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# Reading among grade six learners in Namibia and Norway

An investigation of reading habits and attitudes of learners in the  
Khomas and Oshana regions of Namibia and the Hedmark region  
in Norway

Høgskolen i Hedmark  
Rapport nr. 11 – 2007

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<b>Forfattere:</b> Gerd Wikan, M.Louise Mostert, Anne Marit V. Danbolt, Kari Nes, Francis Nyathi and Job Hengari			
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<b>Sammandrag:</b> Høgskolen i Hedmark, Ongwediva College of Education og Universitetet i Namibia har gjennomført et forskningsprosjekt. Prosjektet er del av et større prosjekt Teacher Education South North. Målsettingen med forskningsprosjektet er å undersøke lesevaner, preferanser og holdninger til namibiske og norske 6. klassinger. Dataene ble samlet inn i oktober og november 2006.			
<p>Dette er en pilot som skal følges opp med en større undersøkelse senere og resultatene må derfor leses med forsiktighet. De variablene som synes å ha størst innvirkning på lesevaner og leseholdninger er kjønn, tilgang på litteratur i hjem-met, i hvilken grad foreldrene fortalte historier og leste for barna da de var små og morsmål. Jenter er mer positive til å lese enn gutter det samme gjelder elever som kommer fra hjem med god tilgang på litteratur. At foreldrene leser for barna og fortelle dem historier mens de er små viser seg også å ha en positiv innflytelse på holdninger til å lese hos 6.klassinger. Det viser seg også at elever fra Namibia har mer positive holdninger til å lese enn elever fra Norge.</p>			





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<b>Keyword:</b> Reading habits, reading attitude, Namibia, Norway, Primary school learners			
<p><b>Summary:</b> A joint research project was conducted by Hedmark University College in Norway and the University of Namibia and Ongwediva College of Education in Namibia. The project was considered as a pilot for a possible larger survey later. The aim of the research was to investigate reading habits, preferences and attitudes of Namibian and Norwegian learners, teachers and student teachers. The data were gathered during October and November of 2006. Although data was collected for learners, teachers and student teachers, this report focuses mainly on the research results as obtained from the learners.</p> <p>The research project was part of the SIU/NORAD financed project: Teacher Education, South-North of which the overall aim was to enhance the quality of teacher education, mainly in the South. However, it was anticipated that insight into the Namibian context could also improve the quality of Norwegian teacher education. Against this background the joint research project was meant to give valuable information and experience to all parties involved.</p> <p>The variables that seemed to have the greatest impact on reading habits and attitudes in this study was gender, availability of reading materials at home, the telling of stories and reading by parents, primary home language. Girls show a more positive attitude than boys, the same is the case with learners which came from homes with good access to reading material and with parents that read to them. Learners with English or Oshiwambo as their primary home language display more positive reading attitude than other learners. In addition, the study reveals</p>			

substantial differences between the three study regions. In general the Namibian learners have more positive reading habits and attitudes than the Norwegian learners.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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We would also like to thank the Ministry of Education, Namibia, the University of Namibia, Ongwediva College of Education and Hedmark University College for supporting this research.

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Norway/Namibia  
12th October 2007





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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ETSIP</b>	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (Namibia)
<b>NQF</b>	the National Qualifications Framework (Namibia)
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
<b>SIU</b>	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education
<b>NORAD</b>	The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>OECD</b>	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>IEA</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
<b>PIRLS</b>	Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey
<b>PISA</b>	Program for International Student Assessment
<b>ESL</b>	English as a second language
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences





## INTRODUCTION

A joint research project was conducted by Hedmark University College in Norway and the University of Namibia and Ongwediva College of Education in Namibia. The project was considered as a pilot for a possible larger survey later. The aim of the research was to investigate reading habits, preferences and attitudes of Namibian and Norwegian learners, teachers and student teachers. The data were gathered during October and November of 2006. Although data was collected for learners, teachers and student teachers, this report focuses mainly on the research results as obtained from the learners.

The research project was part of the SIU/NORAD financed project: *Teacher Education, South–North* of which the overall aim was to enhance the quality of teacher education, mainly in the South. However, it was anticipated that insight into the Namibian context could also improve the quality of Norwegian teacher education. Against this background the joint research project was meant to give valuable information and experience to all parties involved.



## ‘LITERACY FOR LIFE’

‘Literacy for life’ is the title of the 2005 UNESCO annual *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. A major concern underlying our research project is the level of literacy among young persons. We will not here enter the discussion about definitions of literacy, but refer to functional literacy in this way:

“A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community’s development. “ (UNESCO 1978, here from UNESCO 2005).

Literacy is the core of education for all, according to UNESCO (2005) in the literacy decade (2003-2012). There are a number of reasons for this: When learners receive high quality basic education they are equipped with literacy skills for life and further learning. When such pupils grow up, they are more likely to continue their education, to send their children to school and to take active part in society (cf. UNESCO 2005).

Education for all means that “every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs...” according to the World Declaration on Education for All, Article 1 (WCEFA1990).

Education for all has to do with participation in education in a wide sense, i.e. *inclusive education*. “Inclusion is seen as **a process** of

addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO 2001). Hence, education for all is not only about participation, but about outcome of education, drop-out of education, quality of education, language of education and relevance of education: Successful educational programmes require “a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of teachers and learners” (Dakar, Education for All, UNESCO 2001; UNESCO 2005).

To address the issue of ‘literacy for life’ we have chosen to start by exploring aspects of reading among young persons in our two countries.

# BACKGROUND ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS OF NAMIBIA AND NORWAY

In order to understand the context of this research it is important to include some information on the educational systems of the two countries involved in this research and also to provide some background with regard to the reading competence and reading difficulties of the learners, as based on available literature. The focus of the discussion is therefore on the challenges in both systems with regard to reading.

## Namibia

### General background

Until independence in 1990 Namibia was under the rule of the Republic of South Africa and therefore the law enforced the ideology of Apartheid. This was specifically evident in the education system as well as the labour market. In the years preceding independence there were eleven administrative education authorities based on ethnic and racial differences and as such, the system was not only discriminating but also fragmented and wasteful. After independence the eleven separate, yet centralised education authorities had to be transformed into one integrated yet decentralised authority (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1993). Thus, substantial changes were implemented for the whole educational system and this included that curricula were rewritten and the medium of instruction changed from mainly Afrikaans to English. In addition to this, learner-centred methodologies of teaching were progressively promoted.

The Namibian school system has 12 Grades divided into four phases: Lower Primary (Grades 1-4), Upper Primary (Grades 5-7), Junior Secondary (Grades 8-10) and Senior Secondary (Grades 11-12). It is compulsory for all Namibian children to fulfil grade 1 to grade 7. Official figures claim a gross enrolment rate of 98% and there are no significant differences between male and female enrolment (EMIS 2002). Some sources say that 5% of learners never enter schools (Mutorwa 2004). According to Namibia's Constitution, everyone should be in school until they complete Grade 7 or reach the age of 16. However, this aim is not completely reached as dropout is a serious problem at all grade levels. During the Lower Primary Phase the highest dropout rate is during grade 1, with 2.3% of learners dropping out. For the upper primary level the highest dropout rate is for grade 7 (6.5%). This is the transition year from primary to secondary education. A large number of learners, 43.4%, leave school after the Junior Secondary examination at the end of Grade 10. The Grade 10 promotion rate is therefore much lower than the promotion rates for any other grade (Education Management and Information System (EMIS), 2002).

An extraordinary feature of Namibia's schools is that the survival rate, that is the percentages of learners expected to stay in school until they reach a particular grade, is higher for females than males. Early school leaving is a greater problem for male learners than for female learners. Females had higher promotion rates and lower repetition rates than males up to Grade 7. The opposite is true for higher grades and after grade 7 a higher percentage of females than males leave school.

### Home environment

In some schools large numbers of learners come from economic severely disadvantaged families. Some come to school without having had a decent breakfast or any school snack. Many learners live in dwellings without electricity and do not have a specific room or desk that can be used to do their homework. In addition to this they are expected to do a number of household chores that might take up most of the daytime after school and therefore find it very difficult to keep up with school expectations. Some parents do not have any formal

education and are therefore not in a position to assist learners with academic difficulties. Many parents with low educational levels lack self-confidence and do not feel free to visit schools in order to discuss their problems with teachers. Some learners are subjected to abuse and neglect. Others need to take care of sick or elderly family members. These and several other socio-economic conditions prevent learners from achieving their full potential (Mostert, 2003; 2004).

### Challenges with regard to English as a second language

Namibia is a multilingual and culturally diverse country. There are 13 indigenous languages, all of which are presently regarded as equal regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language. Over 54% of learners in Namibia speak an Oshiwambo language at home. Other large numbers are Khoekhoe-gowab speakers (10.4%), Otjiherero (7.5%) and Afrikaans (7.4%). Only 1.2% speak English at home (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1998). After its attainment of independence from an Afrikaans language dominated South Africa in 1990, Namibia, through its constitution introduced English as its official language (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990; Article 3.1). In addition to this English is a compulsory subject in all schools and also the medium of instruction throughout the secondary cycle (grades 8-12). In grades 1-3 the home languages are preferably the medium of instruction after which English is phased in, in order to prepare learners for the secondary phase. However, in practice, many classes have learners with different home languages and only one of these can be the medium of instruction. These language differences obviously complicate the task of educators especially in the first 3 grades.

Immediately after the declaration of independence and the constitutional legitimization of English as an official language, all schools therefore started to phase in English as a second language (ESL). In respect of some theories in bilingualism, research shows that reading and writing skills acquired early in the first language will provide a strong foundation to learn to read and write in a second language. In

other words, it is argued that pupils will speak, read and write better in their second language if they already have high proficiency levels in their first language (Wellemsse, 2003).

Nyathi (2001) reported that the language policy instructing Namibian schools to teach learners in their mother tongue only up to grade three and thereafter teach in English throughout their studies, created more problems for the country as many learners fail to cope with the reading demands (SACMEQ, 2004). The residual effects of this are that Namibia as a nation ranks among the lowest in literacy compared to other countries. In other words, this form of bilingualism is more subtractive than additive hence, not useful for the country.

According to Richards, Platt and Platt (1992), in additive bilingual programs, individuals receive instruction in the mother tongue to such an extent that it supports the acquisition of the second language. As a result, the mother tongue is not threatened by being replaced by the second language. According to Cummins (2000), additive bilingualism has potential to assist learners develop higher metalinguistic abilities, learn additional languages faster and increase their academic, intellectual and linguistic capacities compared to monolinguals or those subjected to subtractive bilingualism.

This scenario where many Namibian learners find themselves overwhelmed by less effective English as a medium of instruction as opposed to their mother tongue; which could be ideally useful could be viewed as *immersion*.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:139) maintains that immersion should be “voluntary and ... enjoyable”. However, reality is that many Namibian children are exposed to a “sink-or-swim” situation” and are instructed in English, whether they can cope with it or not. This type of education is known as submersion which NEPI (1992) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), define as a situation where the goal of introducing a second language as medium of instruction is to ensure that the students learn it as quickly as possible without considering the special needs these students may have in the process.



In a situation where the mother tongue is developed to a level where learning of concepts and other academic elements in the second language becomes easier and manageable, frustrations on the part of learners and parental involvement becomes active and meaningful. This view is supported by Cummins (2000:32) who argues that a solid foundation in mother tongue in learners results in them being more confident at school which results in them experiencing more parental involvement in their learning. The latter, according to Cummins is triggered by the fact that both parents and the teachers would be speaking the same language. These are some of the factors that are sure to foster academic growth and improved reading and/or writing in the learners.

One crucial fact about reading and writing in Namibia is imbedded in the very educational philosophy that guides its epistemology and/or instruction. The dawn of the learner centred approach in an independent Namibia suggested humanistic approaches to teaching. In language teaching, the communicative approach became paramount. It is through this philosophy where acquisition and learning are given a balanced attention in language teaching/learning classrooms. In defining reading or writing under this philosophy, Leki (1992) sums up the expectations;

“The distinction between acquiring and learning language appears pertinent to the accepted wisdom that good writers are good readers. It suggests that the ability to write well is acquired, in this special sense, through exposure to texts in a natural process of communication, not through the learning of rules of writing. A proficient writer who is not, or has not been, a prolific reader is a rarity. By extension, then, we might suggest that to learn to write English acceptably, learners require exposure to written texts in a natural process of communication rather than grammatical and rhetorical rules in writing” (p.17).

The implication of this argument is that, in a Namibian situation, teaching and learning of reading and writing would require abundant

authentic materials, meaningful and supportive environments, comprehensible materials etc. This would require then that schools would need to have libraries or classrooms equipped with authentic materials such as; newspapers, magazines, novels etc.

### Quality of the education system with specific reference to reading

Despite several changes in the right direction, concerns about the quality of education has been expressed in several sources , including Vision 2030, Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), and the National Development Plans (Government of the Republic of Namibia: Office of the President, 2004; Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), 2007; Ministry of Education: Namibia Qualifications Authority, 2006; SACMEQ, 2004).

It is therefore not surprising that access to quality education has top priority in the Education Policy in Namibia (Strategic Plan 2001-2006). Figures for increase in number of schools, number of qualified teachers and number of pupils are impressive. For example, the total number of schools in Namibia increased from 1,435 in 1996 to 1,584 in 2002 (MBESC, 2002). This is an average annual growth of 1.4 %. However, there are several problems and therefore still a long way to fulfil the political aim which is quality education for all Namibian children. There are still children who never enrol in school, there are problems with dropouts and there are problems with the quality of the education given.

Quality of education is a complex concept and implies that more learners should reach a certain level of competence in reading, writing, mathematic and other subjects. In the present debate skills like becoming a democratic minded individual and relevance of the education content for the society at large, are also discussed.

According to official policy statements, Namibia should be moving towards a knowledge-based economy, and in order to reach this goal the quality of education in Namibia will need to be improved. The Ministry of Education has expressed concern regarding the general low performance of learners in Namibian schools. Many learners in Namibia struggle to master reading, writing and mathematical skills. Research results from a survey conducted by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) clearly demonstrated that there are serious gaps in the reading competencies of learners in upper primary phases. This survey included several countries, amongst others Namibia, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa and Mozambique. For Namibia, all educational regions were included and it was found that the majority of learners did not reach the minimum mastery in reading English based on the criteria as determined by the Namibian reading specialists. For example, it was found that at the overall national level only 16.9% of learners reached the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy and a meagre 6.7 % reached the desirable level. By minimum level it is meant that the learner will barely survive the next year of schooling, and by desirable the likelihood of success is very high. (SACMEQ, 2004).

Learners were tested in reading and mathematics competence and Namibian learners in grade 6 scored poorly compared to pupils from other countries in the region. In reading Namibian pupils scored 3<sup>rd</sup> to the bottom and in mathematics they were at the very bottom. In the same study, looking at teachers' competence it was found that their skills were very low compared to teachers in most of the neighbouring countries. Thus, low quality of teacher education and lack of qualified teachers might be one reason behind the low learning outcomes. In addition to this, results of the study showed that there was a decline in reading scores between 1995 and 2000 (SACMEQ, 2004).

The SACMEQ study clearly showed that there were extremely large variations between Namibian regions, with the Northern regions of the country showing the lowest scores in reading competency. About two

thirds of the population in Namibia lives in the Northern provinces. Surprisingly, in these regions not even all teachers reached the desirable level of reading competence. It is important to specifically highlight the results of the Oshana and Khomas regions, since these two regions were the ones included in the joint research project of Namibia and Norway. For the Oshana region, only 11% of learners reached the minimum level of competency and only 1% reached the desirable level of reading competency. On the other hand, learners in the capital region of Khomas, the second region included in the present study, had the highest scores for Namibia. As many as 64% of these learners reached the minimum level and 35% reached the desirable level of competency in reading (Table 1).

**Table 1: Percentage of learners reaching minimum and desirable levels of mastery in reading in the Namibian regions.**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Reaching minimum level</b>	<b>Reaching desirable level</b>
Caprivi	4.2	1.1
Erongo	52.3	25.1
Hardap	49.4	23.4
Karas	45.9	16.2
Kavango	7.5	0.5
Khomas	63.7	35.3
Kunene	16.2	3.5
Ohangwena	3.4	0.2
Omahake	11.6	1.1
Omusati	4.4	0.2
Oshikoto	10.0	5.6
Otjozondjupa	26.7	12.1
Oshana	11.0	1.2

(SACMEQ 2004)

In the SACMEQ research it was also found that the reading competence of learners from 'low' socio-economic groups was much lower than that of learners from high socio-economic groups (SACMEQ 2004). These findings are in accordance with Mbenzi's (1997) who found that pupils from poor families, with illiterate parents and with a bad command of English have greater difficulties in learning to read and write than pupils from a more resource strong background. He furthermore claimed that the policy of automatic promotion and the great preference for English above the mother tongue among many parents, add to the problem of pupils reaching higher grades without being able to read and write.

A small scale research on performance in English and Mathematics among grade 4 learners in Tsumeb, Oshikoto region, showed that learners from better equipped schools did significantly better than learners from disadvantaged schools. This study also found that learners attending isolated rural schools had a significant lower score than pupils from urban schools (Baardseth et. al, 2007).

## Norway

### General background

The Norwegian school system dates back to 1739, when a law of mandatory primary education was introduced. From its onset, this education consisted mainly of learning to read religious texts like the Bible and Luther's catechism to prepare the children for confirmation. Norway was at that time ruled by Denmark, and all books were written in Danish<sup>1</sup>. In 1814, Norway entered into a union with Sweden, but Danish was still the dominant written language. As Norway during the 1800s moved towards full independence<sup>2</sup>, the school system became a driving force in establishing a national identity (Engen, 2004). One of the major school reforms was the establishment of a unitary school

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<sup>1</sup> Norwegian and Danish are closely related languages and mutually understandable orally as well as in writing.

<sup>2</sup> The union with Sweden was dissolved in 1905.

system in 1889, introducing 7 years of mandatory education for all children. The idea of *the unitary school* which arose in this period is distinguished by the idea that education, in principle, remains free and for all at all levels with a common compulsory content. The language of instruction was gradually reformed into a written language that was closer to the pronunciation of Norwegian.

In 1969, a law of primary and lower secondary education extended compulsory education to 9 years. Since 1997, children in Norway start school at 6 and receive compulsory education for 10 years. Primary school is 7 years; lower secondary school is 3 years. All learners are entitled to even three more years of free education, upper secondary school.

The concept of *adapted education* in one school for all, which can be said to be the Norwegian interpretation of inclusion, has been crucial in the Norwegian educational context for the last decades. The principle of adapted education is established by law and emphasized in the latest school reform, but arose in the 1970ies, in the wake of integration of disabled students and of the new comprehensive lower secondary school. It means that all learners are entitled to education adapted to them, irrespective of ability, gender, ethnicity, language, social class etc. The intention is to meet the demands of diversity in the inclusive school by adapting the curriculum, methods, organisation etc. to all students' needs, without streaming or segregation. 'Adapted education' covers regular and special education. The principle implies that some students will have to have more support than others to receive equitable and suitably adapted education. Everyone is generally entitled to support in order to achieve adapted education, but earmarking of additional resources for children with 'needs' due to a disability, for instance dyslexia, and in some cases due to their language minority situation, prevails. However, according to research, in some areas and for some groups of children schools fail to adapt education sufficiently, cf. below about the quality of education.

In the Norwegian school system, the learners get no grades until they reach lower secondary school. The system is based on automatic pro-

motion, with special support of those learners who fall behind. About 94 % of the Norwegian learners attend upper secondary education (Statistics Norway, 2007: 8). However, learners with immigrant background tend to drop out at a higher rate than learners with Norwegian background. One must finish upper secondary education to be eligible for higher education at universities and university colleges. No school fees are charged at any level within the Government school system. Very few learners attend private primary and lower secondary education in Norway, only about 2% (Statistics Norway, 2007: 11).

## Language

Historically, Norway has a relatively homogenous population as regards language and ethnic heritage. The only indigenous group, the Sami, is quite small (estimated to about 20000 within the Norwegian borders) and national minority groups like travellers, Finnish immigrants and others are even fewer and were for many years not taken into consideration in educational policies.

In 1878, the Norwegian Parliament prescribed that the language of instruction should be the language that the learners themselves spoke. This decision must be seen in the light of the development of a national identity as Norwegians, and the struggle to establish the Norwegian language as the language within the school system. The national minority groups, however, were not granted this privilege. The Sami population was forced to abandon the use of their indigenous languages and use only Norwegian in school. Not until 1969 did the Sami minority get entitled to education in their own language.

Due to the increase in immigration during the last decades, there is a rapidly growing population of language minorities, especially in Oslo, where 1/3 of the learners have Norwegian as their second language (Oslo Kommune, 2007). On a national level, 7 % of the learners have language minority background. As a group, these learners tend to lag behind the majority of learners (Roe & Hvistendal 2004; The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training 2007: 39). However, there are huge individual differences, and there are several learners of

language minority backgrounds who succeed in their education. There is a growing interest in improving the learning outcome of learners from language minorities, and as an example of a measure taken can be mentioned that several university colleges with government support are cooperating to provide education for bi-lingual teachers to give them formal qualifications to work within the Norwegian school system.

### Quality of the education system with specific reference to reading

During the last decade, Norway has participated in some major international investigations on reading achievement among learners in primary and lower secondary education (grunnskolen). OECD, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, launched at the turn of the century the extensive program PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) which conducts surveys every third year focusing subsequently on reading, mathematics, and science. 32 countries in total take part in the survey, 28 of those being OECD countries. 265 000 15-year-old learners were included in the study, in Norway more than 4000 learners. Another study that is of interest for our project is PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey). The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is responsible for this program. 150,000 learners, 10 years of age took part in the study in 35 countries. The design of this study was a reading test combined with a questionnaire of reading habits, school work habits, and interests outside school.

In these surveys, Norwegian learners came out with results about the international average. This was not considered satisfactory, as Norway is among the countries which spend a substantial amount of money on the educational system. Another finding that caught a lot of attention in Norway, was that Norwegian youths, and boys especially, expressed very low engagement in reading – they were actually at the very bottom of the scale. Furthermore, Norwegian youths spent less time on reading in their leisure time than learners in many other



European countries.

After the publication of these reports, the Ministry of Education and Research introduced the national strategy plan *Make space for reading*. The aims were to stimulate a love of reading and reading skills among learners in primary and lower secondary education as well as to improve teachers' skills at teaching reading, provision of literature and the use of libraries (Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education, 2003).

As regards qualifications of teachers, there has been a focused effort to increase teacher qualification with regard to the teaching of reading and writing through in-service education. Three out of four teachers of Norwegian have additional education in the subject and are thus formally well qualified (Lagerstrøm, 2007).

The Knowledge Promotion is the latest reform in the 10-year compulsory school and in upper secondary education. The goal of the Knowledge Promotion is to help all pupils to develop fundamental skills that will enable them to participate actively in the society. The Knowledge Promotion, with its special emphasis on learning, is meant to help ensure that all pupils receive a differentiated education.



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Background

The aim of the joint small scale research project was to focus on the reading culture of Namibian and Norwegian learners, student teachers, and teachers. The concept of “reading culture” was narrowed to reading habits and attitudes towards reading. To make an independent investigation of reading proficiency among a representative sample of learners was considered too demanding, even though this would have been interesting. No comparable data existed on this subject matter in the two countries, and there were no international studies of reading performance or school performance where both countries have been involved. However, it was considered far too expensive to set up a new investigation into reading performance. This is in itself a very demanding process, and for example to validate material for use in both countries was considered not possible within a limited budget.

Even though there were no comparable data of reading performance between the two countries, there were some reliable and extensive sources for knowledge of reading performance among learners in each country, as was mentioned above. In Namibia, the SACMEQ II report of 2004, a survey conducted by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, states that the reading competencies among Namibian learners in upper secondary are among the lowest in Southern Africa. Only 25.9 % of the learners in upper secondary reached the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy (SACMEQ II, 2004). In Norway, the PISA and PIRLS studies shed light on reading

performance in an international perspective, revealing that Norwegian learners did not read as well as desirable (OECD 2001: 45; IEA 2003: 36). Thus, there are findings that form an outset for our comparative project of reading cultures in the two countries.

International research like the PISA and PIRLS studies, have shown a clear co-variance between attitudes towards reading and reading performance. There is a close association between engagement in reading and student performance in every country (OECD 2001: 106). Within countries, learners who report more interest in reading tend to achieve better results than those who report less interest (OECD 2001: 102). As regards reading material, reading novels and newspapers correlate positively with reading achievement. Furthermore, both studies show a clear positive correlation between parents' reading for their preschool children and later reading performance (IEA 2003: 96).

As an overall result, girls do better than boys on reading tasks in every country that took part in these surveys. The gender differences vary between countries, being quite substantial in Norway.

The learners in the PISA and PIRLS surveys were asked what language they spoke at home. Learners who reported speaking another language than the language of assessment at home, performed significantly lower than those learners having the same home language as the language of assessment (OECD 2001: 155).

## The design of the study

The findings from these surveys briefly mentioned above form a background for the development of our own research. The choice of design was a quantitative non-experimental design including a small survey using questionnaires. In elaborating the questionnaires, the idea was to include some questions from the PISA survey, to replicate some of them to see to what extent learners from the regions chosen for our investigation would be in line with national and international research. Besides, we wanted to obtain information with specific re-

ference to the two countries, including background information about the learners. We also included questions that were not included in the PISA or PIRLS surveys, but in our view would give a broader perspective on literacy in the home, like question 11: Did your mother or father tell you stories when you were small? (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was developed consisting of four sections. Section A sought information on the background of the school; section B gathered biographical information about the learners; section C focussed on reading habits and section D on attitudes towards reading.

## Population and sample

Three regions were included in the study, namely the Hedmark region in Norway and the Khomas and Oshana regions in Namibia. Regions were selected based on convenience as the selected regions were those where the staff from the three institutions were working and living. Purposeful sampling was used to select the schools for the study. For each of the regions one rural and one urban school were included, that is we have data from 6 schools altogether. It was decided to include one school from an affluent urban area and one from a disadvantaged rural area to attempt representation of two extremes - advantaged and disadvantaged. All schools were Government schools.

As was mentioned earlier, data were collected from learners, teachers and student teachers, but this report only focuses on learners. A total of 155 grade 6 learners were included in the sample. The method of selection was random sampling of full class groups. Of these learners, 40 were from Hedmark, 75 from Khomas and 40 from Oshana.

## Procedures

After the necessary permission was sought and granted, data were collected in all schools during September and October of 2006. All learners were ensured of the confidentiality of the questionnaire and were encouraged to answer questions as honestly as possible.

The questionnaires were written in English and were not translated into the local language before distribution. All learners in Namibia as well as Norway learn English from grade 1. In Namibia, English is the language of instruction from grade 4. In Norway English is thought as a second language in all grades up to grade 10 and in all other subjects Norwegian is the language of instruction. However, for such young learners, the researchers could not take it for granted that they would understand all the questions. Therefore, the researchers administered the questionnaires personally and assisted learners who required help or clarifications.

## Data analyses

The questionnaires were coded and the data entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency tables, using percentages were run for most components of the questionnaire. The Chi-square test was used to determine relationships and/or differences in responses based on variables such as region, language of instruction, primary home language, age, type of school, gender, class size, grade repetition, and parent education.

## Limitations of the study

Due to the fact that the sample was relatively small, it was not expected that we would find statistically significant results with Chi-square analyses. The aim of the research was therefore to identify general tendencies, similarities and differences regarding the reading habits and attitudes of the learners in the sampled group, based on variables such as region, gender, urban and rural setting, parental involvement, socio-economic background, primary home language and language of instruction. The aim was therefore not to attempt to generalise the information to the general population. Nevertheless the findings could form a basis for further research in the area of reading culture.

Data was gathered through questionnaires and therefore it was based on the perceptions of the learners who answered the questions. The

researchers recognise the fact that some learners may have responded in a socially desirable manner and others may have misinterpreted some of the questions. This may have influenced the validity of the results. During the analyses of the results, the researchers detected two such anomalies: When the data on the education of parents were analysed, the researchers became aware of the fact that learners of this age may not be well informed about the level of education of their parents or that they may have a misunderstanding of the meaning of tertiary education, since the findings seemed to indicate unrealistic high proportions of parents trained to tertiary level and unrealistic low proportions of parents with less education than grade 12. It was therefore decided not to consider or analyse this factor in any further details. A second clear discrepancy was the learners' perceived view of their reading ability as compared to their tested levels of competency as revealed through research (SACMEQ 2004).





# RESEARCH RESULTS

## Background information on schools

Some of the background information on schools was retrieved from the teachers' questionnaires to increase reliability since learners were not expected to have the information to their disposal.

### School Fees

In Norwegian schools no school fees are charged. The research results showed that for two of the Namibian schools the school fees were less than N\$100 a month, for one school it was between N\$251 and N\$400 and for the remaining school the fee was more than N\$651.

### Equipment available at schools

The researchers tried to determine to what extent schools were equipped with basic facilities needed for effective teaching. The facilities that were in question were: computers, overhead projectors, audio-visual aids, academic books/journals, electricity, running water, authentic materials such as newspapers and magazines, textbooks in all subjects, enough classrooms, syllabus guides, and photocopy facilities. Apart from one school in Hedmark that did not have textbooks in all subjects, the two schools in this region seemed to have all other facilities available.

The four Namibian schools all had syllabus guides and running water. One of the two schools in both Oshana and Khomas regions did not

have computers, audio-visual aids, academic books/journals, and authentic materials such as newspapers and magazines. Both schools in the Khomas region had electricity, enough classrooms, and photocopy facilities, whereas this was the case in only one of the two schools in the Oshana region. Both schools in the Oshana region did not have overhead projectors and textbooks in all subjects, whereas this was the case in half of the schools in the Khomas region. A summary of the facilities available for each region can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2: Facilities and equipment available in schools per region**

Facilities and equipment	Number of schools having equipment per region		
	Khomas	Oshana	Hedmark
Computers	1	1	2
Overhead projector	1	0	2
Audio-visual	1	1	2
Academic books/journals	1	1	2
Electricity	2	1	2
Running water	2	2	2
Authentic material	1	1	2
Textbooks all subjects	1	0	1
Enough classrooms	2	1	2
Syllabus guides	2	2	2
Photocopying	2	1	2

Since Namibian schools were poorly equipped, further analyses were done for these schools. The availability of equipment was investigated based on teachers' responses. From this it became clear that in Namibia the urban schools were better equipped than the rural schools. According to teachers, none of the rural schools had access to computers or any audiovisual material, whereas 90% of the urban schools had computers and 70% had audiovisual materials. Another example of the difference was that only 10% of the teachers in the rural schools said that they had textbooks for learners in all subjects. The situation for the urban schools was better and 40% of teachers

claimed that they had textbooks in all subjects. As table 3 shows, there were differences between the rural and urban schools on almost all the equipment we asked about.

**Table 3: Facilities and equipment available in Namibian schools by urban /rural based on teachers' perceptions**

Facilities and equipment	Rural	Urban
	%	%
Library	70	90
Computers	-	90
Overhead projector	20	70
Audiovisual	-	80
Journals etc	20	80
Electricity	50	100
Running water	100	100
Authentic material	20	60
Textbooks in all subjects	10	40
Enough classrooms	70	70
Photocopying machine	40	100
Syllabus	90	100

N=30

### Availability of text books at school

On the question as to whether or not the school provided text books, learners responded as follows: Whereas 57% stated that they were provided with books in all subjects, 21% claimed that they were provided with books in some subjects and another 20% indicated that they were provided with books in most subjects. Only 2% said that they were not provided with books.

### *Region*

Analysing the data according to region it became clear that for Hedmark 95%, for Khomas 87% and for Oshana 43% of learners reported that they received books in most subjects or in all subjects.

It therefore seemed that the provision of text books were a greater problem for the Oshana region than for the other two regions.

### *Urban and rural*

It was interesting to note that more rural learners (72%) reported that they were provided with books in all subjects than urban learners (38%). This was found to be statistically significant.

### Class size

Data showed that 54% of the sampled learners were in classes of 26 to 35 and 47% in classes of 36 to 45. All Norwegian learners were in classes of less than 35 learners. In Namibia 67% of the Khomas learners and 55 % of the Oshana learners attended a class with 36 to 45 learners.

### Language of instruction

All learners were asked what their language of instruction was during their initial school grades, 1 to 4. The results indicated the following languages and percentages for the sampled group: English (36%); Norwegian (25%); Afrikaans (18%), Oshiwambo (16%); and Nama/Damara (7%).

## Biographical information regarding the learners

### Gender

Whereas 57% of the sampled learners were female, 44% were male.

### Age

The biographical information showed that 65% of the learners were less than 12 years old while 25% were 13 years of age and 10% were 14 and older. The majority of learners (68%) started school at the age of 6 while 28% started school at age 7. Only 5% of learners started

school at the age of 8 or more. All the learners starting school at the age of 8 or older, came from Namibia, and all of them were from Oshana.

### *Urban and rural*

When data pertaining to the age of learners were analyzed according to type of school (urban and rural), the following was noted: Slightly more learners from urban areas (97%) started school at age six or seven as opposed to learners from rural areas (94%). While no learners from urban areas started school after the age of eight, 3% of learners from rural areas did. This is probably due to the fact that some learners in rural Namibia live far from schools and may have to walk to school. These learners are therefore often kept at the village until they are slightly older so that they can cope with the demands of getting to school.

### Primary home language

Learners were required to indicate their primary home language. From table 4 it is clear that there were almost equal numbers of Oshiwambo (25%), Norwegian (25%) and Afrikaans speaking (24%) learners in the sampled group. Nama/Damara speaking learners represented 16% of the sampled group and English speaking learners 8%. A very small percentage of learners were having German, Somali and Otjiherero as their primary home language. It is worth noting that the Somali speaking learners were refugees attending schools in Norway. With regard to the Otjiherero speaking learners it is important to point out that the regions where these learners predominantly reside were not included in the study. Although several Otjiherero and German learners would be found in the Khomas region, they were under represented in the specific sampled schools. As was pointed out previously, Namibia has 13 indigenous languages and learners from the other Namibian languages were thus not included in this specific sample.

**Table 4: Primary home language of the sampled group**

<b>Primary home language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Oshiwambo	39	25
Norwegian	38	25
Afrikaans	37	24
Nama/Damara	24	16
English	12	8
German	2	1
Somali	2	5
Otjiherero	1	1

### *Region*

For the sampled schools it was noted that in the Khomas region the majority of learners were Afrikaans speaking (49%), followed by Nama/Damara speaking (32%) and English speaking (13%) learners. On the other hand, for the Oshana region 95% of learners were Oshiwambo speaking and the remaining 5% were English speaking learners. Similarly, for the Hedmark region 95% of learners were Norwegian speaking and the remaining 2 learners were Somali speaking .

### *Language of Instruction*

When data pertaining to the primary home language were analyzed according to language of instruction during the initial school grades 1 to 4, the following picture emerged. All those instructed in Nama/Damara used this as their primary home language. Two of the learners instructed in Norwegian had Somali as their primary home language. It was observed that almost all learners who were instructed in Oshiwambo were also Oshiwambo speaking (95%). A similar situation applied to those instructed in Afrikaans where 96% were Afrikaans speaking. It was only in the case of the 55 learners who had English as the medium of instruction, that there was a mix of home languages, with 32% speaking Oshiwambo, 20% speaking English, 22% speaking Nama/Damara, 18% speaking Afrikaans and 2% speaking Otjiherero. It can be noted here that in cases where there is a

mix of home languages in one class group, English is often selected as the medium of instruction to try and accommodate learners of all groups.

### Socioeconomic background

Learners were asked to indicate to what extent they had access to a number of facilities in their household while they were growing up. These were food, shelter, security (e.g. protection by parents), household goods (e.g. clothing, blankets, furniture), electricity, clean water, reading materials (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers), TV and radio, other electronic equipment (e.g. computers, video games etc.), cattle, and small stock or poultry. For each of these they had to indicate whether they had limited, sufficient or ample access. Relatively few learners indicated limited access to most of the mentioned facilities (table 5).

**Table 5: Facilities available at household as indicated by learners**

<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Limited</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	<b>Ample</b>
Food	10	44	46
Shelter	12	39	50
Security (e.g. protection by parents)	11	35	54
Household goods (e.g. clothing, blankets, furniture)	7	36	57
Electricity	7	29	65
Running water	5	28	66
Reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers)	11	37	52
TV and radio	16	40	45
Other electronic equipment (computers, video games)	17	39	44
Cattle	54	29	18
Small stock/poultry	39	35	26

Note: Figures are given in percentages (%)

*Region*

The data was analysed according to region, while only considering those responses where learners indicated *limited* access to the different facilities. The findings are indicated in table 6. From this it became clear that apart from cattle, Oshana learners seemed to have somewhat less access to the mentioned facilities compared to Khomas learners. Therefore it seemed that there were more disadvantaged learners in the Oshana region. For the Hedmark region most of the categories were not selected by any learners to indicate limited access to these facilities. However, 5% indicated limited access to security and 3% indicated limited access to other electronic equipment. A high number of learners from Hedmark said that they had limited access to livestock. Nevertheless, the figure is higher than the national average, because Hedmark is a rural district. It was not clear why 66% of Norwegian learners indicated that they had limited access to clean water. It might be due to the fact that at the time of the research there were several discussions on the quality of drinking water in the region.

**Table 6: Limited facilities available at household by region**

<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Khomas</b>	<b>Oshana</b>	<b>Hedmark</b>
Food	12	18	0
Shelter	16	15	0
Security (e.g. protection by parents)	10	19	5
Household goods (e.g. clothing, blankets, furniture)	7	16	0
Electricity	8	11	0
clean water	6	11	66
Reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers)	15	17	0
TV and radio	19	28	0
Other electronic equipment (computers, video games)	23	25	3
Cattle	36	24	92
Small stock/poultry	21	23	76

Note: Figures are given in percentages (%)



*Urban and rural*

Analysing this data according to type of school it was found that rural learners reported limited access to food, shelter, household goods, clean water, TV and radio, and other equipment more often than urban learners. Urban learners on the other hand reported limited access with regard to reading materials, cattle and small stock/poultry more often than rural learners. For security and electricity the availability was similar for the two groups.

*Difficulties in learning to read*

Learners were asked to indicate to what extent they experienced difficulties in learning to read during previous grades. The majority of learners (50%) indicated that they experienced some difficulties and 45% said they had no difficulties in learning to read. Only 5% admitted to having severe difficulties in learning to read during their previous grades.

*Region*

Analysing this data according to region it was found that substantially more learners from the Oshana region (63%) reported no difficulties in learning to read compared to Khomas (43%) and Hedmark (31%) regions. There were also fewer learners from the Oshana region (3%) reporting severe difficulties in learning to read as opposed to the Khomas and Hedmark regions (5% each).

*Urban and rural*

Analysing this data according to type of school it was found that slightly more rural learners (6%) reported severe difficulties in learning to read as opposed to their urban counterparts (3%). However 49% of rural learners said they had no difficulties in learning to read compared to urban learners (40%).

*Gender*

The data revealed that 54% of boys and 47% of girls had some difficulties in learning to read. More girls than boys reported having no difficulties in learning to read (48% and 41% respectively).

### *Socio-Economic Background*

We were interested to see if socioeconomic background had an influence on difficulties in learning to read in previous grades and took limited access to food as an indicator of poverty and access to other electronic equipments as an indicator of wealth. Based on this it was found that 63% of the learners from poor households had difficulties in learning to read, as opposed to 48% of learners from wealthy households. This finding is in accordance with the findings of the SACMEQ research where it was also found that the reading competence of learners from low socio-economic groups was much lower than that of learners from high socio-economic groups (SACMEQ 2004). Similarly the finding is in accordance with Mbenzi's (1997) who found that pupils from low socio-economic groups have greater difficulties in learning to read than learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds. With regard to Norway, the socio-cultural background of the learners seems to have a greater impact on reading proficiency than socio-economic background (OECD and PISA 2001).

### *Availability of Reading Materials*

In addition to this we investigated difficulties in learning to read in relation to the availability of reading materials at the household level. It was found that there was a gradual decrease in the number of learners experiencing difficulties in learning to read as the availability of reading materials increased. For those with limited access to reading materials 63% had difficulties learning to read, as compared to 58% of those with sufficient access, and 54% of those who had ample access to reading materials at home.

### *Language of instruction*

In an attempt to find out whether the language of instruction during grades 1 to 4 had an impact on difficulties learners' experienced in learning to read, it was found that more respondents who were instructed in Nama/Damara claimed that they had severe difficulties as opposed to other languages. It was also interesting to note that for both those that were instructed in Oshiwambo and Afrikaans the majority felt that they had no difficulties in learning to read (67%).

## Repetition of school grade

Despite learners' reports that they did not experience difficulties in learning to read during previous grades, 16% of them repeated a school grade. Since no learners in Norway repeat grades, the figures only included Namibian learners. Those who repeated grades were asked to state the reason for this. The majority of learners stated that they had to help the family (38%) while an equal number of learners (21%) blamed it on illness and other learning difficulties. Reading difficulties were given as a reason by only 17% of the learners and 4% did not know the reason for them repeating a grade.

### *Region*

The research revealed that 20% of Khomas and 26% of Oshana learners repeated grades. For the Oshana region, helping the family (50%) and other learning difficulties (36%) were the main reasons given for repeating a grade. For the Khomas region an equal number of learners (40%) indicated that illness and reading difficulties caused them to repeat a grade.

### *Urban and rural*

Substantially more rural (24%) than urban learners (6%) repeated a grade. This was found to be statistically significant. It was found that "to help the family" was given as a reason by only rural learners (43%). Learners from rural areas, with specific reference to Namibia, are often expected to assist with chores such as looking after cattle. They do these chores after school or even during school time if needed, and it therefore explains why several of the rural learners indicated "to help the family" as a reason for repeating a school grade. For urban learners the reasons given were equally shared among illness, reading difficulties, and other learning difficulties (33% each).

### *Gender*

It was found that about double the number of females (21%) as opposed to males (10%) repeated grades. It was interesting to note that only girls (27%) stated illness as a reason for repeating a grade. In addition to this 39% of them indicated help to the family as a reason for repeating

a grade and an equal number of girls (16.7%) viewed reading and other learning difficulties as the reasons for repetition. On the other hand an equal number of boys (33%) stated “help to the family” and “other learning difficulties” as reasons for repeating a grade. Reading difficulties were selected as a reason by 16.7% of boys.

#### *Socio-Economic Background*

Once again taking limited access to food as an indicator of poverty and access to other electronic equipments as an indicator of wealth, it was found that 25% of the learners from poor households repeated a grade, as opposed to 12% of learners from wealthy households.

#### *Availability of Reading Materials*

We also investigated the repetition of a school grade in relation to the availability of reading materials at the household level. Similar to what was found with regard to difficulties in learning to read, it was found that there was a gradual decrease in the number of learners repeating a grade, as the availability of reading materials increased. For those with limited access 31% repeated a grade as compared to 21% of those with sufficient access and 11% of those who had ample access to reading materials at home.

#### *Language of instruction*

A Chi-Square analysis of the data revealed that the language of instruction during grades 1 to 4 had an impact on the repetition of a school grade. Of those learners that were instructed in Nama/Damara 46% repeated a grade. It was interesting to note that although 67% of those that were instructed in Oshiwambo felt that they had no difficulties in learning to read, 45% of them repeated a grade. Only 16% of those instructed in English and 4% of those instructed in Afrikaans repeated grades.

#### *Primary home language*

Analysing this data according to the primary home language it was found that a higher percentage of Nama/Damara (42%), English (33%) and Oshiwambo (24%) speaking learners as opposed to Afrikaans (5%) speaking learners repeated grades.

*Age learner started school*

Those who were older than 6 when starting school, more often repeated a grade than those who started at age 6 (19% versus 16 %).

*Reading and telling of stories by parents*

Learners were asked to indicate if their mother or father read to them when they were small. Whereas 45% indicated that their parents read to them sometimes, 28% said parents read to them almost every day. Only 7% indicated that parents did not read to them at all and 19% could not remember parents reading to them.

Similarly learners were asked to indicate if their mother or father told stories to them when they were small. Whereas 51% indicated that their parents told stories to them sometimes, 27% said parents told stories to them almost every day. Only 6% indicated that parents did not tell stories to them at all and 16.8% could not remember parents telling them stories.

*Region*

Analysing the data according to region, it was found that for Hedmark 5% and for Khomas 8% of learners reported that parents neither read to them nor told them stories when they were small. For the Oshana region 8% of learners claimed that parents did not read to them but only 3% said that they were not told stories. For all regions it seemed that learners were read to and told stories sometimes or almost every day. Tables 7 and 8 indicate additional information regarding the reading and telling of stories by parents as related to region.

**Table 7: Parents' reading by region**

		Did your mother/father read to you when you were small?				Total
		No	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost every day	Don't remember	
Region	Khomas	8%	44%	28%	20%	100%
	Oshana	8%	40%	30%	23%	100%
	Hedmark	5%	53%	28%	15%	100%
Total		7%	45%	28%	20%	100%

**Table 8: Parents' telling stories by region**

		Did your mother/father tell you stories when you were small?				Total
		No	Yes, sometimes	Yes, almost every day	Don't remember	
Region	Khomas	8%	48%	35%	9%	100%
	Oshana	3%	55%	23%	20%	100%
	Hedmark	5%	53%	15%	28%	100%
Total		6%	52%	27%	17%	100%

*Urban and rural*

When this data was analysed according to school type it was found that slightly more rural learners (7%) reported that stories were not told to them than urban learners (5%). Similarly 8% of rural and 6% of urban learners was not read to. More urban learners (30%) were told stories every day as opposed to rural learners (24%).

*Gender*

More boys (7%) than girls (5%) reported that stories were not told to them but equal numbers were not read to (7%). In addition to this more girls were told stories (29%) and read to (35%) every day as opposed to boys (24% and 21% respectively).

*Availability of Reading Materials*

It was found that more learners with limited access to reading materials at home (17%) reported that their parents did not read to them when they were small compared to those with sufficient (9%) and ample (5%) access to these materials. Similarly there was a gradual increase of the reading by parents with an increase in reading materials (table 9).

**Table 9. Availability of reading materials**

		Parents read to you		Total
		No	Yes	
Availability of reading materials	Limited	13%	88%	100%
	Sufficient	8%	93%	100%
	Ample	4%	96%	100%
Total		6%	94%	100%

**Reading habits and attitudes**

**Time spent on reading to improve schoolwork**

Learners were asked to state how often they spent time on reading in order to improve in their schoolwork. Almost equal numbers stated that they did so regularly (37.3%) and occasionally (36.6%) while 20.3% did so very often and 5.9% never spent time on reading to improve their schoolwork.

*Region*

More learners from the Khomas (64%) and Oshana (70%) regions claimed that they read either regularly or often to improve their schoolwork than learners from the Hedmark region (31%). However the highest number of learners who claimed that they never read to improve their schoolwork came from Khomas, followed by Hedmark.

**Table 10: Reading to improve homework by region**

		How often do you read to improve homework?				Total
		Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Very often	
Region	Khomas	8%	28%	37%	27%	100%
	Oshana	3%	28%	45%	25%	100%
	Hedmark	5%	63%	29%	3%	100%
Total		6%	37%	37%	20%	100%

*Urban and rural*

Further analyses of the data showed that more rural (8%) than urban learners (3%) never spent time on reading to improve their schoolwork.

*Gender*

Analysing the data according to gender clearly showed that more boys (11%) than girls (2%) stated that they never read to improve their schoolwork. In addition to this more girls (69%) than boys (42%) regularly or very often read to improve their schoolwork. This was found to be statistically significant.

*Availability of reading materials*

Substantially more learners from homes with a lack of reading materials (13%) did not read to improve their homework as opposed to those where reading materials were sufficiently or amply available (4% and 7% respectively). Similarly only 6% of learners lacking reading materials at home read very often to improve their homework as opposed to 21% of those having materials readily available at home (table 11).



**Table 11: Availability of: reading materials by read to improve homework**

	How often do you read to improve homework?				Total	
	Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Very often		
Availability of reading materials	Limited	13%	44%	38%	6%	100%
	Sufficient	4%	26%	49%	21%	100%
	Ample	7%	42%	31%	21%	100%
Total		6%	36%	38%	19%	100%

**Time spent on reading for enjoyment**

The researchers also wanted to establish how much time learners spent on reading every day, excluding reading for the purposes of home work. It was found that 10% of learners did not read just for fun, while the majority of learners (70%) spent one hour or less on reading per day. Only 20% of learners read for one hour or more every day.

*Region*

There was a substantial difference between the regions with regard to the time learners spent on reading for enjoyment on a daily basis. In the Khomas region 32% of the learners spent one hour or more on reading per day, while this was the case for only 15% of Oshana learners and 3% of Hedmark learners. However, 15% of the Khomas learners did not read for enjoyment while this was the case for 10% of Hedmark learners and only 3% of Oshana learners (Table 12).

**Table 12: Time spent on reading for enjoyment by region**

		How much time do you spend reading for enjoyment every day?			
		Do not read for enjoyment	30 minutes or less	30-60 minutes	One hour or more
Region	Khomas	15%	39%	15%	32%
	Oshana	3%	35%	48%	15%
	Hedmark	10%	60%	28%	3%
Total		10%	43%	27%	20%

*Urban and rural*

Further analyses of the data revealed that more rural (23%) than urban learners (17%) read more than one hour per day.

*Gender*

A Chi-Square analysis of the data revealed that substantially more boys (18%) than girls (5%) did not read for enjoyment. In addition to this 54% boys read less than 30 minutes per day as compared to 35% girls. Only 12% of boys as opposed to 26% girls read more than one hour per day. This was found to be statistically significant. Further analyses of the data showed that for the Norwegian learners the difference between boys and girls were even greater and none of the boys as opposed to 4% of girls read more than one hour per day and only 6% of boys as opposed to 42% of girls read between 30 and 60 minutes a day. Similarly none of the Namibian girls indicated that they did not enjoy reading at all but only 4% of the boys fell into this category. Boys from the Namibian group were also reading much less than girls, but the differences were not as dramatic as for the Norwegian groups. This is in accordance with a substantial finding from the PISA/PIRLS studies indicating that in all countries boys read less than girls and girls outperformed boys in reading performance (OECD, 2001; IEA, 2003).

*Availability of Reading Materials*

Several more learners with limited availability of reading materials (31%) did not spend time on reading for enjoyment than those with sufficient (6%) and ample availability (10%). It was also found that none of the learners with limited reading materials spent more than one hour on reading as opposed 28% of those with sufficient and 20% of those with ample reading materials at home (table 13). This is a clear indication that the availability of reading materials in the home has a positive effect on the time that learners are willing to spend on reading.

**Table 13: Time spent on reading for enjoyment by availability of reading materials**

		How much time do you spend reading for enjoyment every day?				Total
		Do not read for enjoyment	30 minutes or less	30-60 minutes	One hour or more	
Availability of reading materials	Limited	31%	44%	25%		100%
	Sufficient	6%	40%	26%	28%	100%
	Ample	10%	46%	24%	20%	100%
Total		10%	43%	25%	21%	100%

*Primary Home Language*

Primary home language seemed to have an influence on how much time learners spent on reading for enjoyment. The Afrikaans speaking, Nama/Damara speaking and Norwegian learners were the group which most often claimed that they never read for enjoyment. On the other hand, half of the learners which had English as their primary home language spent most time, that is one hour or more on reading for enjoyment (table 14). From the sampled group, a typical Norwegian learner spent 30 minutes or less every day on reading for enjoyment and this was also the case for the typical Afrikaans speaking learner.

For a learner from an Oshiwambo speaking home, 30 – 60 minutes was the typical time they spent on reading for enjoyment.

**Table 14: Time spent on reading for enjoyment by primary home language. Percentage**

		How much time do you spend reading for enjoyment every day?				Total
		Do not read for enjoyment	30 minutes or less	30-60 minutes	One hour or more	
Primary home language	Norwegian	11	61	26	3	100
	English	8	33	8	50	100
	Oshiwambo	3	33	49	15	100
	Otjiherero		100			100
	Nama/Damar	13	29	21	38	100
	Afrikaans	19	46	14	22	100
	German		50		50	100
	Somali		50	50		100
Total		10	43	27	20	100

### *Language of Instruction*

The Chi-Square analysis of data revealed that the variable of language of instruction had an impact on the time that learners spent on reading (table 14). For those that claimed they read more than one hour per day the highest rates were for learners who were instructed in Nama/Damara (55%) followed by English (27%) and Afrikaans (25%). Only those instructed in Afrikaans (18%), English (13%) and Norwegian (11%) indicated that they did not enjoy reading at all. It seemed that apart from those instructed in Nama/Damara all others typically read less than one hour per day.

**Table 15: Time spent on reading for enjoyment by language of instruction**

Language of instruction during grades 1-4	Time read		
	Not enjoy	Less than 1 hour	1 hour or more
Norwegian	11%	87%	3%
English	13%	60%	27%
Oshiwambo		91%	10%
Nama/Damara		46%	55%
Afrikaans	18%	57%	25%

*Reading by parents*

It is believed that if parents read to their children it will have a positive effect on their attitudes towards reading later in life. This assumption was supported by our research. Substantially more learners, who were not read to when they were small, did not read for enjoyment compared to those learners who were read to. These learners also spent little time on reading and none read more than an hour per day. How often they were read to do not influence the amount of time learners spent on reading for enjoyment (table 16).

**Table 16: Reading for enjoyment by mother/father read when you were small**

		How much time do you spend reading for enjoyment every day?				Total
		Do not read for enjoyment	30 minutes or less	30-60 minutes	One hour or more	
Did your mother/father read to you when you were small?	No	27%	55%	18%		100%
	Yes, sometimes	10%	41%	27%	21%	100%
	Yes, almost every day	9%	36%	27%	27%	100%
	Don't remember	7%	53%	27%	13%	100%
Total		10%	43%	27%	20%	100%

*Telling stories by parents*

Substantially fewer learners from households where they were told stories reported not enjoying reading than learners from households where they were not told stories (table 17). Similarly learners who were told stories almost every day spent more time on reading for enjoyment than other learners. The research results therefore clearly indicated that with an increase in the telling of stories by parents during the early years, there was also an increase in the enjoyment of reading at a later stage in life. This finding is quite interesting and gives reason to set a higher value on the oral culture in the home as a positive contributor to later motivation for reading and even reading achievement.

**Table 17: Reading for enjoyment by parents' telling stories**

		How much time do you spend reading for enjoyment every day?				Total
		Do not read for enjoyment	30 minutes or less	30-60 minutes	One hour or more	
Did your mother/father tell you stories when you were small?	No	33%	44%	11%	11%	100%
	Yes,	10%	42%	29%	19%	100%
	sometimes					
	Yes, almost every day	7%	34%	24%	34%	100%
	Don't remember	7%	62%	27%	4%	100%
Total		10%	43%	27%	20%	100%

### Degree of enjoyment of reading

Furthermore, in the attempt to establish learners' attitudes towards reading they were asked to indicate how much they enjoyed reading. The options that were given to them varied from not enjoying reading at all to enjoying reading very much. The results showed that 48% of learners enjoyed reading either much or very much, while 50% enjoyed it either somewhat or a little. Only a small percentage of learners (3%) indicated that they did not enjoy reading at all. This finding is encouraging and shows that most of the learners have relative positive attitudes with regard to reading.

### *Region*

For the Hedmark and Oshana regions none of the learners indicated that they enjoyed reading very much while 9% of the Khomas learners enjoyed reading very much. Likewise 5% of Hedmark learners and 3% of Oshana learners did not enjoy reading while this was the case for only 1% of the Khomas learners. However 75% of the Oshana learners enjoyed reading much (table 18). In general it therefore seemed that the Khomas learners had more positive feelings towards reading

than learners from the other two regions. The SACMEQ report (2004) showed that the Khomas learners outperformed the Oshana learners by far with regard to reading competency. It might therefore be that the Khomas learners enjoy reading more because they are more competent, or alternatively their more positive attitudes towards reading has lead to improved competencies in reading.

**Table 18: Enjoy reading by region**

		How much do you enjoy reading?					Total
		Do not enjoy reading	A little	Some what	Much	Very much	
Region	Khomas	1%	25%	25%	39%	9%	100%
	Oshana	3%	5%	18%	75%		100%
	Hedmark	5%	53%	23%	20%		100%
Total		3%	27%	23%	43%	5%	100%

### *Urban and rural*

The data revealed that the geographical setting of schools had an impact on how much learners enjoyed reading. Slightly more rural (3%) than urban learners (2%) did not enjoy reading at all. However, whereas none of the rural learners indicated that they enjoyed reading very much, 11% of their urban counterparts did enjoy reading very much. This was found to be statistically significant.

### *Gender*

Analysing the data according to gender revealed that none of the girls and 6% of the boys did not enjoy reading at all. Furthermore substantially more girls (57%) than boys (35%) enjoyed reading much or very much. This was found to be statistically significant. For the Norwegian learners 13% of boys as opposed to none of girls did not enjoy reading at all. Similarly none of the Namibian girls indicated that they did not enjoy reading at all but only 4% of the boys fell into this category. Once again this is in accordance with international



studies. As a matter of fact, boys in Norway were at the very bottom of the scale of motivation for reading in the PISA 2000 study (OECD 2001).

*Availability of reading materials*

The learners who came from households with limited access to reading materials were more likely not to enjoy reading than learners who came from households with sufficient or ample access to reading materials (table 19). However, more of these learners also claim that they enjoyed reading very much. Thus the results did not give a clear picture and could therefore not support literature claims that good access to reading material at home would have a positive influence on attitudes towards reading.

**Table 19 Availability of: reading materials and how much do you enjoy reading?**

		How much do you enjoy reading?					Total
		Do not enjoy reading	A little	Some what	Much	Very much	
Availability of: reading materials	Limited	7%	31%	19%	31%	13%	100%
	Sufficient	2%	21%	28%	44%	6%	100%
	Ample	3%	35%	19%	41%	3%	100%
Total		3%	30%	22%	41%	5%	100%

*Primary Home Language*

As much as 50% of Norwegian speaking learners enjoy reading only a little, while 5% do not enjoy it at all and none enjoy it very much. Only a small percentage of English (17%) and Afrikaans (14%) speaking learners enjoy reading very much, and for the other language groups none enjoy reading very much.

*Language of Instruction*

The Chi-Square analysis of data revealed that the variable of language of instruction seemed to have an impact on the extent that learners

enjoyed reading. Only English (9%) and Afrikaans (7%) learners indicated that they enjoyed reading very much and only those instructed in Norwegian (5%), Oshiwambo (5%), and English (2%) indicated that they did not enjoy reading at all. Those instructed in Afrikaans and Norwegian typically answered that they enjoyed reading a little, whereas those instructed in Oshiwambo, English and Nama/Damara, typically answered that they enjoyed reading much.

**Table 20: Degree of enjoyment of reading by language of instruction during grades 1-4**

		Language of instruction during grades 1-4							Total
		Norwegian	English	Oshiwambo	Lozi	Nama/damar	Afrikaans	Tswana	
How much do you enjoy reading?	Do not	5%	2%	5%					3%
	A little	50%	18%	5%	100%		36%	100%	27%
	Some	28%	20%	19%		36%	25%		23%
	Much	21%	51%	71%		67%	32%		43%
	Very much		9%				7%		5%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

### *Difficulties to learn to read*

Further analyses of the data showed that 57% of those with no difficulties in learning to read enjoyed reading either much or very much compared to 43% of those who experienced some difficulties and only 29% of those who had severe difficulties in learning to read. It is therefore clear that the more learners experienced difficulties in learning to read the less they enjoyed reading.

### *Telling stories by parents*

It was found that substantially more learners who were not told stories when they were small did also not enjoy reading (22%) compared to

those who were told stories sometimes (1%) and almost every day (2%). Likewise more of those learners who were told stories sometimes (46%) and every day (61%) enjoyed reading much and very much in contrast to those who claimed that stories were never told to them (22%). This difference is very dramatic and it therefore seems that the telling of stories by parents has a very positive influence on the attitudes that learners have towards reading. Similar differences were found with regard to the reading of parents to learners although the differences were not as marked as in the case of telling stories.

### Borrowing books from the library

The research also aimed at finding out if learners could borrow books at the library and if so which libraries were available to them. The majority of learners (41%) were allowed to borrow books from both the school and community libraries. Another 40% could borrow books from the school library only and 17% from the community library only. Only 3% claimed that there was no library available to them. Those learners that had access to libraries were urged to indicate how often they borrowed books from these libraries. Research results revealed that the majority of learners (49%) borrowed books occasionally and 28% borrowed books regularly. Whereas 6% never borrowed books, 17% borrowed books very often.

### *Region*

It was found that more learners from the Oshana and Khomas regions never borrowed books from the library than the Hedmark learners and only 3% of the Oshana learners borrowed books very often as opposed to Khomas and Hedmark (23% and 20% respectively). It therefore seems that learners from the Oshana region were generally less active in borrowing of books. It is worth noting that in Norwegian schools it is compulsory for all learners to borrow books from the school library. Although this is a good policy it may have artificially improved the picture for Norwegian learners in the category of 'never borrow books'.

**Table 21: Borrowing books from the library by region**

		How often do you borrow books?				Total
		Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Very often	
Region	Khomas	7%	43%	28%	23%	100%
	Oshana	10%	65%	23%	3%	100%
	Hedmark		45%	35%	20%	100%
Total		6%	49%	28%	17%	100%

*Urban and rural*

Further analyses of the data showed that more rural (7%) than urban learners (5%) never borrowed books from the library. Substantially more urban (53%) than rural learners (39%) borrowed books regularly and very often. It therefore became clear that urban learners are more active with regard to the borrowing of books than rural learners. This may be because these learners often have more facilities available or may have fewer chores to attend to than rural learners.

*Gender*

It was also found that substantially more female (53%) than male learners (35%) regularly and often borrowed books from the library. This supports the other data in this research and also in other research that girls read more and have more positive attitudes towards reading in general.

*Availability of reading materials*

The availability of reading material in the home had a bearing on the tendency for learners to borrow books from the library. More learners with limited books (19%) never borrowed books as opposed to those with sufficient (6%) materials and ample (4%) materials available. Only 19% with limited access to reading material regularly and often borrowed books compared to 51% who had sufficient, and 52% who had ample access to books (table 22). It therefore seems that when learners have reading materials available in their homes it serves as a motivating factor to make use of library facilities for further reading. In other words, those who have experiences with reading in the home

tend to seek more opportunities for reading and this may enhance the differences between the learners.

**Table 22: Borrowing books in the library by availability of reading materials**

		How often do you borrow books?				Total
		Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Very often	
Availability of reading materials	Limited	19%	63%	6%	13%	100%
	Sufficient	6%	44%	32%	21%	100%
	Ample	4%	45%	34%	18%	100%
Total		6%	46%	29%	18%	100%

### Preferred types of reading material

The research also aimed at finding out what types of materials, excluding homework, were read by learners. As can be seen from table 23 the majority of learners indicated that they read novels and stories (74%). Magazines (47%), Newspapers (45%) and Cartoons (39%) were also popular.

**Table 23: Types of materials read by learners**

Type of reading material	Frequency	Percentage
Novels/Stories	114	74
Magazines	72	47
Newspapers	69	45
Cartoons /comics	60	39
Other books (e.g. factual)	28	18
E-mail and WEB sites	28	18

### Region

When the data was analysed according to region the following picture emerged (table 24): Learners in the Khomas region read mainly novels

(74%) and magazines (51%), while learners from the Oshana region preferred to read newspapers (90%) and novels (83%) and those from the Hedmark region read mainly novels (65%) and E-mail or Web sites (38%). Novels were popular reading material for all regions.

**Table 24: Types of reading materials by region**

	<b>Magazines</b>	<b>Cartoons</b>	<b>Novels</b>	<b>Other books</b>	<b>E-mail/ web sites</b>	<b>Newspapers</b>
<b>Khomas</b>	51	43	74	16	16	35
<b>Oshana</b>	55	35	83	33	3	90
<b>Hedmark</b>	30	35	65	8	38	18

#### *Urban and rural*

Furthermore it was found that urban learners read more magazines and cartoons than their rural counterparts who read more news papers, other books and interestingly, more e-mail and Websites than urban learners.

#### *Gender*

When data pertaining to the type of materials read by learners were analyzed according to gender, the following picture emerged. Boys read cartoons (54%) and e-mails or websites (25%) more than girls (13% and 26% respectively), while girls read novels (88%), newspapers (52%), magazines (49%), and other books (20%) more than boys.

**Table 25: Types of reading materials by gender**

	<b>Magazines</b>	<b>Cartoons</b>	<b>Novels</b>	<b>Other books</b>	<b>E-mail/web sites</b>	<b>Newspapers</b>
<b>Male</b>	43	54	56	16	25	35
<b>Female</b>	49	26	88	20	13	52

*Availability of Reading Materials*

Substantially more learners with sufficient (85%) and ample (71%) reading materials at home read novels than those with limited (44%) access to materials.

*Primary Home Language*

There was a relation between primary home language and what the learners read. Afrikaans speaking learners were inclined to read mainly novels and magazines. English speaking learners read mainly novels and newspaper. Norwegian learners read novels and e-mail or Web sites, Oshiwambo learners read novels and newspaper, and Nama/Damara learners read novels and newspaper. It is worth noting that Norwegian and Afrikaans speaking learners read newspapers much less than the other language groups (table 26). For all language groups the preferred type of reading materials was novels.

**Table 26: Types of reading materials by primary home language percentage**

	<b>Magazines</b>	<b>Comics</b>	<b>Novels</b>	<b>Other books</b>	<b>E-mail/web</b>	<b>Newspaper</b>
<b>Norwegian</b>	32	34	68	5	40	18
<b>English</b>	47	47	69	18	13	53
<b>Oshiwambo</b>	43	5	91	33	0	95
<b>Nama/damara</b>	28	18	73	9	0	46
<b>Afrikaans</b>	79	64	82	25	21	29

### Main reading language

Learners were also asked to indicate in which language they normally read. The results indicated that most learners read in English (63%). Whereas 25% normally read in Norwegian, 6 % read Oshiwambo, 4% read Afrikaans and 3% read Nama/Damara.

### *Primary Home Language*

When these data were analysed by primary home language the following picture emerged: English speaking learners read in English only. Almost all Norwegian and Somali learners read in Norwegian; 87% of the Afrikaans speaking learners normally read in English while the others read in Afrikaans; 80% of the Oshiwambo learners read in English and the others read in their mother tongue. For the Nama/Damara learners, 80% read in English, 17% in Nama/Damara and 4% in Afrikaans.

### Perceived reading proficiency

Based on their own perception of their reading abilities, the following was revealed: The majority of learners felt that they read well (49%) while 33% claimed that they read very well. Whereas 14% claimed that they read adequately only 3% said that they read poorly. Two



learners (1%) indicated that they could not read. This is in sharp contrast to the findings of the SACMEQ (2004) report where it was found that at the overall national level only 16.9% of learners reached the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy and a meagre 6.7% reached the desirable level. Although the figures for the Khomas region was substantially better (63.7% reaching the minimum level and 35.3% the desirable level) the reading proficiency for the Oshana region was exceptionally poor (11% reaching the minimum level and 1.2% the desirable level)

### *Region*

Regional differences were found when Chi-Square analysis was done. Data revealed that 53% of the Oshana learners felt that they could read very well while this was the case for 33% of the Khomas learners and for only 13% of the Hedmark learners. The category 'reading well' was selected by 60% of Hedmark, 47% of Khomas and 43% of Oshana learners. It became clear that very high proportions of the Namibian learners considered themselves as either good or very good readers. Once again this is contrary to the findings of SACMEQ report where the actual reading ability of learners were tested and it was found that very few reached the desired levels of reading proficiency. It is interesting to note that even though the Khomas region learners were tested substantially higher than the Oshana learners, more of the latter group perceived themselves as good readers. It is therefore clear that specifically in the Oshana region learners have a deceptive view of their reading abilities.

**Table 27: Perceived reading proficiency by region**

		How well do you read?					Total
		Cannot read	Read poorly	Adequately	Read well	Read very well	
Region	Khomas	1%	5%	13%	47%	33%	100%
	Oshana	3%		3%	43%	53%	100%
	Hedmark			28%	60%	13%	100%
Total		1%	3%	14%	49%	33%	100%

*Urban and rural*

With regard to school type it was found that more rural (94%) than urban learners (79%) evaluated their reading skills as well or very well. Whereas two learners from rural areas indicated that they could not read, there were none reporting this in the urban areas. Once again it seemed that there was an unrealistic positive self-evaluation regarding reading proficiency.

*Gender*

Slightly more girls (83%) than boys (81%) felt that they read well or very well. More boys (4%) than girls (1%) considered themselves poor readers. It was interesting to note that both learners who said they could not read were girls.

*Availability of Reading Materials*

As much as 13% of learners with limited reading materials at home reported that they were poor readers and only 6% regarded themselves as very good readers. On the other hand for those with sufficient materials available only 2% considered themselves to be poor readers and 40% felt that they were very good readers. Similarly for those with ample materials available only 1% considered themselves to be poor readers and 31% felt that they were very good readers. In general it seemed that learners overestimated their reading abilities, nevertheless it looks as though the availability of learning materials have a positive influence on the reading ability of learners.

### Desire to become a better reader

Even though learners overestimated their reading abilities, the research revealed that 76% of them were interested to become better readers. Only 8% were not interested to become better readers and 16% were uncertain about the issue.

#### *Region*

Almost all learners from the Oshana region (98%) and as much as 73% from the Khomas region wanted to become better readers as opposed to 58% of the Hedmark learners. It was interesting to note that some learners were not interested to become better readers and some were uncertain about the issue.

**Table 28: Desire to become a better reader by region**

		Would you like to become a better reader?			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
Region	Khomas	73%	11%	16%	100%
	Oshana	98%	3%		100%
	Hedmark	58%	10%	33%	100%
Total		76%	8%	16%	100%

#### *Urban and rural*

When the data was analysed according to school type it became clear that more urban (80%) than rural learners (72%) were interested to improve their reading abilities. A high number of rural learners (21%) answered “don't know” to this question.

#### *Socio-Economic Background*

Standard of living seemed to have an effect on the desire to become a better reader and all of those from disadvantaged households, where food was limited, were interested to become better readers as opposed to those where food was sufficiently or amply available (75% and 70% respectively). It may be that learners who are seriously disadvantaged

have a stronger desire to be better readers in order to secure a better education and future success.

**Table 29: Desire to become a better reader by availability of food**

		Would you like to become a better reader?			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
Availability of food	Limited	100%			100%
	Sufficient	75%	8%	18%	100%
	Ample	71%	11%	18%	100%
Total		75%	8%	16%	100%

#### *Availability of Reading Materials*

Several more learners with limited access to reading materials (88%) were interested to become better readers than those with sufficient (74%) and ample access (72%) to reading materials. The same explanation as the above may be applicable here.

#### *Appreciation of a book as a gift*

Learners were asked how happy they would be if they received a book as a gift. Whereas the majority said they would be very happy (50%), 31% said they would be quite happy. Only 7% indicated that they would not be happy, while 12% were indifferent about the issue.

#### *Region*

Most learners from the Oshana region (88%) indicated that they would be very happy to receive a book as a gift. This was not the case with learners from the Khomas region where 45% and Hedmark where only 23% indicated that they would be very happy to receive a book as a gift. For all regions relatively few learners indicated that they would not be happy to receive a book as a gift. Whereas 9% of learners from the Khomas region said that they would not be happy to receive a book as a gift this was the case for only 5% of the learners in the Hedmark and Oshana regions (table 30).

**Table 30: Appreciate book as a gift by region**

		If you get a book for a gift, how happy would you be?				Total
		Not happy	Indifferent	Quite happy	Very happy	
Region	Khomas	9%	12%	33%	45%	100%
	Oshana	5%		8%	88%	100%
	Hedmark	5%	23%	50%	23%	100%
Total		7%	12%	31%	50%	100%

*Gender*

More females than males indicated that they would not be happy to receive a book as a present. This finding is slightly different from other findings on gender where boys normally showed less enthusiasm with regard to reading and associated issues. On the other hand 82.7% of girls as opposed to 79.4% of boys indicated that they would be either quite happy or very happy to receive a book.

*Socio-Economic Background*

The data clearly revealed that 81% of disadvantaged learners, having limited food available, would appreciate receiving a book as a gift. For those who have sufficient food available this number decreased to 57% and it decreased even further to 38% for those that had ample food available (table 31). It is possible that advantaged learners take having books for granted and would therefore rather prefer to receive other types of gifts as opposed to disadvantaged learners who may not be receiving gifts very often and therefore would appreciate a book as a gift more.

**Table 31: Appreciate book as a gift by availability of food**

		If you get a book for a gift, how happy would you be?				Total
		not happy	indifferent	quite happy	very happy	
Availability of: food	Limited	6%		13%	81%	100%
	Sufficient	8%	6%	30%	57%	100%
	Ample	6%	20%	37%	38%	100%
Total		6%	12%	31%	51%	100%

### *Availability of Reading Materials*

There was a gradual decrease in the number of learners reporting that they would not be happy to receive a book as the availability of reading materials increased. 19% of learners with limited access would not be happy to receive a book as a gift as opposed to 8% of those with sufficient and 5% of those with ample access to reading materials. Substantially more learners with ample reading materials available (42%) indicated that they would be very happy to receive a book compared to those with sufficient and limited access (25% each). Once again it seems that the availability of books serves as a motivating factor to have even more books and therefore learners having many books in the homes appreciate receiving yet another book to add to the collection.

### *Need for increased opportunities to read*

On the question whether they would like to have more opportunities to read more books 65% of the learners responded in the positive and 14% in the negative. 21% were indifferent.

### *Region*

With regard to regional differences it was clear that several more learners from the Namibian regions were interested to get more opportunities to read than was the case for Norwegian learners. As much

as 93% from Oshana and 68% from Khomas as opposed to 31% from Hedmark wanted more opportunities for reading (table 32). This might be because there are more serious limitations for reading opportunities in the Oshana region than in the Khomas region and for both of these regions more restrictions than for the Hedmark region.

**Table 32: More opportunities for reading by region**

		Would you like to have more opportunities to read more books?			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
Region	Khomas	68%	8%	24%	100%
	Oshana	93%	3%	5%	100%
	Hedmark	31%	39%	31%	100%
Total		65%	14%	21%	100%

*Urban and rural*

In an attempt to find out whether type of school had an impact on learners’ desire to have more opportunities to read more books, it was found that several more learners coming from rural areas (72%) in contrast to those from urban areas (56%) wanted more opportunities for reading. This was found to be statistically significant. Rural learners might have a heavier burden of chores at home and less spare time than urban learners to read and in addition to this they may have more limited access to reading opportunities through libraries and other facilities.

*Gender*

When the data was analysed according to gender it became clear that substantially more females (74%) than males (54%) would like to have more opportunities to read more books. This was found to be statistically significant and confirms once again the more positive attitudes of girls towards reading compared to boys.

## Additional information with regard to the access of reading materials at home

In the literature on reading culture it is often claimed that good access to reading material at home is one important influencing factor (IEA 2003). We therefore looked specifically at the learners who reported having limited access to reading materials at home and how they answered other questions. Because of the apparent differences in contexts, we decided to present the Namibian and the Norwegian data separately. Note that all Norwegian learners had either sufficient or ample access to reading material at home, and therefore only one column for the Norwegian data appears in the table.

With regard to the Namibian data it may also be worth noting that with regard to primary home language it was found that only Afrikaans (50%), Oshiwambo (31%) and Nama/Damara (19%) speaking learners reported limited access to reading materials at home.

The data revealed that there was a correlation between access to reading material at home and several other indicators on reading habits and attitudes. The learners with limited access to reading material experienced more difficulties in learning to read, they repeated grades more often and more of them reported that parents seldom told them stories than learners from homes with sufficient reading material. In addition it was found that they read less for enjoyment, more seldom borrowed books or read to improve their homework than learners from homes with sufficient access to reading material. They also preferred to read magazines rather than novels and were less happy to get a book as a gift (table 33).

With regard to the Norwegian sample it was interesting to note that such a large percentage of the learners with sufficient reading materials available did not want to read more books.



**Table 33: Access to reading materials at home by a choice of variable on reading habits and attitudes**

<b>Reading habits and attitudes</b>	<b>Namibian limited</b>	<b>Namibian sufficient</b>	<b>Norwegian sufficient</b>
Difficulties in learning to read	21	79	80
Repeated a grade	31	22	-
Parents tell stories	80	96	94
No time spent on reading for enjoyment	31	6	11
Read magazines	63	50	30
Read novels	44	82	65
Never borrow books	19	6	0
Never read to improve homework	13	6	6
Do not enjoy reading	6	2	5
Happy for book gift	30	70	72
Want to read more books	10	90	31
Want to be a better reader	88	80	58
Read well	27	73	72



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This comparative study about reading habits and attitudes among grade 6 learners was set in very different milieus. That the Norwegian schools would be better equipped than the Namibian schools was expected. The data also shows that in general the rural schools in Namibia were less equipped than the urban schools. These differences could be expected to have an influence on reading habits of learners.

The *complex linguistic* situation came out very clearly in this study. In the six schools involved, eight different home languages were detected. In the Norwegian schools the majority was Norwegian speaking, but some spoke Somali. This is increasingly becoming a more common situation in Norwegian schools due to increased immigration. In Namibia multilingual schools is very common. However for the schools included in the sample, most learners were taught in their mother tongue during lower primary. The exceptions were the Somali in Norway and those who attended English medium classes in the selected schools in Namibia.

### Gender

The research results clearly indicated that girls had more positive attitudes and habits with regard to reading than boys. More boys than girls stated that they did not read for enjoyment and also never read

to improve their schoolwork. For the Norwegian learners the difference between boys and girls in this regard was even greater and 13 % of boys as opposed to none of girls did not enjoy reading at all. Furthermore substantially more girls than boys enjoyed reading much or very much. It also became clear that more female than male learners regularly and often borrowed books from the library and similarly more were interested to have additional opportunities to read more books. In the literature on reading habits it is stated that learners who read novels and newspapers are more eager readers than those who for instance read magazines and cartoons. While boys in this study preferred reading cartoons and e-mails or websites girls preferred reading novels, newspapers, magazines, and other books. The research results therefore clearly demonstrated that girls have more positive attitudes and also better habits towards reading in general.

## Availability of reading materials

The literature confirms that socio-economic background tends to have an influence on reading competence and attitudes. In this study, specific attention was given to the availability of reading materials in the home, as one aspect that may determine socio-economic status and thus have an influence on the reading of learners. This view was supported in the present study, since it was found that substantially more learners from homes with a lack of reading materials did not read to improve their homework and did also not spend time on reading for enjoyment, as opposed to those with sufficient and ample reading materials available. Similarly more of these learners never borrowed books from the library and they generally did not prefer reading novels. An additional finding was that there was a gradual decrease in the number of learners reporting that they would not be happy to receive a book as the availability of reading materials increased. Learners with limited access to reading materials considered themselves more often as poor readers. However, it was also found that several more of these learners were interested to become better readers and also wanted more opportunities to read than those with sufficient and ample access to reading materials. It may be that learners who are

seriously disadvantaged have a stronger desire to be better readers in order to secure a better education and future success.

## Telling stories and reading by parents

The research results clearly indicated that with an increase in the telling of stories by parents during the early years, there was also an increase in the enjoyment of reading at a later stage in life. This difference was very dramatic and it therefore seems that the telling of stories by parents has a very positive influence on the attitudes that learners have towards reading. Similar differences were found with regard to the reading of parents to learners although the differences were not as marked as in the case of telling stories. This question was genuine to our research, and it is interesting that telling stories gives such an impact on later motivation for reading. This gives reason to set a higher value on the oral culture in the home.

## Primary home language

Primary home language seemed to have an influence on how much time learners spent on reading for enjoyment. The Afrikaans speaking, Nama/Damara speaking and Norwegian learners were the group which most often claimed that they never read for enjoyment. On the other hand, half of the learners which had English as their primary home language spent most time, that is one hour or more on reading for enjoyment. From the sampled group, a typical Norwegian learner spent 30 minutes or less every day on reading for enjoyment and this was also the case for the typical Afrikaans speaking learner. For a learner from an Oshiwambo speaking home, 30-60 minutes was the typical time they spent on reading for enjoyment.

As much as 50% of Norwegian speaking learners enjoy reading only a little, while 5% do not enjoy it at all and none enjoy it very much. Only a small percentage of English and Afrikaans speaking learners enjoy reading very much, and for the other language groups none enjoy reading very much.

For all language groups the preferred type of reading materials were novels, but it is worth noting that Norwegian and Afrikaans speaking learners read newspapers much less than the other language groups. Almost all Norwegian and Somali learners read mainly in Norwegian which is also for most their first language, but the majority of Namibian learners read in English which is their second language in most cases.

## Urban and rural

With regard to school type the findings were inconclusive and it did not give a clear picture as to which group could be considered to have better attitudes and habits with regard to reading. On the one hand more rural than urban learners never spent time on reading to improve their schoolwork, but more of them also spent more than one hour on reading per day. Substantially more urban than rural learners borrowed books from the library but this may be due to the fact that the urban schools may have better library facilities. Although more urban than rural learners were interested to improve their reading abilities, fewer of them wanted more opportunities for reading.

## Region

In general it seemed that the Khomas and Oshana learners had more positive attitudes towards reading than learners from Hedmark. For example in the Khomas region 32% of the learners spent one hour or more on reading per day, while this was the case for only 15% of Oshana learners and 3% of Hedmark learners. Despite their over-estimation of reading ability, the majority of Namibian learners wanted to become better readers, while this was the case for slightly more than half of the Norwegian learners. It was interesting to note that some learners were not interested to become better readers and some were uncertain about the issue. Of the three regions Oshana learners, more than others, indicated that they would be very happy to receive a book as a gift

Although novels were popular reading material for all regions, learners from Namibia read novels as well as other books and newspapers more often than Norwegian learners. Norwegian learners had a preference for reading e-mails and web pages. This is not surprising given the better access to computers among the Norwegian learners and the fact that some homes in Namibia do not have access to electricity.

With regard to regional differences it was clear that several more learners from the Namibian regions were interested to get more opportunities to read than was the case for Norwegian learners. This might be because there are more serious limitations for reading opportunities in Namibia than in Norway.

## Conclusion

We have in this study explored aspects of literacy skills for life and further learning by investigating reading habits and attitudes. The variables that seemed to have the greatest impact on reading habits and attitudes in this study was gender, availability of reading materials at home, the telling of stories and reading by parents, primary home language. Girls show a more positive attitude than boys, the same is the case with learners which came from homes with good access to reading material and with parents that read to them. Our findings are in this case confirmed by international research on reading. Learners with English or Oshiwambo as their primary home language display more positive reading attitude than other learners. In addition, the study reveals substantial differences between the three study regions. In general the Namibian learners have more positive reading habits and attitudes than the Norwegian learners.

However, due to the fact that the sample was relatively small all conclusions and findings must be read as tentative. The aim of the research was to identify general tendencies, similarities and differences regarding the reading habits and attitudes of the learners in the sampled group, based on variables such as gender, urban and rural setting, parental involvement, availability of reading materials,

primary home language, language of instruction, and region. This information could be valuable to educators and researchers.

Data was gathered through questionnaires and therefore it was based on the perceptions of the learners who answered the questions. The researchers recognise the fact that some learners may have responded in a socially desirable manner and others may have misinterpreted some of the questions. This may have influenced the validity of the results. For example, most learners claimed that their reading proficiency was adequate to very well. This was surprising, specifically in the Namibian situation, where it has been documented that a very small number of learners in the Oshana region and a fairly higher number in the Khomas region reached the desirable level of reading. This was an indication that learners did not evaluate their reading ability accurately at all. It is interesting to note that even though the Khomas region learners were tested substantially higher than the Oshana learners, more of the latter group perceived themselves as good readers. It is therefore clear that specifically in the Oshana region learners had a misleading view of their reading abilities.

Nevertheless to the small sample and some of the mentioned reliability and validity problems the findings are still very interesting as they in many ways confirm findings which are reported in other international and national studies. Thus there might be of interest to the Namibian and Norwegian educational policymakers to read this report. As this is a pilot and the findings are tentative it would also be of interest to conduct further research in this field.



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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire pupils

#### *A. Background Information (school)*

1. In which region is your school?

Khomas		1	Oshana		2	Hedmark		3
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2. Type of school:

Rural Public		1	Urban Public		2
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3. How many learners are in your classroom?

1 – 25		1
26 – 35		2
36 – 45		3
more than 45		4

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4. In what language did you receive instruction during Grades 1 – 4?

Norsk		1
English		2
Oshiwambo		3
Otjiherero		4
Kavango		5
Lozi		6
Nama/Damara		7
Afrikaans		8
German		9
Other (specify)		10

### *B. Biographical information*

1. Sex:

Female		1
Male		2

2. Please state your age

Less than 12 years		1
13 years		2
14 – 15		3
Older than 15		4

3. What was your age when you started Grade 1?

6 and below		1
7		2
8		3
9 – 11		4
Older than 11		5

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4. Highest Education of mother /guardian mother

No formal education		1
Grade 1 – 4		2
Grade 5 – 7		3
Grade 8 – 10		4
Grade 11 - 12		5
Tertiary Education		6
DK		7

5. Highest Education of father/guardian father

No formal education		1
Grade 1 – 4		2
Grade 5 – 7		3
Grade 8 – 10		4
Grade 11 – 12		5
Tertiary Education		6
DK		7

6. While growing up, which of the following did you have in your household?

	Limited	Sufficient	Ample
Food	01	1	11
Shelter	02	2	12
Security (e.g. protection by parents)	03	3	13
Household goods (e.g. clothing, blankets, furniture)	04	4	14
Electricity	05	5	15
Clean water			
Reading materials (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers)	06	6	16
TV and radio	07	7	17
Other electronic equipment (e.g. computers, video games etc.)	08	8	18
Cattle	09	9	19
Smallstock/poultry	21	22	23

7. To what extent did you experience any difficulties in learning to read in your previous grades?

No difficulties	1	Some difficulties	2	Severe difficulties	3
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8. Have you repeated a school grade?

Yes	1	No	2
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IF YES: State reason

Illness	1
To help the family	2
Reading difficulties	3
Other learning difficulties	4
DK	5
Other	6



Specify other reason: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your primary home language? (select one)

Norsk		1
English		2
Oshiwambo		3
Otjiherero		4
Kavango		5
Lozi		6
Nama/Damara		7
Afrikaans		8
German		9
Other; state		10

10. Did your mother or father read to you when you were small?

No		1	Yes, some-times		2	Yes, almost every day		3	I don't remember		4
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11. Did your mother or father tell you stories when you were small?

No		1	Yes, some-times		2	Yes, almost every day		3	I don't remember		4
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12. Does your school provide you with text books?

No		1	Yes, in some subjects		2	Yes, in most subjects		3	Yes, in all subjects		4
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### C. Reading habits

1. How much time do you spend reading every day (excluding home work)?

I don't read just for fun	1	30 minutes or less	2	30 - 60 minutes daily	3	One hour or more every day	4
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2. What do you read (excluding homework)?

Magazines	1
Cartoons /comics	2
Story books	3
Other books (e.g. factual)	4
E-mail and WEB sites	5
Newspapers	6
Other (specify)	7

3. In which language do you normally read? (tick only one)

Norsk	1
English	2
Oshiwambo	3
Otjiherero	4
Kavango	5
Lozi	6
Nama/Damara	7
Afrikaans	8
German	9
Other (specify)	10

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4. In which other languages are you proficient in reading?

Norsk		1
English		2
Oshiwambo		3
Otjiherero		4
Rukwangali		5
Lozi		6
Nama/Damara		7
Afrikaans		8
German		9
Other (specify)		10
None		11

5. Are you allowed to borrow books at the library?

Yes, library at school		1	Yes, com- munity library		2	Yes, both places		3	No library available		4
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**6. If yes on the question above:** How often do you borrow books?

Never		1	Occasi- onally		2	Regularly		3	Very often		4
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7. How often do you spend time on reading in order to improve in your schoolwork?

Never		1	Occasi- onally		2	Regularly		3	Very often		4
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## D. Attitude towards reading

1. How much do you enjoy reading?

I don't enjoy reading		1	A little		2	Much		3	Very much		4
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2. If you get a book for a gift, how happy would you be?

Not happy		1	Indifferent		2	Quite happy		3	Very happy		4
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3. Would you like to have more opportunities to read more books?

Yes		1	No		2	I don't know		3
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4. Would you like to become a better reader?

Yes		1	No		2	I don't know		3
-----	--	---	----	--	---	--------------	--	---

5. In your own opinion, how well do you read?

I cannot read		1	I read poorly		2	Adequately		3	I read well		4	I read very well		5
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6. Do you have a reading corner in your language classroom?

Yes		1	No		2	I don't know		3
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7. How often during school time are you allowed to do silent reading?

Often		1	Sometimes		2	Never		3	I don't know		4
-------	--	---	-----------	--	---	-------	--	---	--------------	--	---

8. How often during school time are you asked to read aloud?

Often		1	Sometimes		2	Never		3	I don't know		4
-------	--	---	-----------	--	---	-------	--	---	--------------	--	---