.2, presents comparative observations from countries such as Kenya and South Africa, which have successfully implemented transformational competency-based curricula following independence (Ruth & Ramadas, 2019; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). Despite progress, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the precise function of educational research in these developments, prompting critical questions about how research is incorporated into policy-making frameworks. Studies such as Pamela and Mwila (2022) and Inyenga (2021) in Chapter Three, section 3.3.2, underscore the inadequacy of educational research as a critical determinant in curriculum reviews.

The insufficient examination of how educational research impacts curriculum change in these contexts raises concerns about the replicability and adaptability of their tactics in distinct environments such as Namibia. Namibia's unique experience, which draws on both official and informal research, highlights promising techniques that employ diverse knowledge-generating approaches and incorporate inputs from practitioners and local community stakeholders to address specific educational challenges.

Future research should move beyond simple diagnostic analysis to examine the structural mechanisms required to embed educational research systematically within Namibian curriculum review processes. Specifically, it should explore how reallocating resources such as funding and time, and adjusting authoritative rules such as policy mandates, can empower Senior Education Officers to translate empirical data into policy. This research is vital for addressing the tension between global educational trends and local social realities. The ultimate goal is to create a model of reflexive monitoring that ensures curricular reforms are not only aligned with theoretical trends but also responsive to Namibia's unique educational needs.

The preliminary findings offer insight into Namibia's circumstances; however, the investigations by Josua, Aula, and Miranda (2022) and Mabokela and Mlambo (2016) also offer broader inquiries into the relationship between educational research and policy. As the educational landscape evolves, it is essential to

critically assess how evidence informs practices, ultimately shaping the future of educational institutions in a just and effective manner.

Fourthly, including evidence-based research is essential for improving educational results and promoting adaptability in curriculum frameworks. This study emphasises the need to employ research evidence in curriculum reviews, mirroring the effective tactics adopted in Finland (Halinen, 2018) and the Philippines (Barrot, 2019) as detailed in Chapter 2.2.2. Chapter Five, section 5.4.1, reveals that as educational innovation progresses, the curriculum must adapt to the changing demands of society. This requires ongoing evaluation of the methodology employed in educational research, highlighting the significance of integrating developing research findings, pedagogical theories, and many stakeholder viewpoints into complete curriculum frameworks.

Fifthly, the insights from Chapter Five, sections 5.4.5.2 and 5.4.5.3, underscore a significant issue pertaining to the disparate quality of educational research. Not all research is reliable, underscoring the need for rigorous validation and credibility in educational studies that inform curriculum review. This study, consistent with the findings of Akkerman, Bakker, and Penuel (2021) in Chapter Three, section 3.3.1, underscores the urgent need to educate SEO professionals and curriculum evaluators in Namibia and worldwide. Equipping these professionals with crucial data analysis and critical thinking skills ensures their capacity to successfully

assess the relevance and application of various data sources during curriculum revision processes.

A key gap in the existing literature is the limited empirical research on the integration of educational research in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Namibia. By focusing on this unique setting, this study challenges the limitations of universal global approaches, which often overlook the specific social and structural factors shaping local curriculum review. As a result, the research goes beyond generic models to show how Namibian Senior Education Officers (agents) can use educational research not just as administrative input but as a tool for structural change, helping to bridge the gap between international directives and local realities and demands.

#### 6.2.3 Education Research can Identify the Gaps and Address Challenges.

The study's findings emphasise the significance of educational research in curriculum review, offering distinctive contributions to education by highlighting a multifaceted approach to comprehending and improving curricular frameworks. This section analyses the function of research in recognising deficiencies and tackling obstacles. Three facets are emphasised.

Firstly, research findings indicate a substantial disparity between theory and practice in the incorporation of educational research into the revision process of Namibia's basic education curriculum, as previously identified by Josua, Auala, &

Miranda (2022) and Ruth and Ramadas (2019) in Chapter Three, section 3.2.2. The study revealed a disjuncture between the Ministry of Education's frameworks and the curriculum review process regarding the incorporation of educational research in curriculum reviews. Despite the expectation that SEOs integrate educational research into curriculum review, there was no clarity or written protocols for implementation.

Chapter Five, sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.2, delineate the curriculum review structure and educational regulations that establish the NIED Research Division as a pivotal intermediary among stakeholders, including SEOs, the Ministry of Education, researchers, and other relevant entities. The lack of published rules or specific regulations requiring SEOs to incorporate educational research into curriculum reviews raises significant questions about the evidence-based integrity of these processes. Research conducted by Lock et al. (2018) and Sabah (2020) in Chapter Three, section 3.5.1, elucidated the curriculum review processes but failed to delineate the integration of educational research within them.

Likewise, while Halinen (2018) and Lavonen (2020) asserted that the curriculum revision in Finland was successful, they did not specify whether educational research was incorporated. Chapter Three establishes a basic context for comprehending this topic, especially in sections 3.3.3 and 3.5.3, which emphasise the significance of educational research in guiding curriculum review. Although the reviewed literature recognises the significance of educational research, it does not

emphasise its essential role in developing and modifying curriculum content. The insufficient attention is concerning, as it suggests the curriculum may not be sufficiently guided by empirical evidence or modern educational theories, leading to practices detached from the realities of teaching and learning.

Secondly, the analysis identified a paucity of subject-specific research available for integration, as detailed in Chapter Five, section 5.4.5.2. The references from Pamela and Mwila (2022) and Steiner (2017), cited in Chapter Three, section 3.3.2, further validate the study's conclusions. Both publications emphasise a widespread tendency for insufficient educational research to inform curriculum review procedures. This highlights a broader systemic problem in which the processes of curriculum creation may neglect important insights that could improve educational outcomes. Furthermore, the adverse effects of this separation not only reduce the relevance and responsiveness of the curriculum but also weaken the influence of research in shaping educational policies aligned with modern pedagogical developments. Incorporating educational research into the curriculum revision process should be regarded not just as an academic exercise but as an essential practice for cultivating a more dynamic educational environment that addresses learners' needs and society's changing demands.

The lack of formal policies mandating the incorporation of educational research into the curriculum revision process poses a significant difficulty in Namibia's educational system. Chapters Three and Five, in conjunction with pertinent

research, indicate an immediate necessity for implementable frameworks that facilitate evidence-based curriculum review. This will enable SEOs and other stakeholders to utilise comprehensive, research-based strategies that improve educational quality and maintain the curriculum's relevance and influence on learners' lives.

Rectifying this deficiency is crucial for cultivating a resilient educational system that can respond to the challenges of the 21st century. Aligning educational research with curriculum review methods ensures relevance, coherence, and responsiveness to the local context, as argued by Dyjur et al. (2018) and Inyanga (2021). Namibia faces distinct educational challenges; therefore, adopting evidence-based techniques in curriculum review is crucial to developing a more effective and inclusive educational system. Namibia's distinctiveness in educational research and curriculum review stems from its great cultural diversity and the multitude of languages, which require a comprehensive curriculum assessment that encapsulates this complexity.

Thirdly, educational research can meet distinct educational and societal needs, enhance quality, ensure inclusivity, and create curricula that confront historical injustices while encouraging social cohesion, akin to the works of Basu (2020) and Shan (2022). Furthermore, Namibia faces numerous socioeconomic inequalities that limit access to quality education. Research can identify resource deficiencies and guide focused educational efforts to assist marginalised groups. Challenges

such as globalisation, climate change, sustainability, and health crises are particularly urgent in Namibia, and research can facilitate the incorporation of these pertinent subjects into the curriculum, equipping learners to address contemporary and future issues. This study promotes the ongoing advancement and enhancement of educational practices, emphasising that as societies evolve, our methods for curriculum review and the incorporation of educational research must also adapt.

#### 6.2.4 Educational Research has the Potential to Unify Stakeholders.

This study has uncovered substantial insights into the factors that affect curricular decisions across diverse political contexts. Primarily, its distinctive contribution is in the empirical examination of the failure of political leaders to utilise research evidence within the curriculum review framework, as discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.4.4.4. The study reveals a concerning disparity between the empirical findings in educational research and the decision-making processes of policymakers. This is especially notable considering the thinking of Gouëdard et al. (2020), who argue that political motivations, rather than academic research, are the predominant influence on several national curricula. This research challenges the assumption that policy decisions are inherently grounded in evidence, arguing that directives on curricular frameworks have been formulated without sufficient empirical investigation. It challenges the significance of evidence in driving educational reform, suggesting that policies frequently mirror the ambitions and

power structures of political entities rather than the complex requirements revealed by research.

Furthermore, the distinctiveness of this research is emphasised by its promotion of a more collaborative interaction between educational stakeholders and research. This research underscores the imperative of collaboration among diverse stakeholders, educational administrators, teachers, parents, and students, to advance reforms based on empirical evidence, engage in research, and provide comprehensive support to curriculum reviewers, in contrast to studies that concentrate exclusively on policy or pedagogy. It demonstrates the capacity of academic research to serve as an advocacy instrument, enabling stakeholders to contest prevailing policies and instigate reforms that align with contemporary educational requirements and practices.

Thirdly, the study recognises educational research as a unifying force among stakeholders through ethical collaboration that goes beyond consultative meetings, encouraging all parties to assume responsibility for educational outcomes without attributing blame to the SEOS, as if the curriculum review and educational research were exclusively their obligation, as Barrot (2019) indicates. Chapter Five, section 5.3.6, indicates that the SEOs believe the degree of stakeholder engagement and collaboration is unspecified, resulting in a gap and a lack of accountability for deficiencies. This study enhances the existing literature on advocacy in educational reform by providing a framework for stakeholders to

utilise research to influence policy. This addresses a notable deficiency in the literature about the practical use of research findings in the advocacy initiatives of various educational stakeholders.

This research emphasises the imperative for policymakers to actively interact with empirical educational research and for researchers to convey their findings in a manner that is pertinent and accessible to diverse stakeholders. Investigating this relationship may facilitate the development of more inclusive and successful educational systems, ensuring that reforms are closely aligned with the lived experiences and needs of all learners. This study marks a substantial advancement in the educational reform dialogue by connecting research, policy, and practice.

Educational research can guide curriculum evaluators and help Cambridge maintain its benchmarking criteria. A study by Descartin et al. (2023) in the Philippines examines the role of educational research in facilitating curriculum development, particularly in alignment with global standards, including those set by Cambridge. The findings, detailed in Chapter Five, section 5.3.5, elucidate the intricacies of implementing benchmarking techniques. Success depends on the combined endeavours of educators, curriculum evaluators, legislators, and others. Aligning with the work of SEOs is vital to guarantee that curriculum revisions fulfil their objective of enhancing educational standards and equipping students with the requisite skills and knowledge.

This study concludes that effective benchmarking can result in a curriculum that aligns with local education standards and facilitates diverse learning and personal development, consistent with OECD (2023) recommendations. This method underscores the necessity for a curriculum review that incorporates language and cultural diversity in educational contexts, therefore fostering a climate conducive to holistic student development, as advocated by the SEO for Indigenous Languages and Sciences. This underscores the need to integrate extensive educational research on pedagogy, content, and indigenous knowledge to safeguard and maintain a national, cultural, and linguistic legacy. The study advises against excessive dependence on external criteria or indigenous knowledge unless supported by substantial research data to guarantee alignment with both local and international contexts.

Sixthly, the use of structuration theory enhances comprehension of the reflexivity among educational stakeholders, promoting the integration of local knowledge into international frameworks. The demand for adaptive agency, wherein educators must actively confront and negotiate prevailing educational norms to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies, highlights the complex interplay between global and local educational practices.

The potential advantages of international benchmarking for education are considerable; yet the findings also confirm that incorporating local knowledge and

cultural contexts is crucial. This integration promotes an inclusive and effective curriculum that addresses students' different needs, thereby creating a more equitable and high-quality educational experience, as noted by the MoEAC (2022) in section 1. Subsequent studies are needed to examine the dynamics of this integration, taking into account the ramifications of diverse stakeholders' viewpoints and investigating approaches that promote alignment between local and global educational standards.

#### 6.2.5 Educational Research Constitutes an Investment in the Attainment of Educational and National Objectives.

This study found that educational research is essential to achieving national and global educational objectives, missions, and visions. The importance of educational research is substantial, especially in its ability to inform and influence policies and practices that correspond with local and global educational goals, as outlined in Chapter Five, sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.3. This aligns with the observations made by Lock et al. (2018) in Chapter Three, section 3.7.1. This study examined the perspectives of principal stakeholders in the structuration process concerning the significance and utilisation of educational research. It overcomes a significant deficiency discovered in Cunningham's (2018) research (Chapter Three, section 3.6.2). This disparity, which underscored the limited application of educational research findings, was also observed by Mabokela and Mlambo (2016) and Josua, Auala, and Miranda (2022). They indicated that Namibia's curriculum review processes frequently neglected to utilise educational research. This circumstance

highlights the urgent need for a change in mindset, positioning educational research not just as an academic endeavour but as a fundamental element that propels and guides educational reform and development initiatives.

This research is uniquely grounded in the viewpoints of SEOs, who assert that educational research is not merely supplementary but essential for informing policy decisions. The literature corroborates this claim, especially the findings of Courtney (2024) and Karseth et al. (2023), as elaborated in Chapter Three, section 3.3, which affirm the vital relevance of research in educational settings. This study differentiates itself by affirming the acknowledged significance of academic research and outlining the intricate hurdles that obstruct its effective integration, notably the financing disparities outlined in Chapter Five, Section 5. 4.4

Secondly, the research examined these difficulties and contextualised them within a comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework and investment in educational research. The essential addition is the understanding that harmonising stakeholders' views of educational research as an investment may stimulate increased funding and support, as indicated by Pamela and Mwila (2022) and Kim (2019) in Chapter Three, section 3.6.2. It promotes a paradigm shift from viewing research as an ancillary element of educational frameworks to recognising it as a fundamental investment with enduring benefits for educational systems.

While Fullan (2015) posited that curriculum review is arduous, this study promotes a collaborative approach among all stakeholders and investors to translate research information into the educational framework. This work enhances theoretical discourse in educational research and has practical consequences for policymakers and educational leaders. Encouraging stakeholders to reframe educational research as a strategic investment facilitates the development of a more sustainable, integrated research culture that emphasises evidence-based approaches. This reflective approach creates a more favourable climate for innovation and progress in educational settings, rendering the study's contributions both contemporary and essential.

The study highlighted the Ministry of Education's crucial role in education and educational research. Chapter Five, section 5.4.2, delineates the evolving responsibilities of the Namibia Institute for Educational Development (NIED) concerning curriculum review. These responsibilities encompass training, participation in educational conferences at both national and international levels, and the formation of partnerships with local higher education institutions. This includes the University of Namibia's voluntary contribution to the editing and publication of the NIED journal, as well as support for the NIED Research Division, which is staffed by only two personnel. The SEOs characterised the curriculum as the "heart" of education and research as its "brain." This metaphor highlights the intricate interdependence between curriculum and research; the educational system may become dysfunctional if either the heart or brain operates

inadequately. This comprehension underscores the imperative of integrating research methodologies into curriculum design and evaluation to ensure a comprehensive and pragmatic educational framework.

This distinctive emphasis on the interdependent relationship between curriculum and research not only enhances the dialogue regarding educational advancement in Namibia but also acts as a paradigm for other educational environments seeking to improve their systems through research-based methodologies. It requires sustained collaboration among educational stakeholders to ensure that reforms are underpinned by robust empirical data, thereby promoting a culture of continuous improvement within the educational sphere. This study underscores the transformative potential of incorporating research into curriculum frameworks to realise significant educational improvement.

#### 6.2.6 Facilitating and Restricting Educational Frameworks.

This study rigorously analysed the functions of the Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) in educational research and curriculum review. It emphasises a framework crucial for comprehending educational governance in this domain. This study integrates theoretical frameworks from Giddens (1984) and Kolasi (2020) to enhance sociological analysis of structural influences in education.

A distinctive contribution of this study is its examination of the Ministry and NIED as architects and executors of policy. This duality is essential as it illustrates the interconnection among diverse educational stakeholders (SEOs) and frameworks. The research employs a specific model (depicted in Chapter 2, Figure 2.1) to demonstrate how these organisations influence educational standards through established rules and frameworks, thereby introducing a dynamic element to the legislative processes related to education.

The extensive allocation of resources, such as finance, equipment, training, and educational materials, underscores the active involvement of these structures in the educational delivery environment. This relationship is crucial, as it underscores a comprehensive understanding of educational policy that extends beyond mere regulations and structures, encompassing the practical realities that shape educators and students.

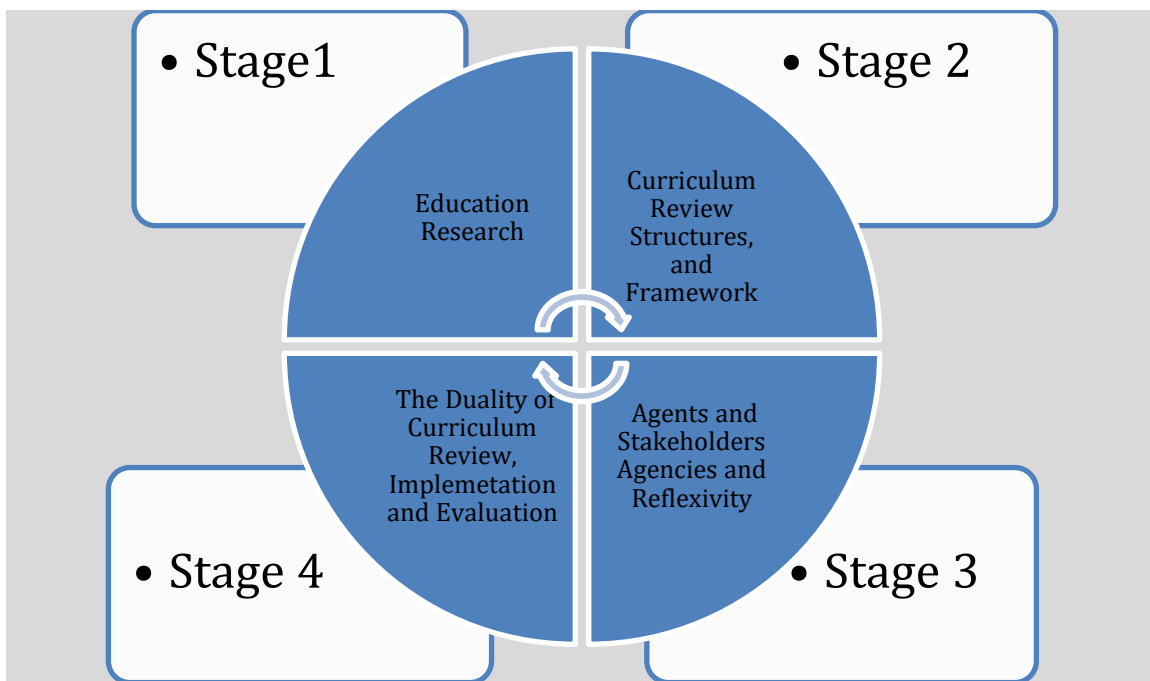
Secondly, the function of research in curriculum assessment extends beyond the mere introduction of new knowledge; it encompasses critical evaluation processes that align with educational aims and social requirements. Research yields empirical evidence that identifies inadequacies or gaps in the existing curriculum, indicating opportunities for modification or improvement. The extent to which this research is employed often hinges on institutional perspectives on innovation and transformation.

This dynamic complicates the link among various types of quantitative, qualitative, and action research and their perceived legitimacy within educational frameworks. Quantitative studies may be preferred in some circumstances owing to their perceived objectivity. Conversely, qualitative and action research frequently yield profound insights into teaching practices and student experiences, yet may struggle to gain recognition. Educational frameworks may impose limitations, such as insufficient funding for research endeavours or inadequate professional development for educators to understand and implement research outcomes. This may result in a situation in which the curriculum remains unchanged, despite advancing research findings.

A critical analysis of the relationship between educational structures and the role of research in curriculum revision requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges how these structures can both facilitate and hinder educational innovation. This approach enhances theoretical comprehension and simultaneously provides practical ramifications for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners dedicated to building responsive, evidence-based curricula.

### **6.3 Developing a Research-Informed Curriculum Review Model.**

The following model was created to tackle the challenges of educational research and curriculum review:



*Figure 6.1 Framework for incorporating educational research into the curriculum review process*

This investigation's findings led to the development of the model shown in Figure 6.1. It primarily aims to assist policymakers, education researchers, curriculum developers, reviewers, including SEOs, members of the curriculum panel within Namibia's Ministry of Education, and other educational stakeholders. The goal is to support the seamless integration of research into curriculum review and development, fostering a more dynamic, reflective, and evidence-based approach to enhance curriculum effectiveness in Namibia. The method involves four interconnected, cyclical stages: Educational Research; Curriculum Review, Structures and Framework; Agents and Stakeholder Agencies and Reflexivity; and

Curriculum Review Implementation and Evaluation. Each stage is essential for establishing a systematic, research-informed curriculum review process.

### **Phase 1: Educational Research**

Education research encompasses empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and evidence-based approaches. The principal aims of educational research are defined below:

- Educational research must include both formal and informal studies conducted by academics at national and international levels.
- To inform practices by delivering critical results and insights to facilitate subsequent decision-making processes. Research findings in curriculum studies can profoundly impact the aims, methodology, and strategies of the redesigned curriculum.
- Educational research functions as a standard for evaluating existing practices, identifying knowledge deficiencies, and highlighting areas necessitating enhancement throughout all phases of the model.
- This phase integrates modern discoveries and promotes novel techniques that improve learning experiences and results, thereby enabling the evolution of education and collaboration.

### **Phase 2: Curriculum Review Framework**

This pertains to the institutional frameworks, rules, and guidelines that influence the educational landscape, including those established by the Ministry of Education, NIED, and other entities. A clearly defined structure ensures that the curriculum aligns with educational standards, legal requirements, and the objectives of institutional structures.

The subsequent step, as per the paradigm, is to design or enhance the Curriculum Review Framework. At this juncture, the insights obtained from the initial phase are employed to achieve particular aims, such as:

- A curriculum review that incorporates research findings and addresses the needs of various learners may involve the integration of innovative pedagogical methods, assessment techniques, and educational resources.
- The framework directs the methodical evaluation of the curriculum to ascertain strengths and flaws. It guarantees that evaluations are grounded in facts and situated within contemporary educational research.
- This phase also evaluates the resources required for the effective implementation of curriculum modifications. This encompasses educator training, learner materials, and necessary technical tools.

### **Phase 3: Structure and Agents**

Agency and stakeholder participation are essential throughout a curriculum review to develop an effective and responsive educational framework. This breakdown

elucidates the interplay of these aspects in augmenting flexibility in curriculum review.

### **Curriculum Review Agency**

- Curriculum reviewers have the power to evaluate and shape educational programmes critically. Their professional judgment and skills allow them to discern strengths and limitations in current courses.
- The expertise of reviewers enhances educated decision-making regarding educational research, objectives, and the wider context of societal requirements. They utilise insights from research and stakeholder feedback to recommend significant modifications.
- This authority promotes a culture of ongoing enhancement, as reviewers are authorised to recommend essential modifications based on assessment results and evolving educational trends.

### **Engagement of Stakeholders**

- Stakeholders, such as researchers, higher education institutions, educators, students, parents, and community members, are integral to the curriculum revision process. Their contributions ensure the programme reflects diverse perspectives, requirements, and ambitions.
- Involving stakeholders cultivates a cooperative atmosphere wherein their practical experience and views can guide curricular modifications, thereby improving its relevance and efficacy.

- The stakeholder agency underscores the significance of inclusive decision-making procedures, guaranteeing that curriculum modifications are endorsed by those immediately impacted. Their involvement fosters consensus and ownership of the programme.

### **Flexibility in Curriculum Review**

- The interactive link between curriculum evaluators and stakeholders facilitates a versatile curriculum review process. Reviewers can promptly adapt to evolving educational requirements and settings by proactively soliciting and integrating input.
- Flexibility enables the curriculum to adjust to emerging instructional methodologies, technology innovations, and changes in societal expectations. This adaptability is essential for sustaining relevance in a continuously changing educational environment.
- The adaptability promoted by the agency of curriculum reviewers and substantial stakeholder involvement guarantees that the curriculum remains a dynamic document, evolving through ongoing feedback, assessment, and practical implementation.
- The interplay between structure and agents is essential. Efficient educational frameworks enable individuals to critically engage with research outcomes, promoting a culture of ongoing improvement and adaptation.

- The interaction of agency among curriculum reviewers and stakeholders underscores the importance of collaboration and responsiveness in curriculum development. This collaborative method enhances the quality of educational programmes and guarantees that curricula are customised to address the varied needs of all learners.

#### **Stage 4**

The curriculum review, implementation, and evaluation are interrelated in a reciprocal manner within the curriculum development process. Each stage influences the others, forming a dynamic system capable of adapting and evolving in response to feedback and outcomes, as detailed below:

##### **Curriculum review**

- This phase entails evaluating and analysing current curricula to discern strengths, flaws, and opportunities for enhancement in accordance with established educational objectives and learner requirements. It underscores structuration theory and facets of educational research.
- Structuration emphasises the interaction between human activities and societal frameworks, indicating that curriculum modifications must focus on immediate educational objectives while also taking into account the wider context in which these curricula function.
- Insights derived from the review phase, taking into account structuration principles and educational research findings, inform the planning and

design of the implementation phase. For instance, we assume deficiencies in the curriculum's capacity to empower learners or enhance participation. This may result in specific modifications to learning objectives or the choice of content that corresponds with structuration theories and evidence-based practices.

- During this phase, input from stakeholders, educators, students, and the broader community will guide curricular modifications. This guarantees that the curriculum adapts to contemporary educational demands and empowers students within their sociocultural contexts, thereby maintaining relevance and effectiveness in a changing educational environment.

## **Implementation**

- This pertains to the execution of the curriculum in educational environments, including parts of structuration theory and highlighting the interaction between structure and agency.
- It involves providing instructional information, engaging students, and employing specific teaching approaches grounded in educational research.
- The measures executed during implementation immediately affect the assessment of the curriculum.
- We assume the material presented or the techniques utilised fail to engage learners fully. The evaluation may reveal a discrepancy between expected

results and actual learning, underscoring the need for research-informed, iterative feedback.

- Educators are essential at this point, employing their professional judgment to modify the curriculum as needed, thus demonstrating the interplay of structure and agency in practice while incorporating their findings from educational research to enhance efficacy.

### **Assessment and evaluation**

- Evaluation involves the examination of learner outcomes and curricular efficacy, using aspects of structuration theory and educational research. This entails using formative and summative evaluations to gauge advancement toward attaining the specified objectives.
- Evaluation outcomes yield essential data that guide subsequent curriculum assessments. Favourable findings may validate the existing strategy, whilst unfavourable results highlight aspects for additional scrutiny and modification.
- The evaluation results may necessitate significant modifications to the curriculum, illustrating the iterative nature of the process. The findings, informed by structuration theory and educational research, may need a reassessment of aims, content, and methodologies.
- The duality of curriculum review, implementation, and evaluation illustrates a perpetual cycle in which each element influences the others. The curriculum is a dynamic framework that adapts through feedback and

practical application. Recognising this duality enables educators and curriculum creators to design more effective, responsive, and engaging learning experiences that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

This model provides a thorough curriculum-review method grounded in educational research. It links theoretical principles with practical applications via organised frameworks and involves stakeholders, fostering ongoing reflection and adaptation to enhance educational practices and results. By adopting this strategy, organisations such as NIED can establish a feedback loop in which research guides curriculum review. Frequent evaluations grounded in contemporary research guarantee adaptability to educational obstacles. Educating curriculum reviewers to proficiently utilise research findings facilitates informed decision-making that aligns with local and global standards. Involving multiple stakeholders enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the review process. Policymakers can leverage research evidence to synchronise policy with current educational requirements. This curriculum review model, informed by structuration theory, offers a dynamic framework for institutions that promotes discoveries that connect theory to practice within an evolving global environment.

Research substantiates curriculum enhancements by elucidating beneficial methods, facilitating data-informed decisions for educators and administrators. It assesses students' requirements and curricular deficiencies, thereby promoting the creation of relevant programmes. Moreover, it presents novel approaches that

enhance learning, promote diverse instructional techniques, and support professional growth for educators. Nonetheless, implementing changes may require substantial resources and training, posing obstacles to full acceptance.

Educators and administrators may become complacent with established curricula and may resist implementing new practices recommended by research, especially if they view these changes as daunting or intimidating. Moreover, research frequently yields context-specific results, indicating that effective strategies in one educational environment may be inappropriate in another due to variations in demography, resources, or institutional priorities. A comprehensive curriculum review requires a substantial time commitment, which is often limited in educational settings. As a result, evaluations might be cursory, obstructing schools from properly capitalising on research findings.

Although research is an essential instrument in curriculum review, facilitating informed decision-making and the implementation of effective modifications, it encounters obstacles that may impede its adoption. Achieving equilibrium between these facilitating and limiting elements is crucial for the effective application of research in the ongoing enhancement of educational curricula.

#### **6.4 Implications of the Study**

This study has highlighted the implications for practice, research, and theory. These are discussed below:

#### 6.4.1 The Implications for Practice.

Educational research can yield significant insights and evidence-based recommendations that may lead to a more pertinent and pragmatic curriculum. This will hopefully meet the particular requirements of learners in Namibia. By comprehending the viewpoints of curricular evaluators and agents, stakeholders can improve collaboration between researchers and educators. This ensures that the findings of various studies are effectively incorporated into the curriculum revision process. Educational research findings can guide policymakers regarding the efficacy of existing curricular strategies and practices, facilitating data-driven decisions that enhance Basic Education. Training programmes can be designed to improve educators' and curriculum evaluators' competencies in utilising and interpreting educational research, thereby cultivating a culture of research-informed practice within the education system.

Incorporating research into the curriculum review process may yield more adaptive practices that meet society's changing demands, thereby preparing learners with the necessary skills and knowledge for their future. By employing a systematic methodology for integrating educational research into curriculum review, educational institutions can consistently evaluate and improve their curricula, thereby maintaining their relevance for the future. Engaging diverse stakeholders

in educational research helps cultivate a sense of ownership in curriculum development, resulting in more community-oriented educational practices. The consequences underscore the importance of integrating educational research and curriculum development, potentially resulting in a more effective education system in Namibia.

#### 6.4.2 Research Implications

Research provides evidence-based insights that help policymakers and curriculum evaluators understand the broader educational requirements. Educational research can pinpoint deficiencies in the existing curriculum, facilitating necessary modifications to conform to national educational standards and local circumstances. Research is essential for empowering stakeholders involved in education research and curriculum review, allowing them to shape and enhance educational frameworks. In Namibia, involving educators, students, and the community in the research process enhances engagement. Their own experiences and perspectives profoundly influence curriculum development, ensuring it better aligns with the community's values and requirements.

Research promotes discourse among educators, politicians, and researchers. Fostering collaboration in Namibia can yield a more cohesive, comprehensive approach to curriculum development across these groupings. This debate might reveal how different societal structures, economic factors, or cultural traditions affect educational content and delivery.

As society requires change, the education system must adjust accordingly. Research can elucidate emerging trends and challenges, including technological innovations and changes in labour market requirements. In Namibia, adapting to these changes ensures the curriculum remains relevant and equips students for the complexities of contemporary society. Research facilitates a systematic assessment of the curriculum's impact on student outcomes. Utilising data to determine efficacy is essential for ongoing enhancement. This iterative approach in Namibia can ensure the curriculum remains dynamic and responsive to pupils' evolving conditions.

The function of research in Namibia's curriculum review process is complex. It serves as a catalyst for essential transformations and a conduit linking diverse stakeholders, guaranteeing an inclusive and efficient educational system. This collaborative method can ultimately result in a curriculum that aligns with national and global standards while profoundly connecting with learners' experiences and goals.

#### 6.4.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of Namibia's curriculum review process offer a comprehensive insight into the interplay between structure, individual agency, and educational reform. They highlight the difficulties of overcoming systemic obstacles when attempting to effect beneficial change through localised knowledge systems.

The duality of structure and agency is particularly relevant here. Although human motives might stimulate innovation, institutional constraints, such as budget deficiencies, demonstrate that individual agency alone is insufficient for realising significant reform. This structural rigidity can sever the connection between policy decisions and educators' experiences, exacerbating educational inequalities.

The results indicate substantial consequences for structuration theory for educational reform. The tension between innovative educational approaches and conventional practices underscores the relationship between structure and agency. Resistance to change among stakeholders signifies the established norms and routines that shape their identities and functions within the educational environment. This resistance serves both as an impediment to implementation and as a manifestation of the cultural and psychological ties that influence stakeholders' behaviours.

To address this complexity, educational systems must foster a more adaptive culture that accords with the tenets of structuration theory. By cultivating stakeholder involvement, educational leaders may instil a sense of ownership that enables individuals to question established procedures. This active participation redefines established frameworks, facilitating the incorporation of innovative ideas into daily instructional procedures. Consequently, by examining the interaction

between agency and structure, educational reform can transform from resistance into a more adaptable and dynamic milieu that welcomes change.

The emphasis on evidence-based decision-making in the curriculum review process can be analysed through structuration theory, which highlights the interplay between structure and agency in social activities. The quality of the data utilised for curricular modifications is crucial to the frameworks that affect decision-making processes. The findings demonstrate that unclear research procedures weaken the legitimacy of institutional judgments, implying that accountability and governance frameworks may be insufficient to promote informed agency.

The use of both formal and informal research methodologies illustrates a versatile approach to the complexities of educational processes. Nevertheless, it underscores a substantial need for more robust structures to guide these investigations. An inadequate empirical basis for reforms increases the likelihood of perpetuating current inequities in educational systems. This emphasises the imperative for transparent processes that enhance the interaction between agency and structure, focusing on equitable educational reforms that adeptly address the sector's many issues. Ultimately, structuration theory emphasises the importance of strengthening the structural elements that influence decision-making, thereby enabling agency to facilitate substantial and equitable transformation in educational processes. Structuration theory offers a significant framework for analysing these interactions. Thoroughly examining the relationship between

agency and structure can reveal ways to integrate local insights into wider curricular frameworks, fostering educational innovations that are contextually pertinent and sustainable. Future research should prioritise establishing explicit methodological principles and training programmes that equip stakeholders with the requisite skills for conducting rigorous empirical research. This is essential for improving decision-making and ensuring that curriculum frameworks are adaptable to global best practices and local requirements.

The cyclical nature of curriculum revision and educational reform highlights a theoretical framework that emphasises the necessity for ongoing interaction among all educational stakeholders. This framework promotes a collaborative environment defined by openness and transparency, crucial for aligning curriculum initiatives with national educational goals. This approach enriches the curriculum review and amplifies the effectiveness of educational improvements by incorporating diverse perspectives. Thus, the ramifications of this theory underscore the significance of stakeholder engagement in creating a more flexible and comprehensive educational system.

The interaction among professional growth, research methodologies, and established educational frameworks presents both opportunities and challenges for the curriculum revision process in Namibia. Confronting systemic obstacles and promoting a culture of flexibility, with a steadfast commitment to evidence-based policies, will be essential for realising significant and enduring educational reform.

Future research should prioritise developing approaches that balance localised knowledge and global standards, ensuring that changes align with educators' and learners' experiences.

### **6.5 Recommendations for Enhancing Educational Research in Curriculum Review for Basic Education in Namibia**

The study recommends the following:

- The SEO should be authorised to actively participate in research, undertake educational investigations, collaborate with local and international scholars, and integrate insights from their experiences into curriculum review.
- The Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Development should equip and enable the curriculum panel members to become researchers and curriculum specialists.
- Education students who engaged in ethical academic research should offer input and insights that may impact the curriculum revision for the Ministry of Education, NIED research division.
- The Ministry of Education and NIED must enable the integration of research findings into curriculum decisions at all levels of decision-making.
- Researchers ought to disseminate knowledge and exemplary practices derived from contemporary educational research to the Ministry of Education and SEOs.

- The Ministry of Education should initiate an awareness campaign to encourage all stakeholders to assume responsibility for research and curriculum review, engage in educational research, and share accountability for the results of the revised curriculum.
- The Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Development should create collaborative networks between educational researchers and curriculum developers to ensure the successful integration of research findings into the curriculum review process. This may encompass routine workshops and feedback meetings, as well as online platforms, where practitioners can share thoughts on the applicability of research.
- Provide training programmes for curriculum reviewers, emphasising the significance of educational research. These programmes could enhance their ability to analyse research findings and use them effectively for curriculum enhancements.
- A centralised online repository for stakeholders should be created so that everyone can access educational research findings pertinent to the curriculum. This platform must be consistently updated and intuitive to promote regular engagement by curriculum reviewers and educators.
- The curriculum review process must incorporate perspectives from diverse stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, to ensure that educational research effectively tackles real-world difficulties and needs in the Basic Education sector.

- Standards must be established which delineate the application of educational research within the curriculum review framework. This should delineate explicit procedures for integrating research findings into decision-making.
- Promote enhanced funding and resources for educational research, particularly focusing on curriculum development, evaluation, and implementation in Basic Education. This enables researchers to conduct more focused investigations that effectively guide the curriculum. For instance, collaborate with the commercial sector and international organisations capable of providing research funding. The Ministry of Education should allocate sufficient resources to the National Institute for Educational Development, including personnel, finance, contemporary technology and software, and facilities that facilitate research efforts.
- Establish mechanisms to consistently evaluate the impact of educational research on curriculum reviews and the resultant consequences of these integrations. This feedback loop can enhance research methodologies and guarantee they align with the evolving demands of education.
- Involve policymakers in dialogue regarding the significance of educational research in curriculum review, promoting reforms that emphasise evidence-driven decision-making in educational policies.
- Foster a culture of inquiry and perpetual enhancement among educators and administrators, emphasising the importance of continuing professional development and evidence-based methods to guide curriculum decisions.

- Feedback mechanisms must be established to enable instructors, students, and other stakeholders to provide input on curriculum modifications informed by study findings.
- Inclusive engagement to guarantee that all stakeholders, including marginalised voices, are incorporated in the curriculum revision process to address power relations.

By implementing these recommendations, Namibia may leverage educational research to improve the quality of its Basic Education curriculum, enhancing students' educational outcomes.

### **6.6 Concerning the theory**

Structuration theory, developed by the sociologist Anthony Giddens, provides a framework for understanding the interaction between individual actions (agency) and structural elements (social systems, norms, and institutions). It asserts that buildings serve both as the means and as the result of social action. In the realm of educational research and curriculum review in Namibia, structuration theory elucidates the interaction between research outcomes and prevailing educational frameworks that shape educational policies and practices.

The duality of structures indicates that knowledge generated from educational research can both inform and be influenced by established curricular frameworks. Researchers influence curriculum creation while simultaneously being influenced

by prevailing educational standards and expectations. Analysing the perspectives of curriculum reviewers and agents requires examining their roles within the framework of educational policy. Their experiences and interpretations profoundly influence the integration of educational research into curriculum review processes.

The function of curriculum review agencies can be comprehended through the perspective of structuration theory by examining how institutional frameworks either promote or obstruct the use of educational research. Agencies can implement change by utilising research findings to modify existing frameworks. To enhance the contribution of educational research to curriculum revision, it is crucial to identify ways to strengthen the connection between research and practice. This entails facilitating collaboration between academics and educational practitioners, ensuring research addresses pertinent concerns, and advocating for a culture of evidence-based decision-making. Utilising structuration theory in educational research and curriculum review in Namibia offers significant insights into the production and application of knowledge, highlighting the dynamic interplay between agency and structure in educational activities.

## **6.7 Contributions**

The research findings in this study have substantial consequences for educational research and curriculum review processes, especially in Namibia. The study outlines critical areas within the existing curriculum that require improvement,

particularly emphasising the lack of research integration in curriculum review and the inadequate responsibility among stakeholders for these evaluations. By resolving these deficiencies, entities such as the Ministry of Education, NIED, and SEOs may make informed judgments that tackle prevailing educational and societal issues.

The study underscores the significance of empirical data in curriculum reviews and suggests solutions to improve curricular efficacy through research-based tactics. This emphasises the necessity for collaboration among educators, policymakers, and academics, promoting a cohesive curriculum development strategy that incorporates multiple viewpoints.

Engaging diverse stakeholders, such as educators, students, and community members, in the research process empowers them to voice their perspectives in educational decision-making. This interactive method enables the curriculum to better align with community requirements and ambitions. This research informs the creation of professional development opportunities for educators and curriculum evaluators. Educators can effectively incorporate research findings into their teaching methods by enhancing their research literacy and skills, thereby cultivating a culture of continuous improvement in education.

The research underscores the importance of a curriculum that is sensitive to society's changing demands. Educators can maintain the curriculum's relevance and applicability by employing a systematic curriculum review process that

integrates ongoing research. The research enhances the understanding of structuration theory by analysing the influence of external research findings and internal elements, including institutional culture, frameworks, individual values, and experience on educational practices. This research stimulates significant discourse on curriculum development and underscores the imperative for an evidence-based methodology to enhance educational outcomes in Namibia.

### **6.8 Limitations**

This study substantially enhances the current body of educational research and curriculum review in Namibia. The study emphasises the fundamental role of SEOs in shaping educational policy and practice by examining their viewpoints at NIED. This work highlights the importance of linking curriculum review processes to national frameworks, such as the Harambee Prosperity Plan and Vision 2030, and underscores the need for strategic integration across all educational levels.

Although the study has recognised limitations, including its restricted geographic and participant reach, these constraints also delineate the particular situations and circumstances to which its findings are applicable. This research elucidates the dynamics of policy and practice within the Namibian educational landscape, prompting future investigation into the perception and implementation of these policies at the classroom level.

The application of Giddens' structuration theory enhances the theoretical foundation supporting this investigation. This theoretical framework compels academics to examine the role of teachers not only as executors but as proactive agents of change, whose experiences and involvement in research are essential for effective curriculum implementation and enhanced learner outcomes. The research establishes a foundation for substantial future investigations into the connections among educational policies, teacher agency, and curricular practices. Recognising deficiencies in the existing understanding of these processes, especially from educators' and other stakeholders' perspectives, necessitates further investigation into these vital components. Such inquiries are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of curriculum implementation in Namibia and beyond, ultimately improving educational policy and practice on a larger scale

### **6.9 Future research**

Educational research's contribution to curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia is vital for ensuring the educational framework is practical and relevant. Educational research yields significant insights into pedagogical practices, learning outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of the curriculum. This knowledge facilitates the identification of deficiencies and opportunities for enhancement.

Collecting perspectives from curriculum evaluators and educational agents on the incorporation of research yields a comprehensive picture of the problems and benefits of utilising research in curriculum review procedures. Their perspectives

can guide subsequent research initiatives. The agencies representing curriculum reviewers play a vital role in shaping the implementation of educational research in practice. Understanding their impact can help identify obstacles to efficient integration and underscore successful methodologies in alternative circumstances. Enhancing educational research through collaboration between researchers and educators, and emphasising its practical applications, can improve its alignment with the curriculum review process.

#### **6.10 The Conclusion of the Research**

The study concluded that the role of educational research in curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia is multifaceted. This complexity was recognised in the diverse factors affecting curriculum decisions, including curriculum review frameworks, the viewpoints of curriculum reviewers, contextual experiences, stakeholder perspectives, and educational policies. The results indicate that a cooperative strategy including educators, policymakers, and the community is crucial for the effective review and implementation of curricula, guided by educational research. Furthermore, continuous research is essential to refine and enhance educational practices to accommodate the diverse needs of learners in Namibia.

The study investigated the impact of educational research on curriculum review in Basic Education and concluded that academic research is a vital resource for curriculum reviewers. The impact of educational research depends on the

curriculum reviewers who utilise it; the role of research in curriculum review encompasses both facilitative and restrictive elements.

This study revealed six critical enabling variables that enhance collaboration and productivity within the organisation. Access to vital resources is fundamental, ensuring team members have the tools and materials needed to fulfil their responsibilities efficiently. Supportive leadership is essential for cultivating an environment where people feel esteemed and encouraged to share their thoughts and put forth their efforts. Effective communication is essential, as it promotes the dissemination of information and ensures that all parties are aligned on objectives and expectations. A cooperative strategy and robust collaboration, especially with the Research Division, augment the organisation's capacity for innovation and collective problem-solving.

The lack of extensive empirical research resulted in a knowledge deficit that impeded informed decision-making and innovation in the domain. Time restrictions intensified the problem, as researchers endeavoured to reconcile their obligations with the urgent requirement for comprehensive examination. Financial constraints significantly reduced access to essential resources and support for research initiatives due to inadequate funding. Ultimately, the lack of contemporary research facilities substantially hindered progress, preventing scholars from using state-of-the-art technologies and methodologies vital to their work. Collectively, these

constraints constituted a significant impediment to efficient research and development.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Participants' interview questions**



**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY THE SIX (6) NIED CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICERS AND SIX (6) SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICERS WITH AT LEAST THREE (3) YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN CURRICULUM REVIEW**

**RESEARCH TITLE: “REVIEW OF BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM AS  
STRUCTURATION THROUGH EDUCATION RESEARCH IN NAMIBIA”**

#### **Main question**

- What is the structuration role of educational research on curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?

#### **Sub-Questions**

- What kind of knowledge has been produced through the duality of structures in education research related to curriculum review for Basic Education in Namibia?
- What are the curriculum reviewers' (as agents) views on integrating educational research into reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia?

- How do the curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the curriculum review structure in Namibia?
- How can education research be enhanced to contribute optimally to curriculum review?

### **Data generation questions**

#### **1. Knowledge Produced through Duality of Structures in Education Research Related to Curriculum Review for Basic Education in Namibia**

- 1.1 Can you give an overview of your role and involvement in education research, the curriculum review process, and the integration of education research during this review?
- 1.2 Can you share your experiences on the role of research in the curriculum review process? How is research integrated throughout the curriculum review process?
- 1.3 What types of knowledge have emerged from the curriculum review processes in Namibia?
- 1.4 In what ways do formal and informal structures influence the knowledge produced during these curriculum reviews?
- 1.5 Can you discuss any frameworks or policies that have guided the integration of education research and curriculum review in Namibia?
- 1.6 How do these frameworks interact/relate with the practical realities of education research and curriculum review in Namibia?

1.7 Who are the key stakeholders involved in the curriculum review process, and how do they contribute to the knowledge production and education research?

**2. The curriculum reviewers' (as agents) views on integrating educational research into reviewing the curriculum for Basic Education in Namibia**

2.1 Can you share any personal reflections on the role played by the NIED research and curriculum development divisions towards education research and curriculum review

2.2 What strategies are in place to ensure that ongoing research is integrated into continuous curriculum improvement efforts?

2.3 Could you provide examples of specific research methods or approaches that have been used in informing curriculum review decisions?

2.4 What challenges or barriers have you encountered when trying to integrate research into curriculum review? How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?

**3. How the curriculum reviewers' agencies influence the utilisation of education research within the curriculum review structure in Namibia**

3.1 How do you ensure that the educational research you consider is relevant and applicable to the Namibian context?

3.2 Are there collaborations between curriculum agents and universities or researchers? How does this impact the research being used?

3.3 How do you balance the use of research evidence with other factors, such as contextual considerations, stakeholder input, and practical constraints, in the curriculum review process?

3.4 How do you ensure that research findings are effectively communicated and translated into practical recommendations for curriculum improvement? Give specific examples of the current reviewed curriculum

#### **4. Enhancing education research to contribute optimally to curriculum review**

4.1 How can education research be enhanced to contribute optimally to curriculum review?

4.2 What future developments or improvements do you envision in terms of the role of research in curriculum review?

4.3 What recommendations would you make to policymakers regarding the curriculum review process based on your experiences?

4.4 Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the role of research in the curriculum review process

## Appendix 2: Editing letter

**Andrew van Zyl**  
**864 Tereblanche Ave**  
**Villieria**  
**Pretoria**  
**Tel: 072 112 3999**

### **Certificate of Editing**

**This serves to confirm that copy-editing and proofreading services were rendered to**  
**SIMSOLIA NAMENE NTINDA**

**For his Doctoral thesis entitled *Review of Basic Education Curriculum as***  
***Structuration through Education Research in Namibia* on 14 July 2025**

*I am a member of the Professional Editors' Guild (member number VAN090) and commit to the following codes of practice (among others):*

- *I have completed the work independently and did not sub-contract it out*
- *I kept to the agreed deadlines and/or communicated changes within reasonable time frames*
- *I treated all work as confidential and maintained objectivity in editing*
- *I did not accept work that could be considered unlawful, dishonest or contrary to public interest*

*I uphold the following editing standards:*

- *proofreading for mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, grammar*
- *copy-editing that includes commenting on, but not correcting, structure, organisation and logical flow of content, basic formatting (headings, page numbers), eliminating unnecessary repetition*
- *checking citation style is correct, punctuating as needed and flagging missing or incorrect references*
- *commenting on suspected plagiarism and missing sources*
- *returning the document with track changes for the author to accept*

**I confirm that I have met the above standards of editing and professional ethical practice.**

**The content of the work edited remains that of the student.**

SIGNATURE

FULL NAME

  
ANDREW VAN ZYL

## Appendix 3: UNISA College of Education Ethics Clearance



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/08/10

Ref: **2023/08/10/64128369/35/AM**

Name: Mrs SN Ntinda

Student No.:64128369

Dear Mrs SN Ntinda

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2023/08/10 to 2028/08/10

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs SN Ntinda  
E-mail address: 64128369@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +264812995472

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof. Madikizela-Madiya Nomanesi  
E-mail address: madiyn@unisa.ca.za  
Telephone: 0124294698

#### Title of research:

**Unleashing the Potential of Namibia's Basic Education through Education Research  
and Curriculum Review**

**Qualification:** PhD Education

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 2023/08/10 to 2028/08/10.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/08/10 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.



University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
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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. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2028/08/10**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2023/08/10/64128369/35/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof Mpine Makoe**  
**EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
qakisme@unisa.ac.za



Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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## Appendix 4: Ministry of Education permission letter



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Enquiries: Mr. N. Eiman  
Tel: +264 61 -293 3202  
Fax: +264 61- 293 3922  
Email: nickeyeiman@gmail.com  
File no: 13/2/9/1

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

Simsolia Namene Ntinda  
Tel: 0812995472  
Tel: 0812401170

Dear Ms Ntinda,

**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 29 August 2023 seeking for permission to conduct academic research at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) the for your PhD studies which is titled: "*Unleashing the Potential of Namibia's Basic Education Through Cutting-Edge Education Research and Curriculum Review.*"

Permission has been granted to you. However, you have to seek for further clearance from the Director of the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) to ensure that:

- Participation is voluntary,
- 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 the Ministry looks forward to hearing from you upon completion of your studies.

Yours sincerely,

  
Sanet L. Steenkamp  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



All official correspondence must be addressed to the Executive Director

Page 1 of 1