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Acronyms

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
MoEAC	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
NSSCAS	National Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary
NSSCO	National Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4

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1. Introduction

According to the National Budget Review 2023/24, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) received 16.2 billion or 24.5% of the total operational budget (van Zyl, van Wyk, & van den Heever, 2023). This makes Namibia one of the few African countries that allocate highest percentage of their national budgets to education. However, the operational budget money allocated to the MoEAC “*does not necessary trickle down to achieve age and grade appropriate learning outcomes*” (Nghipondoka, 2022a, p. 101). Even though, the operational budget is aimed to improve the education system for quality learning outcomes and quality of life. According to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) (2017), quality education leads to effective learning outcomes, nonetheless quality education and effective learning outcomes are not possible without quality teaching. On the contrary, the results of the National Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary (NSSCO) and the National Senior Secondary Certificate Advanced Subsidiary (NSSCAS) 2022 National Examinations were clear evidence that effective and efficient quality teaching and learning has not been taking place in many of our schools (Nghipondoka, 2022b). This was due to many factors that have negatively contributed to the learners’ learning outcomes. Thus, this desktop study is aimed at exploring factors that negatively influence learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools. Before we explore the factors, we first need to know and understand the main objectives of this study.

2. Objectives

The main objectives of this desktop study were:

- To examine Bloom’s taxonomy’s levels of learning in relation to attaining learning outcomes.
- To understand the importance and benefits of the learning outcomes during the teaching and learning process.
- To find out the key factors that influence learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools.
- To provide some recommendations that would enable learners achieve quality learning outcomes in Namibian schools.

3. Findings

3.1 What are learning outcomes?

The Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2019) defines learning outcomes as the “*statements in the curriculum specifications to describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning*” (p. 6). With reference to the school curriculum, learning outcomes are based more on the assessment of the subject content i.e., the topics covered during the teaching and learning process. Although, learning outcomes are different from learning objectives; these terms are often used interchangeably (Chandra, 2022). In a nutshell, both terms are related to the teaching and learning which are expected to take place in the classroom.

According to Chandra (2022) and Gosse (2022) learning objectives generally describe what teachers or subject topic/content aim to do during the teaching and learning process; whereas, learning outcomes describe (in observable and measurable terms) what learners are able to do as a result of completing the subject topic/content or a certain grade level. This study, however, focuses mainly on learning outcomes than learning objectives. Furthermore, Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan (2014) state that learning outcomes are what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do and/or value as a result of their learning. In other words, learning outcomes are the skills and knowledge which learners are expected to acquire during the learning process and after completion of their topics or learning activities (Baber, 2020). The learning period could be end of the week, term or year.

3.2 Bloom’s taxonomy in relation to attaining learning outcomes

According to Mwakamele (2018), the taxonomy was created in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom to categorise learning outcomes in educational settings. In 2001, Bloom’s taxonomy was revised by Anderson and Krathwohl to include the verbs that best describe what teachers want to include in their learners’ learning outcomes (what learners should achieve) and also what type of activities teachers would like their learners to carry out (Wilson, 2016). In addition, Bloom’s taxonomy

helps teachers to develop critical thinking skills and higher order cognitive abilities in their learners during the teaching and learning process (Young, 2022). Figure 1 portrays Anderson and Krathwohl’s revised Bloom’s taxonomy which is more relevant and helpful to the teachers when assessing their learners’ cognitive skills within six areas (levels of learning that can help teachers to plan effective learning outcomes, teaching activities and assessments) (Wilson, 2016). The six levels of learning are: *remember*, *understand*, *apply*, *analyze*, *evaluate* and *create*. In each level, there are many specific and measurable learning outcome verbs that teachers should make use of when assessing or evaluating their learners to see whether they have acquired the expected learning outcomes at the end of the course or learning activities (McGrae, 2019).

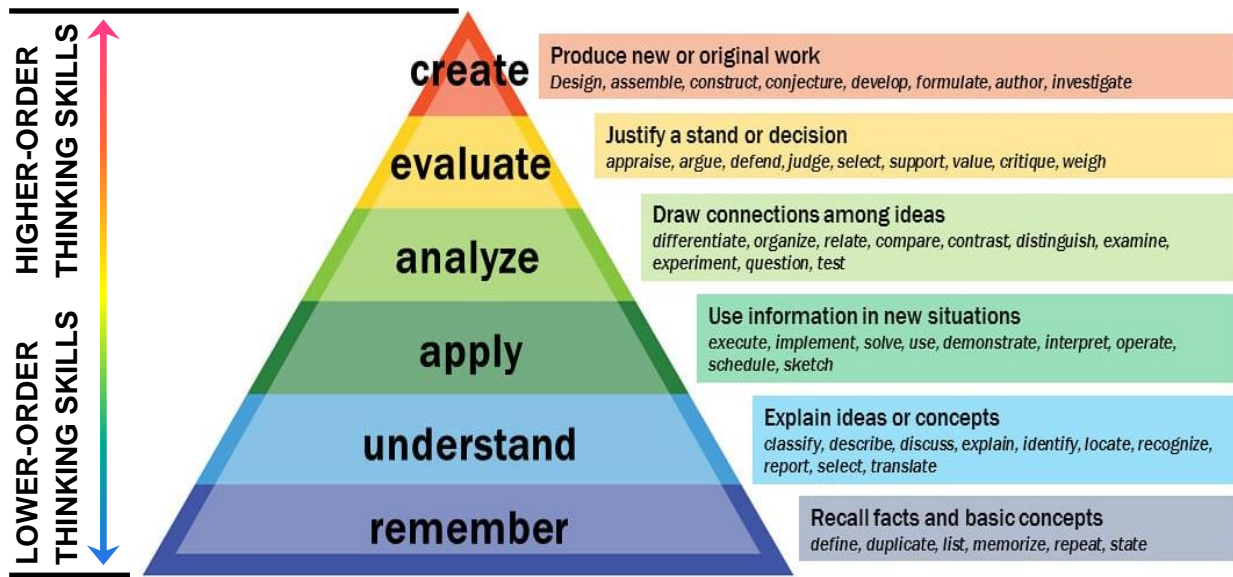


Figure 1: Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy–Cognitive Domain (Adapted from Gracey, 2021 with author’s adjustment)

Figure 1 shows that teachers need to teach learners from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills (from known to unknown). Thus, the six levels of learning should be seen as a contract between teachers and learners as they provide direction for teaching and learning (Anees, 2017). According to Samberg Institute for Teaching Excellence (2001), for each level of learning, teachers expect learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes, for instance:

- *Remember*: be able to recall information such as dates, events, places, ideas, definitions, formulas, and theories.
- *Understand*: be able to grasp the meaning of the information, express it in own words, and/or cite examples.
- *Apply*: be able to apply knowledge or skills to new situations. Use information and knowledge to solve a problem, answer a question, or perform another task.
- *Analyse*: be able to break down knowledge into parts and show and explain the relationships among the parts.
- *Evaluate*: be able to judge or assess the value of materials and methods for a given purpose.
- *Create*: be able to pull together parts of knowledge to form a new whole and build relationships for new situations.

The above-given levels of learning were revised to assist teachers to think clearly about what exactly their learners learn in classrooms and which orders of learning they use to help their learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes (Kasimi, 2022). Many learners around the world, with no exemption to the Namibian learners desire to achieve the expected learning outcomes. However, some teachers might fail their learners unintentionally simply because they did not fully understand the importance and benefits of learning outcomes.

3.3 Importance and benefits of learning outcomes during the teaching and learning process

Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan (2014) state that learning outcomes in relation to teaching and learning gained strong support as they help teachers to strategize their teachings. Learning outcomes do not only help teachers but also enhance learners' critical thinking skills (Kasimi, 2022). According to Jenkins and Unwin (2001) cited in Kennedy, Hyland and Ryan (2014, p. 25), some advantages of learning outcomes are:

- to help teachers to tell learners more precisely what is expected of them;
- to help learners to learn more effectively and know where they stand as the curriculum is more open to them;
- to help teachers to design their materials more effectively by acting as a template for them;

- to make clear what learners can hope to gain from following a particular course or lesson;
- to help teachers select the appropriate teaching strategy matched to the intended learning outcomes, e.g. lecture, seminar, group work, tutorial, discussion, peer group presentation or laboratory class;
- to help teachers to tell their colleagues more precisely what a particular activity is designed to achieve;
- to assist teachers in setting examinations based on the materials delivered; and
- to ensure that appropriate teaching and assessment strategies are employed.

In addition to the above-given advantages of learning outcomes, Gosse (2022, p. 3) provides the following key benefits of learning outcomes, as they:

- allow teachers to shape their assessment and evaluation activities;
- make learners to better understand lessons' expectations and assessments/evaluations; and
- help teachers connect their lessons to their subjects, disciplinary standards, and potential applications beyond the lesson to the wider world or society.

Mahajan and Singh (2017) indicate that learning outcomes are important as they give a clear idea of what can be achieved by the learners. Furthermore, learning outcomes benefit learners and teachers in many ways. Thus, Mahajan and Singh (2017, pp. 66-67) provide some of these benefits.

For the teachers, learning outcomes:

- help teachers to plan lessons;
- give clear ideas of what and how much to teach and plan accordingly;
- help teachers to design their teaching materials more effectively;
- help teachers to select appropriate strategies for teaching; and
- help teachers to avoid extra teaching which ultimately help in saving time.

For the learners, learning outcomes:

- help learners to choose appropriate course/programme;

- remove the risk of wasting time if they are well defined;
- reduce unnecessary stress on the learners;
- give the learners clear ideas of what they are going to learn or achieve at the end of the class before they start with every lesson;
- highlight what exactly learners should know or achieve at the end of that lesson; and
- help learners to demonstrate that they have reached the objective of the lesson/topic.

The above-mentioned benefits of learning outcomes are crucial to teaching and learning. However, not all the learners are able to benefit due to certain factors that influence them during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, Section 3.4 provides factors that are considered as influential to learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools.

3.4 Factors that influence learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools

In Namibia, there were stakeholders who were still doubt about the Namibian education system and are worried about the Namibian child’s future (Nahole & Nauyoma, 2021; Rana, 2022). During the National Conference on Education 2022, some concerns were raised over the trend of poor learners’ academic performances at all levels of education (Muchila, 2022; Nyambe & Matengu, 2022). The poor learners’ academic performances are not only found in Namibian schools but also in other international countries such as Bangladesh, Philippines and South Africa (Habib & Mawa, 2022; Libed, 2022; Mabena, Mokgosi, & Ramapela, 2021). So, to improve learners’ academic performances in schools, factors that contribute to poor quality learning outcomes should be identified and addressed consistently (Iimene, 2018). Therefore, from the literature review, this desktop study identified some key factors that influence learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools. The internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) factors are provided in Table 1; whereas teacher-related and learner-related factors are given in Table 2.

Table 1: Internal and external factors that influence learners’ learning outcomes

<i>Learners’ internal (intrinsic) factors</i>	<i>Learners’ external (extrinsic) factors</i>
• Physiological	• Family environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sense perception in the exam room ○ physical health ○ levels of fatigue at a time and day of studying/learning ○ quality of food and drink learners have consumed ○ age ○ atmospheric conditions <p>• Psychological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ person's interests ○ intelligence ○ talent ○ motivation ○ learning styles ○ peer learning ○ self-esteem ○ self-efficacy ○ self-confidence ○ stress ○ test/exam anxiety ○ emotions ○ interests ○ attitudes ○ beliefs ○ values ○ self-perceptions ○ attributions ○ self-regulated learning ○ ill-health ○ depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ family economic status/family income ○ parents' attention ○ marital status ○ family size ○ parents' level of education/qualifications ○ home chores ○ religious background ○ values and beliefs ○ interests/parents' expectations ○ physical support ○ parental involvement in education <p>• School environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ facilities and infrastructures ○ competence of teachers ○ curriculum implementation ○ teachers' heavy workload ○ quality of teachers' qualifications ○ teachers' teaching styles ○ classroom rules ○ school location ○ school climate ○ over-crowded classes ○ teacher-learner relationship ○ teaching and learning atmosphere ○ teacher-learner ratio ○ language of instruction ○ teachers and learners' absenteeism ○ teaching and learning resources ○ classroom settings ○ distributed leadership
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sleeping habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extra/remedial teaching ○ co-curricular activities ○ academic pressure/workload <p>• Social environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ social culture ○ participation in learning ○ alcohol and drug abuse ○ social media ○ home living condition ○ entertainment events
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Table 1 provides the internal and external factors that are believed to influence learners’ learning outcomes in Namibian schools. These factors were compiled by the author and were taken from various types of secondary data sources (Fenta & Kelkay, 2018; Hausiku, 2015; Iimene, 2018; Iimene, Tanga, & Mushoriwa, 2019; Isaacs, Kazondovi, & Lwendo, 2022; Wikan & Mostert, 2011). Table 2 presents teacher-related and learner-related factors.

Table 2: Teacher and learner-related factors that influence learners’ learning outcomes

<i>Teacher-related factors</i>	<i>Learner-related factors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ qualifications ○ commitment ○ dedication ○ motivation ○ hard work ○ professional attitudes/ethics ○ age and gender ○ knowledgeable ○ pedagogical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ learners’ attitude/ill-discipline ○ lack of exposure ○ family background ○ study habits ○ peer influence/pressure ○ school attendance ○ co-curricular activities ○ language barriers ○ handwriting

Table 2 shows some of the teacher-related and learner-related factors that are also believed to influence learners' learning outcomes in Namibian schools. Similar to Table 1, these factors were also compiled by the author and were taken from various types of secondary data sources (Al-Daghi, 2022; Asif, 2020; Ekowati, 2019; Ipinge, 2021; Isaacs, Kazondovi, & Lwendo, 2022). A number of factors have been mentioned; however, the foundation phase is found to play a big role in a very child's learning life (Shikalepo, 2019). Therefore, a poor learning foundation is likely to cause learners' poor performances as children struggle to cope with learning outcomes during their education life.

4. Recommendations

To ensure that a Namibian child achieves quality learning outcomes that lead to improving his/her academic performance at all levels of education, this desktop study made some recommendations based on each key factor.

4.1 Physiological factors

- Poor nutrition adversely affects learners' neuro-muscular system and consequently upon their learning capacity. Therefore, learners should be advised to avoid taking food and/or drinks that contain alcohol and caffeine.
- High temperature and humidity lower the learners' mental efficiency. Thus, all sorts of distractions that might affect learners' power of concentration should be avoided.
- Learning capacity varies with age. For instance, children learn the school subjects more easily than uneducated adults can learn. For that reason, learners should be taught subject contents that appropriate at their age levels.

4.2 Psychological factors

- Learners should be emotionally supported and respected by teachers and fellow classmates.
- Learners should be encouraged to report any noticed incident of bullying at the school to their teachers and/or parents/guardians.

- The Life Skills teachers should educate the learners on the importance of respecting and caring of fellow learners by not harming them physically and/or emotionally.

4.3 Family environmental factors

- Parents/guardians should be sensitised and encouraged to attend parents' meetings and partake in school-related activities.
- Parents/guardians should be motivated to take their responsibilities to spend more time on their children's homework.
- Workload of household chores should be minimised so that learners have sufficient time to study and do homework.
- Parents/guardians should create a conducive learning/study environment and/or better living spaces that enable their children to study and do their homework quietly.

4.4 School environmental factors

- Schools must be provided with sufficient and quality teaching and learning resources to help them in producing positive learning outcomes.
- The early stages in a child's life are crucial for learning; therefore, a good learning foundation should be laid by experienced teachers. Because of the learners' poor educational foundation and unpreparedness to obtain adequate knowledge and skills from one grade to another, this might result in them performing poorly at the exit point.
- The use of English as a language of communication between teachers and learners inside and outside the classroom should be enforced to ensure proficiency.
- Proper teaching and learning aids such as charts, pictures and diagrams should be displayed to influence learners' performance and help them to shape what they would like to achieve in future careers.
- A positive teacher-learner relationship should be encouraged as it creates an active participation in the classroom by both the teacher and learners.
- Extra classes and/or remedial teaching should be made mandatory to help learners improve their learning outcomes.

- A standard teacher-learner ratio should be implemented in schools to ensure that teachers have a manageable class size for effective teaching and learning.
- Regular meetings should be organised with parents to discuss with them their children's progress and how these learners could be assisted to learn and acquire learning outcomes.
- Learner support programmes for less able learners and those who struggle with reading and writing should be implemented and made compulsory.
- Schools should find food donors to supplement the school feeding programmes to feed the needy learners who come to schools with empty stomachs. This might also reduce learners' absenteeism.
- School principals should be equipped with the necessary training on leadership skills to enable them to lead and manage their schools as organisations if they want to improve their learners' learning outcomes.
- Schools should award the best performing learners and those who attend school regularly to motivate them and also to encourage other learners to do the same.

4.5 Social environmental factors

- Community members should report the noisy and disturbing neighbours/events to the police or community representatives.
- The importance of after-school-support/awareness should be sensitised and increased among learners so that learners with poor performance may get the support and help from their classmates through teamwork or support group.
- Learners should be well-informed about the advantages and disadvantages of using social media. Parents/guardians should be aware of the type of gadgets that they buy for their children and for what purpose.

4.6 Teacher-related factors

- Teachers should teach subjects and phases that they were trained for to teach.
- Qualified teachers should be appointed; whereas, the under-qualified teachers should be encouraged to upgrade their qualifications through in-service training and Continuous

Professional Development (CPD) programmes, in which they should be capacitated to improve their subject knowledge and competencies. They should also acquire teaching strategies that will enable them to enhance learners' learning outcomes.

- Teachers should be motivated and encouraged to create a culture of hard work which will result in producing good learners' learning outcomes.
- Teachers should be continually reminded to respect their profession and always adhere to their code of conduct/work ethics.
- Teachers should keep lesson presentation short, funny and interesting; otherwise, learners lose concentration.
- Teachers should cultivate and build a quite conducive learning atmosphere for effective teaching and learning.
- Teachers should inspire their learners and be learners' role models.
- Teachers should divide learners into groups when teaching and use learner-centred approach to keep them busy and avoid noise.

4.7 Learner-related factors

- Learners should be exposed to some educational platforms such as debates, spelling bees and science fairs that promote the acquisition of English proficiency and enhance their conceptual understanding that lead to better academic performance.
- Learners should avoid bad cohorts and peers who encourage them to abuse addictive substances or abscond themselves from classes.
- Learners should be encouraged to report other learners with unruly behaviours to their teachers, parents/guardians and/or community leaders.

5. Conclusion

In teaching and learning context, learning outcomes are the specified and measurable indicators of success of an educational lesson. Learning outcomes give teachers clear ideas of what learners should achieve after completing a lesson. However, factors such as internal (intrinsic), external (extrinsic), teacher-related and learner-related might influence learners' learning outcomes.

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