IMPLEMENTING BASIC PRE-VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS IN NAMIBIAN SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS: TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examined how Senior Primary teachers and principals perceived the implementation of basic pre-vocational subjects in three schools in Circuit 3 of Namibia's Khomas Region. Nine teachers completed open-ended questionnaires and three principals participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis and compared across participant roles and sources. Participants broadly valued the subjects for practical skills, career orientation, creativity and entrepreneurship. Their accounts nevertheless revealed uneven conceptual understanding and an aspiration–practice gap: curriculum aims were constrained by limited specialist preparation, shortages of tools and facilities, inadequate funding and the lower status sometimes attached to practical subjects. Teachers' perceptions were not merely personal preferences; they reflected the interaction of professional knowledge, institutional support and material conditions. The study contributes context-specific evidence from an under-researched Namibian Senior Primary phase. It recommends targeted professional learning, protected funding for practical activities, circuit-level resource sharing and stronger partnerships with vocational training institutions.

Keywords: basic pre-vocational subjects, curriculum implementation, Senior Primary, teacher agency, Namibia

INTRODUCTION

Pre-vocational education introduces learners to practical activity, occupational awareness and applied problem-solving before they enter specialised technical or vocational pathways. Its purpose is not to assign young learners prematurely to a fixed occupation. Rather, it broadens their learning experience, helps them connect abstract knowledge with productive activity, and helps them recognise a wider range of educational and career possibilities. Vocational learning can therefore serve personal, educational, social and economic purposes, including the development of competence, confidence and informed choice.[1] International policy similarly positions technical and vocational education and training as a means of connecting education with decent work, social inclusion and sustainable development.[2]

The Senior Primary phase is an important point for this orientation because learners consolidate foundational knowledge while encountering more differentiated curriculum experiences. When practical learning is well designed, it can enable learners to plan a task, select materials, work safely, solve problems, evaluate a product and collaborate with others. These experiences can strengthen

[1] Stephen Billett, *Vocational Education: Purposes, Traditions and Prospects*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.
[2] UNESCO, *Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Successful and Just Transitions: UNESCO Strategy 2022–2029*, Paris: UNESCO, 2022.

learning across the curriculum and provide early exposure to pathways that are sometimes hidden by an exclusively academic conception of achievement. The value of pre-vocational subjects therefore lies in both the practical competencies they develop and the message they communicate: productive, technical and creative work constitutes legitimate knowledge.

In Namibia, Senior Primary refers to Grades 4–7. *The National Curriculum for Basic Education* emphasises learner-centred education, practical competence, creativity, entrepreneurship and preparation for further learning.[3] The revised curriculum reintroduced and strengthened practical and pre-vocational learning in this phase. Basic pre-vocational subjects are consequently intended to offer more than a list of activities. They should help learners connect school knowledge with everyday life, explore interests, develop respect for practical work and acquire dispositions relevant to later vocational learning and employment.

Implementation remains demanding. Practical subjects depend on specialised teacher knowledge, consumable materials, safe workspaces, sufficient instructional time and repeated opportunities for learners to make, test and improve products. Studies of school vocationalisation in African contexts have reported shortages of qualified teachers, weak infrastructure, limited materials and a persistent belief that practical pathways are less prestigious than academic routes.[4] These studies establish that ambitious policy language cannot by itself change classroom practice. They also caution against viewing implementation as a single event. New syllabuses, teacher development, equipment, leadership arrangements and assessment practices must develop in a coordinated manner.

Teachers' perceptions matter because curriculum reform is interpreted rather than mechanically delivered. Teachers decide what to emphasise, which activities are feasible, how to explain a subject's value and whether to persist when implementation conditions are difficult. Research on teacher agency shows that beliefs interact with professional experience, relationships, school cultures and material resources.[5] A teacher may value practical learning but reduce hands-on work when tools, confidence or organisational support are inadequate. Conversely, a teacher with strong preparation may adapt creatively when the school provides time, collegial support and access to materials. Principals also shape enactment through timetabling, staffing, resource allocation, supervision and the status they accord a subject.

The problem is therefore not adequately described as either a shortage of resources or a negative teacher attitude. Perceptions and conditions may influence each other. Repeatedly teaching without suitable tools can lower professional confidence; low confidence can encourage theory-dominated instruction; and limited practical activity can reinforce the public impression that the subject has little value. Understanding this relationship is necessary if policy responses are to address causes rather than symptoms.

Existing literature provides international comparisons and accounts from other African systems, but empirical work on basic pre-vocational subjects in Namibia's Senior Primary phase remains limited. In particular, little is known about how frontline teachers and principals understand the reform, how their perceptions differ and how those perceptions interact with school conditions.

[3] Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*, Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development, 2016.

[4] Lucia Mandiudza, Winnet Chindedza and Jeriphanos Makaye, "Vocationalization of Secondary Schools: Implementation Reality or Fallacy?", *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 2013, pp. 123–132; S. T. Puyate, "Constraints to the Effective Implementation of Vocational Education Programmes in Private Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 9(1), 2008, pp. 59–71; E. N. Wafubwa, "Factors Influencing Implementation of Art and Craft Curriculum in Primary Schools in Kenya", Master's thesis, Nairobi: University of Nairobi, 2011.

[5] Gert Biesta, Mark Priestley and Sarah Robinson, "The Role of Beliefs in Teacher Agency", *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(6), 2015, pp. 624–640; Mark Priestley, Gert Biesta and Sarah Robinson, *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Without such evidence, interventions may focus on equipment without supporting teachers, or on changing attitudes without improving the conditions in which teachers work.

This study investigates perceptions of implementing basic pre-vocational subjects in three Senior Primary schools in Circuit 3 of the Khomas Region. It contributes a role-comparative account of teachers' and principals' perspectives and explains the gap between the reform's aspirations and its enactment. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. How do teachers and principals understand the nature and purpose of basic pre-vocational subjects at Senior Primary level?
2. What perceptions and attitudes towards teaching these subjects are reported by teachers and principals, and what shapes them?
3. Which school and system conditions enable or constrain the implementation of basic pre-vocational subjects?

The study is informed by an ecological view of teacher agency and a sense-making perspective on curriculum implementation. The ecological view treats agency as an achievement arising from the interaction of individual capacities and beliefs with cultural, structural and material conditions, rather than as a stable personality trait.[6] Teachers act purposefully, but the range of actions they can reasonably take depends on their professional histories, present relationships, access to resources and expectations for the future. Biesta, Priestley and Robinson further demonstrate that teachers' beliefs influence the purposes they pursue and the possibilities for action they recognise.[7]

This framework is appropriate for analysing mixed perceptions of pre-vocational education. Knowledge, confidence, and perceived subject status operate at individual and cultural levels. Staffing, funding, timetabling, workshops and tools operate as structural and material conditions. School leadership connects the levels because principals influence priorities, professional learning and access to resources. The framework therefore avoids reducing implementation to teacher compliance. It asks what teachers and principals understand, what they are trying to accomplish, and what their environment enables them to do.

Sense-making scholarship similarly explains that implementers interpret policy through prior knowledge, professional identities and local circumstances.[8] Curriculum implementation involves adaptation and judgement, even when national expectations are clearly stated. Fullan argues that meaningful educational change requires attention to beliefs, teaching approaches and materials, because changing only one dimension produces superficial implementation.[9] In practical subjects, these judgements are especially visible: the difference between explaining a procedure and enabling learners to perform it depends on equipment, preparation, safety, time and class organisation.

The framework highlights three linked dimensions. The first is interpretation: whether participants understand pre-vocational subjects as practical learning, career orientation, a collection of named subjects or a lower-status alternative to academic study. The second is professional capacity and commitment: whether teachers possess the knowledge, confidence and motivation to enact practical pedagogy. The third is opportunity: whether school and system arrangements provide the time, materials, staffing and support through which professional intention becomes classroom practice. Evidence of weakness in one dimension must be interpreted alongside the others.

Comparative research indicates that pre-vocational curricula often promise broad employability and practical competence while classroom practice narrows under assessment, resource and teacher-

[6] Mark Priestley, Gert Biesta and Sarah Robinson, *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
[7] Gert Biesta, Mark Priestley and Sarah Robinson, "The Role of Beliefs in Teacher Agency", *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(6), 2015, pp. 624–640.
[8] James P. Spillane, Brian J. Reiser and Todd Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition: Reframing and Refocusing Implementation Research", *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 2002, pp. 387–431.
[9] Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 5th ed., New York: Teachers College Press, 2016.

preparation pressures.[10] Research in developing-country settings similarly suggests that implementation capacity varies across schools and that reform should be matched to existing support structures while progressively strengthening them.[11] This argument is particularly important in unequal systems: requiring identical practical outputs without ensuring comparable learning opportunities may reproduce rather than reduce educational disadvantage.

African studies identify inadequate equipment, funding, specialist staffing and professional preparation as recurring barriers.[12] Their strength lies in documenting the material and human requirements of vocationalised curricula. Their limitation for the present study is that differences in national systems, school phases and subject structures restrict direct transfer to Namibia. Moreover, barrier lists do not always explain how constraints shape teachers' professional identities or the status of the subject.

Namibia's curriculum supplies a clear policy rationale for practical, entrepreneurial and learner-centred learning,[13] but policy documents cannot show how teachers and principals interpret that rationale in particular schools. The present study addresses this empirical gap. Rather than treating attitudes and resources as separate problems, it examines how material shortages can weaken confidence, restrict practice and reinforce the perception that pre-vocational subjects are marginal. The resulting analytical proposition is that sustainable implementation requires simultaneous attention to meaning, capacity and opportunity.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Design and Setting

The study adopted an interpretive qualitative case study design. The bounded case comprised three schools in Circuit 3 of the Khomas Region that offered basic pre-vocational subjects in the Senior Primary phase. A case study was appropriate because the inquiry sought context-sensitive explanations of how a curriculum reform was understood and enacted under actual school conditions.[14] The design did not seek statistical representation. Its purpose was to develop an analytically rich account of implementation from participants who held direct instructional or supervisory responsibilities. The anonymised study record identifies the setting and approval process but does not retain the exact fieldwork dates; this reporting gap is acknowledged under limitations.

2. Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling selected information-rich sites and participants directly responsible for the curriculum. Schools had to be located in the selected circuit and offer basic pre-vocational subjects. Teachers were eligible when they taught at least one of these subjects in the Senior Primary phase.

[10] Matthias Pilz and Junmin Li, "What Teachers in Pre-vocational Education Should Teach and What They Actually Teach: A Comparison of Curricula and Teaching in Germany and China", *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 7(2), 2012, pp. 226–247.
[11] John M. Rogan and Diane J. Grayson, "Towards a Theory of Curriculum Implementation with Particular Reference to Science Education in Developing Countries", *International Journal of Science Education*, 25(10), 2003, pp. 1171–1204.
[12] Lucia Mandiudza, Winnet Chindedza and Jeriphanos Makaye, "Vocationalization of Secondary Schools: Implementation Reality or Fallacy?", *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 2013, pp. 123–132; S. T. Puyate, "Constraints to the Effective Implementation of Vocational Education Programmes in Private Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 9(1), 2008, pp. 59–71; E. N. Wafubwa, "Factors Influencing Implementation of Art and Craft Curriculum in Primary Schools in Kenya", Master's thesis, Nairobi: University of Nairobi, 2011.
[13] Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*, Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development, 2016.
[14] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018.

Principals were eligible because they supervised curriculum implementation, staffing, and resource allocation in the participating schools. The final sample comprised nine teachers and three principals. Participant codes T1–T9 and P1–P3 are used in the findings.

Table 1: Participant profile based on information recorded in the study

Item	Teachers (n = 9)	Principals (n = 3)	Reporting note
Role	Nine subject teachers	Three school principals	Participants came from three schools offering basic pre-vocational subjects.
Gender	Five male; four female	Two male; one female	Gender was the only characteristic recorded separately by role.
Experience	Included in the combined distribution	Included in the combined distribution	All participants: 0-5 years, two (16.7%); 5-10 years, six (50.0%); 10-15 years, four (33.3%).
Professional profile	Not recorded	Not recorded	Qualifications, specialisation and formal pre-vocational training were not reconstructed.

The study records gender and overall teaching-experience categories but does not contain reliable data on qualifications, subject specialisations or formal pre-vocational training. These characteristics have not been inferred or fabricated. Their absence prevents subgroup comparisons and limits analysis of whether specific forms of preparation were associated with different perceptions.

3. Data Collection

Teachers completed an open-ended questionnaire that enabled all nine participants to describe their understanding, experiences, attitudes, and constraints in writing. Principals participated in semi-structured interviews focused on curriculum supervision, teacher preparedness, attitudes, resource provision and institutional support. Follow-up probes clarified meanings and requested examples. The sources generated complementary perspectives: teachers described frontline enactment, whereas principals described school-level oversight and decisions. Condensed versions of the question domains are provided in Appendices A and B.

Using different techniques for the two groups served an analytical purpose. Written responses allowed teachers time to formulate accounts without the immediate presence of school managers, while interviews allowed principals to explain organisational processes and respond to follow-up questions. The study did not treat the sources as equivalent measures. Instead, it compared how instructional and supervisory roles shaped what participants noticed and emphasised.

4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The lead researcher conducted reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's guidance.[15] Analysis moved recursively through familiarisation, initial semantic coding, comparison of codes across teachers and principals, construction of candidate themes, review against the full dataset and research questions, and definition and writing of the final thematic account. Coding was primarily inductive. The ecological framework was introduced at the interpretive stage to examine connections among beliefs, professional capacity and contextual conditions.

Theme development required more than counting repeated statements. A candidate theme had to express a coherent pattern relevant to a research question and be supported by evidence across, or meaningfully within, participant roles. The researcher also retained divergent accounts. For example, teachers' statements of value were not discarded simply because principals reported weak commitment; the apparent tension became evidence that positive beliefs and constrained enactment could coexist.

[15] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "One Size Fits All? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis?", *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 2021, pp. 328–352.

Credibility was strengthened through source and role triangulation: patterns in teacher questionnaires were compared with principal interviews, and both convergence and divergence were retained. Candidate themes were checked against coded extracts and the complete dataset. An audit trail linked codes, theme definitions, participant groups and illustrative extracts. Thick description of the setting, sample and implementation conditions supports readers' judgements about transferability.[16] The article does not claim independent double-coding, formal member checking, or peer debriefing because these procedures were not documented in the study record. This boundary is stated transparently rather than presenting unverified validation activities.

5. Ethical Considerations

Research permission was obtained through Great Zimbabwe University and from the relevant national and regional education authorities. School principals facilitated access only after institutional permission had been granted. Participants received information about the academic purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. Names and contact details were not collected in the research instruments, and participant codes were used in reporting.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organised around the three research questions. Teacher and principal perspectives are identified explicitly, and interpretation is integrated with the conceptual framework and related literature.

Understanding the Nature and Purpose of Pre-Vocational Subjects

1. Shared Emphasis on Practical Skills

Teachers and principals most consistently understood basic pre-vocational subjects as an early opportunity for learners to acquire practical and technical competence. Teachers T3, T4, and T8 explained that the subjects allow learners to work with their hands and learn skills such as sewing, carpentry, and simple technical crafts. Principal P2 similarly described them as an introduction to skills that may prepare learners for technical fields or trades. "Pre-vocational subjects give learners the chance to work with their hands and learn skills like sewing, carpentry, and simple technical crafts. (Teachers T3, T4 and T8)"

This shared emphasis aligns with Namibia's commitment to applied, learner-centred and entrepreneurial learning.[17] It indicates that participants did not view the subjects only as content to be memorised. They associated learning with doing and with producing something observable. That orientation is educationally important because practical competence develops through guided performance, feedback and repeated improvement, not through explanation alone.

However, recognising the purpose of practical learning did not guarantee sustained hands-on experience. Participants could articulate an intended pedagogy even when school conditions encouraged a more theoretical approach. This distinction between conceptual endorsement and enacted practice becomes central to the third research question. It also demonstrates why perception data should be interpreted alongside the conditions participants describe.

[16] Andrew K. Shenton, "Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects", *Education for Information*, 22(2), 2004, pp. 63–75.
[17] Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, *The National Curriculum for Basic Education*, Okahandja: National Institute for Educational Development, 2016.

2. Career Orientation, Further Training and Entrepreneurship

A second strand of understanding concerned orientation to future work and training. Teachers T1, T7 and T9 described the subjects as giving learners an early sense of technical schools, vocational colleges and workplaces. Principal P1 emphasised career exploration, while other participants associated the subjects with creativity, respect for manual work and the possibility of self-employment. "The aim is to prepare learners for technical schools or vocational colleges by giving them a taste of what to expect in the world of work. (Teachers T1, T7 and T9)" "Pre-vocational subjects help learners not only learn skills but also become creative and entrepreneurial. (Principal P2)"

These accounts correspond with the view that vocational education has educational and developmental purposes beyond immediate job placement.[18] At Senior Primary level, learners are not expected to possess occupational competence. Participants instead described an exploratory foundation: learners encounter tools, materials, work processes and possible pathways while developing adaptable capacities. This interpretation protects pre-vocational education from becoming a narrow track for learners perceived as academically weak.

The entrepreneurial emphasis also reflects the Namibian curriculum's concern with self-reliance and productive participation. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship should not be reduced to asking learners to sell products without sufficient technical learning. Participants' accounts imply that creativity, practical quality, planning and problem-solving must precede credible enterprise learning. Career orientation and entrepreneurship are therefore most meaningful when grounded in authentic practical experience.

3. Uneven Depth of Understanding

Despite a shared outlook, the depth of teachers' explanations varied. Some teachers defined pre-vocational learning by its purpose and pedagogical function. Teacher T3 connected it to both the world of work and progression into vocational or technical programmes. Others mainly listed Design and Technology, Agriculture and Home Ecology. Listing relevant subjects was not incorrect, but it provided less evidence that the underlying educational rationale was understood.

This variation matters from a sense-making perspective. When reform is understood primarily as a new subject label, implementation may reproduce familiar classroom routines. When teachers understand its practical and exploratory purposes, they are more likely to seek applied tasks, integrate process and product assessment, and connect learning to community life.[19] The finding therefore refines the original claim that participants had a basic understanding: they recognized the curriculum area but differed in the conceptual resources available to enact it.

The finding also has implications for professional learning. Workshops that only repeat curriculum content may not deepen implementation. Teachers need opportunities to examine the subject's purposes, experience practical pedagogies, design feasible activities, and discuss how evidence of learning should be assessed. Conceptual clarity and practical capability must develop together.

Perceptions and Attitudes, and the Factors Shaping Them

1. Teachers' Perspectives: Value Accompanied by Uncertainty

Teachers' perceptions were mixed rather than uniformly negative. Several valued the subjects because they offered practical learning and alternative ways for learners to demonstrate competence. At the same time, limited specialist preparation reduced confidence. Teacher T3 linked professional

[18] Stephen Billett, *Vocational Education:…*, 2011; UNESCO, *Transforming Technical and Vocational Education:…*, 2022.
[19] James P. Spillane, Brian J. Reiser and Todd Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition: Reframing and Refocusing Implementation Research", *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 2002, pp. 387–431.

preparation directly to classroom enactment: "We did not receive proper training in college to teach these kinds of practical subjects, and we lack the resources to do justice to them. (Teacher T3)"

The statement illustrates an interaction between individual capacity and environmental opportunity. The concern was not merely reluctance; it reflected a judgement that the teacher could not meet the curriculum's practical expectations under existing conditions. This supports the ecological view that agency depends on the relationship between expertise and available resources.[20]

A lower-status perception was also present. Teacher T5 reported that some colleagues did not want to be associated with pre-vocational teaching because it was seen as suitable for less academically capable learners. Such stigma can become self-reinforcing. Reduced status weakens motivation and investment, while weak provision makes the subjects appear less rigorous. Similar tensions have been reported in African vocationalisation studies, although the current finding locates the problem specifically in Namibia's Senior Primary phase.[21]

The teacher accounts therefore reveal an important distinction between valuing learner outcomes and valuing the professional assignment. A teacher may believe that practical skills are important while feeling that assignment to the subject carries little recognition or exceeds their preparation. Leadership and policy interventions should consequently avoid treating a positive attitude as a substitute for competence, or a negative attitude as proof of personal unwillingness. Both require investigation of the professional conditions surrounding the assignment.

2. Principals' Perspectives: Attitudes as a Response to Capacity and Conditions

Principals generally perceived teachers as less committed to pre-vocational subjects than to conventional academic subjects. However, they also linked attitude to training, workload, and resources. Principals P1 and P3 stated that some teachers taught the subjects because they were assigned to do so, not because they felt prepared or recognised their value. "Some feel burdened because they are not trained in these areas. They do it because they are told to, not because they see value in it. (Principals P1 and P3)"

Principal P3 similarly linked low valuation to inadequate preparation and equipment. These accounts partially converge with teachers' reports: both groups identified limited training and confidence, while principals emphasized observable commitment. The divergence is analytically useful. It cautions against interpreting hesitant practice as a purely personal deficit and suggests that leadership responses should combine clear expectations with professional and material support.

Principals occupy a strategic position because they mediate national expectations and school realities. They can protect timetable space, avoid assigning teachers solely because they have an unfilled period, encourage collaboration, recognise successful practical work and include the subject in improvement planning. Yet principals cannot independently resolve systemic shortages of specialist teachers or capital equipment. Their agency, like teachers' agency, is conditioned by resources and authority.

The study therefore challenges a simple positive-versus-negative classification. Perceptions operated as situated professional judgements. Teachers who valued curriculum purposes could still feel unable to enact them, and principals who criticised attitudes also recognised the structural conditions shaping those attitudes. This is the study's main conceptual contribution: perceived value, professional competence, and implementation opportunity formed a connected system.

[20] Mark Priestley, Gert Biesta and Sarah Robinson, *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
[21] Lucia Mandiudza, Winnet Chindedza and Jeriphanos Makaye, "Vocationalization of Secondary Schools:…", 2013, pp. 123–132.

Conditions Enabling and Constraining Implementation

1. Specialist Staffing and Professional Learning

A shortage of teachers with specialised practical-subject preparation was identified across the dataset. Participants described teachers being assigned outside their strongest areas and receiving insufficient preparation for practical pedagogy. This condition constrained the range of activities offered and teachers' confidence in managing tools, materials and assessment. The finding confirms evidence that curriculum expansion without corresponding teacher development can produce symbolic rather than substantive vocationalisation.[22]

Short workshops alone are unlikely to resolve the problem. Effective professional learning should connect curriculum purposes, subject knowledge, safety, lesson design, inclusive participation and assessment of practical processes and products. It should also include opportunities to practise with the tools and materials teachers are expected to use. Follow-up coaching and school-based collaboration can help teachers adapt activities to local conditions while maintaining curriculum intent.

2. Tools, Facilities and Funding

Participants repeatedly identified inadequate tools, consumable materials, workshops and funds for practical activities and educational excursions. Principal P2 offered the clearest summary: "Home Ecology and Design and Technology require workshops and specialised tools, but these are not provided in most schools. (Principal P2)"

The educational consequence is qualitative, not merely logistical. When equipment is unavailable, teachers may replace making and experimentation with verbal explanation. Learners then encounter the vocabulary of practical work without sufficient opportunity to develop practical competence. The curriculum remains visible on the timetable, but its distinctive pedagogy is weakened.

3. Institutional and System Support

Participants referred to uneven support from educational authorities and limited funding earmarked for the subjects. Principals' accounts indicate that school leadership can encourage implementation but cannot independently resolve specialist staffing or capital-resource shortages. Conversely, supplying equipment without building teacher capability may leave resources underused. Effective support therefore requires coordination among the ministry, regional and circuit offices, schools, teacher-education institutions and vocational training centres.

Partnerships with vocational training centres and local enterprises may provide demonstrations, mentoring and exposure to authentic work settings. Such partnerships should support curriculum goals rather than replace the school's responsibility. Clear safeguarding, supervision and learning expectations are required, especially for younger learners. When carefully structured, external expertise can broaden teachers' networks and help learners see continuity between school learning, further training and community livelihoods.

4. The Aspiration–Practice Gap

Across the themes, participants endorsed curriculum aspirations—practical competence, career awareness, creativity and entrepreneurship—yet described conditions that encouraged theory-heavy and lower-status provision. This aspiration–practice gap threatens reform in three ways. First, learners may receive unequal exposure depending on school resources. Second, teachers may come to regard the curriculum as unrealistic, weakening ownership. Third, families and learners may interpret poorly

[22] Lucia Mandiudza, Winnet Chindedza and Jeriphanos Makaye, "Vocationalization of Secondary Schools:…", 2013, pp. 123–132; S. T. Puyate, "Constraints to the Effective Implementation:…", 2008, pp. 59–71.

resourced delivery as evidence that practical subjects are less valuable. The gap concerns both curriculum credibility and instructional quality.

The finding extends existing literature by showing how constraints combine in a Senior Primary setting. Training, perceptions, and resources are not isolated variables. Limited preparation narrows teachers' options; limited tools reduce visible success; and both conditions can reinforce low status. This pattern supports the proposition that implementation capacity is multidimensional and must develop progressively.[23]

Closing the gap therefore requires a sequenced strategy. Immediate action can identify teacher-development needs, map available resources and establish school or circuit priorities. Medium-term action can build subject communities of practice, protect budgets for consumables and develop shared facilities. Longer-term action should align pre-service teacher preparation, staffing norms, infrastructure and assessment with the curriculum's practical ambitions. Reform is more credible when expectations and support grow together.

CONCLUSION

Teachers and principals in the three Khomas Region schools broadly understood basic pre-vocational subjects as a means of developing practical skills, career awareness, creativity and entrepreneurship. Their understanding nevertheless varied in depth, and implementation was shaped by mixed perceptions, limited specialist preparation, inadequate facilities and materials, and insufficient funding. The central finding is an aspiration–practice gap: participants valued the curriculum's purposes, but enactment conditions often limited the hands-on learning needed to achieve them.

The study contributes context-specific knowledge by showing that teachers' perceptions cannot be separated from professional and material conditions. Low confidence or commitment may be partly produced by assignments outside specialisation, insufficient learning opportunities, and repeated experience of teaching without appropriate tools. This relational explanation moves beyond blaming teachers or treating resources as a standalone problem. It also demonstrates the value of comparing frontline and supervisory perspectives: differences between the groups revealed how professional intention can be interpreted as weak commitment when implementation constraints are insufficiently considered.

Three recommendations follow directly from the findings. First, regional and circuit offices should provide sustained, subject-specific professional learning that combines practical pedagogy, assessment and safe use of equipment. Second, the ministry and schools should protect funding for tools, consumables and practical activities, with circuit-level shared workshops or resource clusters where individual-school provision is not feasible. Third, schools should develop structured partnerships with vocational training centres and relevant local enterprises for demonstrations, mentoring and supervised exposure to work settings. Progress should be monitored through evidence of learners' practical participation, not only the presence of subjects on timetables.

The study is limited by its small purposive sample of 12 participants in three schools, reliance on self-reported accounts, absence of classroom observation and document analysis, and missing participant details on qualifications, specialisation and formal pre-vocational training. The study record also did not document formal member checking, independent coding, or exact fieldwork dates. These limitations restrict transferability and prevent causal or regional generalisation. Future research should combine teacher and principal accounts with observations of practical lessons, inventories of facilities, learner perspectives and comparisons across rural and urban regions. Longitudinal studies

[23] John M. Rogan and Diane J. Grayson, "Towards a Theory of Curriculum Implementation:…", 2003, pp. 1171–1204; Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2016.

could examine whether professional learning, resource-cluster models and institutional partnerships improve the quality and status of pre-vocational education over time.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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