Perceptions of Namibian College of Open Learning Learners' Self-Regulated Learning Skills

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study of tutor and learner perceptions of Grade 10 Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) learners' self-regulated learning (SRL) skills to achieve academic success. Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) model of SRL, grounded in social cognitive theory, formed the theoretical framework of the study. A qualitative research design, guided by a phenomenological case study in an interpretivist paradigm, was used to explore the perceptions of tutors and learners regarding the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with the challenges of open distance learning (ODL). Three NAMCOL centres, six tutors and 15 learners were conveniently and purposively selected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. The findings reveal discrepancies between tutors' and learners' perceptions of Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with ODL and to achieve academic success. The findings underline the importance of academic support for ODL learners as well as the development of tutors' knowledge and use of SRL teaching strategies to foster SRL learning, self-directed learning and academic success. Recommendations are offered to the Namibian Ministry of Education to improve the infrastructure of ODL centres and to NAMCOL to adapt their curriculum design and tutor training. Further studies should be conducted to explore academic and institutional support for NAMCOL learners.

Keywords: open distance learning; self-regulated learning; tutors; NAMCOL; Namibian context

Introduction

The objective of this study was to explore and to compare Grade 10 NAMCOL tutors' and Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' perspectives regarding Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with open distance learning (ODL).

Eleven years ago, the *Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme* of the Namibian Ministry of Education (Republic of Namibia 2007) revealed that large numbers of learners failed Grade 10. Many of these learners dropped out of school and became perpetual job seekers with little hope of ever getting qualified for any permanent position. The Namibian government faced the problem of providing secondary education for large numbers of learners who could not be accommodated in the formal school sector. With the Namibian Vision 2030, the Namibian government, through quality formal education and open distance learning (ODL), planned efforts to improve the quality of life of the Namibian people (Malumo 2012 ,1).

With Vision 2030 in mind, as well as the learners who were unable to gain admission to the formal education system, the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), an ODL institution, was established through the Namibian College of Open Learning Act 1 of 1997 (Republic of Namibia 1997). Learners who passed Grade 10 through NAMCOL could return to formal secondary school for Grade 11. In the Namibian education context, ODL is consequently perceived as a valuable, beneficial and critical strategy to aid in achieving the Namibian Vision 2030 goals as it offers a flexible, accessible and affordable means of studying (Hummel 2010).

The NAMCOL is modelled against the second-generation model[1] of distance education, which offers a five-hour orientation workshop, subject study guides and textbooks for each subject for Grade 10 learners. Class attendance at NAMCOL is optional. Grade 10 learners receive one-hour tutorial sessions in each subject and two vacation workshops are organised for those learners who cannot attend the weekly tutorial sessions. Each learner is expected to submit three assignments per subject. At some NAMCOL centres, unsupervised study halls are provided since NAMCOL learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and study independently. The specific duties of NAMCOL tutors encompass teaching, facilitating the learning process and coaching, mentoring and monitoring activities that guide learners through their subjects.

However, despite the efforts of the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, the problem of high dropout and low retention rates in the NAMCOL programmes persists, and unemployment rates and dependence on social grants are increasing (Mwinga 2012). We argue that high dropout and low retention rates of Namibian learners can be counteracted by developing and enhancing self-regulated learning skills

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[1] The models or generations of distance learning show a progressive increase in the sophistication of technology to enable inter alia interactivity between the learner and the educator (Geduld 2011).

in learners. Self-regulated learning (SRL) is an imperative factor for academic success in ODL (Perry, Hutchinson, and Thauberger 2008). SRL refers to the learning processes that focus on how learners manage and engage actively in their own learning in order to acquire knowledge and skills, make their own decisions and solve problems through accessing, manipulating, and utilising existing knowledge (Zimmerman 2013). Self-regulated learning skills are the foundation for the development of self-directed and lifelong learning skills. In this article self-directed learning and self-regulated learning are viewed hierarchically. Self-directed learning is situated at a macro level where individuals choose their own learning activities, plan their own learning goals and learning trajectory in the long term to suit their individual learning needs. On the other hand, self-regulated learning concerns a micro level where tasks are set by instructors in formal education settings (Jossberger et al. 2010, 423), such as NAMCOL.

Although some Namibian researchers, such as Haufiku (2010), Möwes (2005) and Bitegeko (2012), report on barriers that learners experience in ODL, no documented evidence could be found regarding Grade 10 learners making use of ODL in Namibia, specifically in the Ohangwena Region. This study aimed to fill a gap by exploring the perspectives of the Grade 10 NAMCOL tutors and learners in the Ohangwena Region.

Against this background, the following research question was posed: How do the perspectives of Grade 10 NAMCOL tutors and Grade 10 NAMCOL learners compare regarding Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with ODL?

In the next section, SRL will be presented from Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) social cognitive perspective; the challenges and demands of ODL will be discussed and lastly, ODL will be conceptualised within the theoretical framework of SRL.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Self-Regulated Learning

Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) distinguish between the forethought phase, the performance or volitional control phase and the self-reflection phase in their model of SRL (see Figure 1). In the three phases, self-regulated learners apply various cognitive, metacognitive and behavioural strategies when doing learning tasks (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009, 300–304). Bramucci (2013) describes self-regulated learners as active, self-aware participants in their own learning processes, capable of managing, directing and controlling themselves.

Task analysis is the first main process in the forethought phase (see Figure 1). With task analysis, learners set proximate, distant, specific and challenging goals and start to plan their time, resources and strategies strategically, such as when, where and with whom to study (Zimmerman 2013). Goal setting enhances motivation and persistence to succeed. The second process in this phase is self-motivational beliefs, which influence the manner in which task analysis, planning and goal setting is performed. High self-

motivational beliefs result in mastering goal orientation, intrinsic task interest and value and commitment (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, and Robert 2011, 10). Self-efficacy and outcome expectations are key variables in self-motivational beliefs. Learners with high self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations delay satisfaction, avoid distractions and remain focused on the task to complete it successfully (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009, 301). On the other hand, Bembenutty, White and Vélez (2015) report that learners with low self-efficacy beliefs focus less on their goals and label themselves as incapable and incompetent to perform academically.
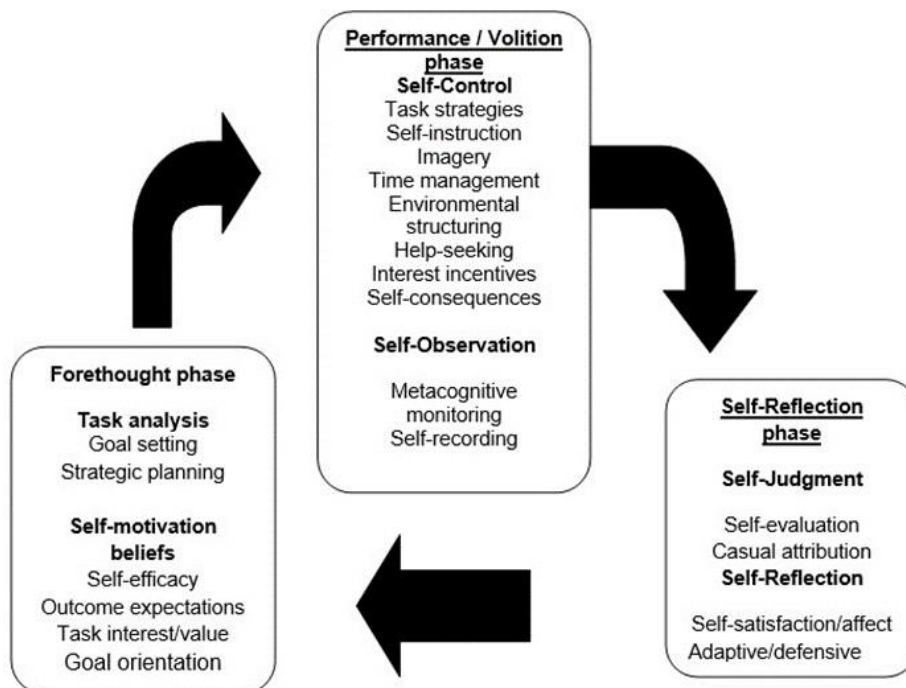

Figure 1: Zimmerman's (2000) three phase cyclical model for SRL adapted by Zimmerman and Moylan (2009)

In the performance or volitional control phase, learners employ various task strategies to make progress on the learning tasks. They monitor the effectiveness of thosestrategies as well as their motivation to attain the goals set (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, and Roberts 2011, 5). Self-regulated learners engage in self-instruction and self-observation.Self-control processes, such as self-instruction, attention focusing and task strategies, help learners to focus on learning tasks.

Other strategies self-regulated learners use in the volitional phase are time management, creating favourable learning environments, seeking academic help, self-observation, metacognitive monitoring and self-recording (Zimmerman, Schunk, and DiBennedetto 2015). They take responsibility for their learning by proactively seeking academic help.

Academic help-seeking strategies influence learners' learning strategies, self-motivational beliefs and study habits (Mahasneh, Sowan, and Nassar 2012). With instrumental and adaptive help-seeking, learners ask clarifying questions because they want to work autonomously and lessen their need for teacher assistance. With executive or expedient help-seeking, learners attempt to avoid work by asking others for answers to problems (Kozanitis, Desbiens, and Chouinard 2007, 239). Most poor-performing learners are reluctant to seek help, and they use defensive strategies to avoid admitting their incompetence to do a task and to protect their self-esteem (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009).

In the self-reflection phase, self-regulated learners apply self-judgement to reflect, compare and evaluate learning outcomes with their personal performance, standards and goals (Labuhn, Zimmerman, and Hasselhorn 2010). During this phase, learners adapt their task strategies and manage their emotions regarding the outcome of their performance. Learners will experience self-reaction, which refers to feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction stemming from an evaluative judgement of their performance (Zimmerman 2010, 68). Successful learners experience self-satisfaction with their achievements and are motivated for future tasks. Learners who experience failure will make causal attributions, which include adaptive or defensive behaviour. Adaptive inferences direct learners to new and potentially better forms of self-regulation, such as changing goals or choosing different strategies in order for them to gain better results. Defensive self-reactions, such as task avoidance, procrastination and feelings of helplessness, protect unsuccessful learners from future dissatisfaction and aversive affect, but are self-handicapping and limit personal growth (Panadero and Alonso-Tapia 2014, 458).

Even though SRL is linked to achieving academic success, there are personal limiting factors and causes that lead to underachievement and passive SRL. A few examples are the ineffective use of forethought and volition phase strategies, a lack of motivation, negative outcome expectations and a lack of social learning experiences and exposure to SRL behaviour. Learning-disabled learners, who struggle with cognitive problems in concentration, recall, reading and writing, set lower academic goals, are less capable of assessing their abilities, are less self-efficacious about their performance and tend to give up more easily (Zimmerman 2000, 27–8).

Challenges and Demands of ODL

ODL learners often experience stress and frustration caused by uncertainty about their potential to be successful in their studies, the academic workload, apathy of family, a lack of tutor support, financial pressures, poor time management, and social re-adjustments (Naidoo 2012). Therefore, Simpson (2012) states that ODL learners need to keep themselves motivated, and they need family and institutional support to evade feelings of isolation, stress and frustration to prevent termination of their studies, dropout and failure.

ODL learners' motivation is highly influenced by the support of peers, tutors and lecturers. They play a vital role in bridging the physical, emotional and social separation between learners and the institution. They also give individual and subject specific support in terms of progress and success (Tait 2014).

Another challenge is balancing study time with family responsibilities, parenting, work and social commitments and leisure time. Poor time management often results in role conflict and failure to adhere to due dates for submitting assignments (Rao and Giuli 2010).

Tait (2014) emphasises the provision of academic learner support to help learners overcome learning difficulties and enhance academic achievement. Hummel (2010) warns that institutional factors, such as a lack of learner and administrative support services for payment of fees and writing examinations, academic support services, institutionally organised study groups, library services, access to reliable internet and email services, and even financial support for learners' accommodation fees, also cause challenges.

Many ODL learners drop out because of inadequate financial resources to purchase information communication technology (ICT) resources and pay for internet services, registration, tuition and examination fees. In such cases, learners are likely to seek employment to deal with their financial commitments (Silinda 2013). Transport costs to attend contact sessions and costs for caretakers who take care of their children when they have to attend classes or write examinations are hidden financial costs, which also cause financial stress. Linked to inadequate financial resources are poor infrastructure to use and maintain ICT and a lack of technological skills to use the available ICT (Naidoo 2012).

In ODL, poor English proficiency restricts comprehension, which may cause confusion and misinterpretation of study materials, which in turn may result in failure or underperformance (Iipinge 2013). Frans (2016) believes the multicultural and multilingual Namibian society, with its different dialects, cultures and norms, exacerbated many Namibians' poor English proficiency.

Many ODL learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds have unfavourable learning environments and are surrounded by negative influences from peers, places of work and communities that do not value education (Musingafi et al. 2015).

Academic success in ODL is mostly determined by the ODL learners' SRL skills and strategies. The SRL strategies in Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) model are the same skills and strategies ODL requires for academic success. ODL demands all the SRL strategies in Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) SRL model. Labuhn, Zimmerman and Hasselhorn (2010) confirm that learners will only be able to cope with the challenges of ODL and achieve academic success if they possess SRL skills.

The next section will focus on the empirical investigation of the study.

Empirical Investigation

Aim of the Investigation

The aim of the phenomenological case study was to explore the perceptions of tutors and learners regarding the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with the challenges of ODL.

Research Design

A qualitative research design, directed by an interpretivist paradigm, offered the potential for a deeper understanding of tutors' and learners' perceptions of the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners' SRL skills to cope with the challenges of ODL (Maree 2016).

Sampling

Six tutors and 15 learners were conveniently and purposively selected to participate in the study. All three centres, the tutors and learners were conveniently selected due to their accessibility to the researchers. Two tutors from each centre were purposively selected because they were the facilitators of these learners, and they were in direct contact with the learners. Therefore, the tutors were able to provide valuable data to answer the research questions regarding learners' SRL skills to cope with ODL. Furthermore, five learners from each centre were also purposively selected because they were studying through ODL, and they were in a position to provide the researcher with relevant information required in order to answer the research question for the study. The researchers did not plan on generalising the results of this study to other domains or populations, considering its design and the sample size. Although this research is subjective in nature, it is objective in its particular teaching context, namely ODL at NAMCOL centres in Namibia, and the research area of SRL.

Research Site and Context of the Participants

The phenomenological case study was conducted at three NAMCOL centres in the Ohangwena Region in Namibia, a predominantly rural environment. NAMCOL does not have its own centres, but uses some secondary schools as centres after school hours. The Grade 10 NAMCOL learners who participated in the study failed Grade 10 in secondary school. Some learner participants live in villages close to the centres, while others have to travel long distances to the centres. The average age of the participants was 19 years, which is older than the average 16-year age of Grade 10 learners in secondary schools. All the tutors who participated in the study were full-time, experienced teachers in public schools.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews, based on the literature review of SRL, ODL and an adapted version of the SRL interviews schedule of Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988), were used to explore the perceptions of the tutor and learner participants. The interviews took place at convenient times for the participants to prevent disturbances in the participants' teaching and learning activities.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Issues

Trustworthiness and reliability were assured by using the data collection methods consistent with the theoretical framework of SRL and the research questions. A systematic approach to data collection was used. Ethical consideration of the participants was ensured by addressing the matters of permission, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality, integrity, professional dignity, the trustworthiness of the information and the right to withdraw from the study without consequences (Fraenkel and Wallen 2010, 57). This research study received written ethics approval from the institutional Ethics Committee of the university at which we are based. Permission to conduct this study was granted by the Namibian Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Education of the Ohangwena Region, the regional manager of NAMCOL and the principals of the three NAMCOL centres. Informed consent was received from all tutor and learner participants.

All participants agreed to complete and sign the consent form, providing the researcher with permission to participate in the research. The consent letters confirmed that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The information gathered and the identity of the participants were treated confidentially. The participants were asked to give permission to be tape recorded during interviews. The researcher thoroughly explained beforehand the potential impact of the research. The dates for the interviews were set by the researcher and the participants to make sure that the schedule did not interrupt the teaching hours of the tutors and contact sessions of the learners. Participants were assured that they would not come to any harm while participating in the research. Care was taken to ensure that no harm, risks, discomfort and frustrations were experienced by the participants during the research.

Data Analysis Procedures

A priori codes were identified by the researcher from the literature review on Zimmerman and Moylan's (2009) model, the SRL interviews schedule of Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988) as well as from semi-structured interviews. Content analysis was used to analyse the data using a thematic approach. The following themes were identified: goal setting, planning, motivation, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, task strategies, self-monitoring, time management, help-seeking, self-evaluation and responsibility for own learning.

In the next section, the results flowing from the study will be outlined.

Results and Discussions

Verbatim quotes are used to provide a description of the participants' perceptions and experiences. "T1C1" indicates the responses of Tutor Participant 1 from Centre 1 and "L1C1" indicates the responses of Learner Participant 1 from Centre 1, and so forth.

Goal Setting

Tutor participants indicated that many Grade 10 NAMCOL learners do not set educational goals. They are not committed, and they attend contact sessions poorly or attend them merely to meet friends for socialising and sports activities. As T2C3 observed, "They attend sessions just for a sake of saying I am a learner. These learners do not have full understanding of what they are aiming to achieve."

In contrast to tutor participant views, most of the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners indicated that they set distant goals for their studies and study hard before examinations. One participant stated "I have the dream to be someone in life. I want to help my families and my brothers, people in our community and building our country" (L4C2). Another participant said, "This year I want to pass this NAMCOL so that next year I become a full candidate" (L4C3).

Planning

Most tutor participants perceive Grade 10 NAMCOL learners as lacking the SRL skills to do proper planning for their studies. The following response encapsulates the perceptions of all the tutor participants: "Even though they are trying, I think they do not know how to go about to about their study" (TIC2).

In contrast, most of the learner participants indicated that they do have planning strategies. However, they equate planning only with planning study time for examinations. Nine learner participants (L1C1, L2C1, L4C1, L5C1, L3C2, L1C3, L2C3 and L5C3) indicated that timetables help them to plan—stating for example, "I will just draw up a timetable to study" (L1C1). Despite having timetables, a few learner participants indicated that they find it difficult to sustain their planning due to conflicting responsibilities. The learner participants did not mention how they plan resource strategies, learning strategies, and so forth.

Motivation

All of the tutor participants indicated that for many learners a lack of motivation is a barrier to their studies. One tutor participant claimed "[t]heir level of motivation is very poor; this is a result of the poor motivational background from home" (T1C1). Another one explained, "These learners lack motivation; one can say they lose hope" (T2C3).

Not all of the learner participants seemed demotivated. Two learner participants indicated that they were motivated by their peers' successes and their own failures. They made adaptive changes that direct them to new and potentially better forms of self-regulation, such as changing goals, putting in more effort and concentration or choosing different task strategies (Zimmerman 2010).

However, the majority of the learner participants reflected defensive behaviour by blaming external influences, such as tutors and fatigue, for their low motivation to study (Panadero and Alonso-Tapia 2014, 458). The following are examples of this: "Whenever I am studying I use to be tired. I do not want to touch the books" (L3C1); "Sometimes I am just feeling lazy, because no one to tell me to do so" (L4C3). From a few other responses similar to that of L4C3, it can be concluded that most of the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners are externally regulated and need to be told by tutors to study, as noted by L3C2: "You do not even get much information like full-time learners. Not always tutors attend the lessons."

Self-Efficacy

The tutor participants indicated that the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners have low self-efficacy beliefs. One tutor participant said, "They tell you that they do not think they can make it, they are doubting their performance and perceive themselves with low self-esteem" (T2C1). Zumbrunn, Tadlock and Roberts (2011) report that learners with low self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations make less effort with their studies, which results in dissatisfaction and reluctance to continue learning.

Most of the other learner participants' responses confirmed the tutor participants' perceptions of their low self-efficacy beliefs to study successfully through ODL, their feelings of hopelessness, and their mistrust in ODL studies. The following responses, supported by Bembenutty, White and Vélez (2015), show that learners with low self-efficacy beliefs label themselves as incapable and incompetent to perform academically: "I just want to give up, I cannot do this" (L2C1) and "I feel left out. I lost a lot; when I am doing this distance learning, it is not really a good thing to do. My fellow learners have moved on with their studies, and I am like back, is still a long journey to go, so I cannot reach them, so I feel very bad" (L2C2). Only three learner participants (L5C1, L5C3 and L4C3) seemed to have high self-efficacy beliefs. One participant, for example, expressed "I am sure I will make it this year so that next year I will not be in NAMCOL" (L5C1).

Outcome Expectations

The tutor participants perceived learners to have low outcome expectations for success. T1C3 observed, "Learners have doubts if they will make it and they end up getting stress. Some use to ask me whether they will pass."

Contrary to this view, a few learner participants' responses indicated that they were motivated by outcome expectations of their studies. One participant (L3C1) remarked, "I have to make it this year, to be someone in future" and another (L4C2) observed, "I have the dream of good things, to be someone in my life. I want to help my families and my brothers, people in our community and building our country."

Two learner participants indicated negative influences from their peers on the outcome expectations of their studies. L4C2 explained, "They tell me can I stop to go to school; NAMCOL does not help me; we have to go look for our job."

Task Strategies

The tutor participants indicated that the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners did not use different task strategies to help them understand their tasks. One tutor (T1C3) remarked the following: "Modules, they do understand them a bit; they need more explanation from their tutor."

On the other hand, the learner participants indicated that they used strategies such as repetition, note taking, thinking aloud and self-explanations, summarising, and studying from model answers and previous question papers. L5C1 stated, "I go through the questions first and later on I go check the answers in the book to compare my answer with the ones that are provided at the end of the book." Two others explained, "I will make notes of questions that are difficult" (L3C2) and, "[w]hen I am reading, I read out loud; that is how I learn. I am explaining to myself, and I am also summarising my own work" (L2C2). From the response of the latter participant, quoted below, it seems that the learner has a problem retaining information in long-term memory: "I did a subject, but some of the information you drop them out, so they are no more in you, even you try to remember what they meant what you were taught in full time, you cannot remember" (L2C2). Another learner participant (L1C3) said "I leave a blank space because things are difficult." The responses of learner participants L2C3 and L1C3 above are supported by Zimmerman (2000).

Self-Monitoring

The tutor participants' responses indicated that the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners did not monitor their understanding of the content and their progress. Their perceptions were supported by the vague learner participant responses about their metacognitive monitoring for understanding and progress. One learner participant (L5C3) tried to explain: "Before exam, I make sure that I know everything in my summary and everything in my modules and I used to set test for myself so that I can … I can answer those tests and makes sure that I answer all the questions correct." Another one (L3C1) said, "I used to study months before exam, so I have to revise." The learner participants could not describe the different strategies they used to monitor their comprehension and progress. It seems that most of the learner participants demonstrated passive SRL (Zimmerman 2000).

Time Management

The tutors indicated that the learners have poor time management skills (Rao and Giuli 2010). Many learners attend contact sessions irregularly and habitually arrive late. One tutor (T2C3) lamented, "The lesson is starting at two they are coming even 30 minutes after." They fail to meet due dates for assignments and submit incomplete assignments, as another tutor's response indicates: "On the due date they come to submit, and some are still sitting there outside writing" (T1C2).

One learner participant indicated that he balanced his study time well with other responsibilities, as ODL requires: "I have a study timetable where I write my time to start studying and time to relax and to do other things at home" (L5C3). Most of the learner participants' responses confirmed the tutors' perceptions of their poor time management, and general fatigue that affects their ability to study as a result of their parenting and domestic workloads, part-time employment duties, and financial problems, such as having to pay for transport for the far distances they have to travel. One learner participant (L3C1) stated, "I did not get time to study; I just get on the house work instead of studying." A few learners revealed that they struggled with English, and therefore they took longer to complete assignments.

Help-Seeking

The tutor participants indicated that most Grade 10 NAMCOL learners want to be spoon-fed and use expedient help-seeking (Kozanitis, Desbiens, and Chouinard 2007). They explained that the learners do not turn up when additional help is offered. The following are examples of tutor responses: "You find a person come up with an essay and say straight to you, Miss, can you poke out my problems?" (T2C1). Another tutor participant said, "Even if you give them something to do, an activity of five questions, many of them can come back to class without doing anything, telling you they do not understand, they say the questions are difficult" (T1C1). Grade 10 NAMCOL learners seem reluctant to seek help proactively, but rather camouflage their incompetence to do a task or use defensive strategies to protect their self-esteem (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009).

In contrast to the tutor participants' perceptions, a few learner participants' responses showed that they knew how to seek help from different sources. One observed, "I can get those textbooks from full time learners and I can help myself. So like sometimes I go to the library and search for that question somewhere" (L5C2). Another learner participant elaborated, "If I have a question that I do not understand, I go to my friends or to the neighbours to help me, those people who already completed their Grade 12" (L1C2). Although most of them use expedient help-seeking, it can be concluded that a few learner participants use adaptive help-seeking (Kozanitis, Desbiens, and Chouinard 2007).

Self-Evaluation Strategies

The tutor participants indicated that Grade 10 NAMCOL learners do not use self-evaluation strategies. They believe the learners' English language proficiency inhibits their comprehension and other metacognitive monitoring processes that relate to self-evaluation (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009). The following is an example of how the tutor participants exposed their perceptions: "Their reading skills are too poor. If they do read the book, they do not understand at all, not enough for them to execute what the book is saying" (T1C2). Another one elaborated, "Many of them can come back to class without doing anything, telling you they do not understand, they say the questions are difficult, although you rephrased them" (T1C1).

The following three responses encapsulate the perceptions of most of the learner participants regarding their self-evaluation skills: "I answer some questions in our module. In the modules, there are some correct answers; I check if I am correct" (L4C2); "I set my own exam, and then I try to answer. Then I got it that I am okay. I verify with the summary book and booklet" (L2C3 and L5C3); "I close my book, to see if I can remember what I read" (L5C2).

The learner participants' responses show that most of them use self-evaluation to evaluate how well they remember the content. No participant referred, for example, to how the tutors' feedback helps them to self-evaluate their comprehension, learning strategies or progress.

Responsibility for Own Learning

In contrast to Bramucci (2013), four tutor participants perceived the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners as uncommitted, dependent on tutors and not ready to take responsibility for their own learning. The following response (T1C1) encapsulates the perceptions of the four tutors:

> They are required to study, but they only depend on me. The problem is if I am not there they will not make it. They are not serious and they tend to have many responsibilities, some are important some are not. Many of them spend most of their time at the bars drinking. They spend their time on soccer, netball and so on … You give them something to do, an activity of five questions, many of them can come back to class without doing anything, telling you they do not understand.

Two learner participants perceived themselves as taking responsibility for their learning by doing their own assignments and managing their study and leisure time. This is what one learner participant said: "I do my assignment on my own and submit before due date. I just have to read first before I attend to my friends or other things. Normally I put myself first in a schedule" (L2C2).

Conclusion

The Grade 10 NAMCOL learner participants were only exposed to teacher-centred instruction in their secondary school experiences and still need to adjust to SRL practices in ODL. The perceptions of the tutor and the learner participants concur with regard to factors that influence the learner participants' time management, low motivation and self-efficacy beliefs as well as their financial predicaments. Both groups concur that the expanse of the Namibian geographical landscape and the socio-economic conditions of the Grade 10 learners exacerbate their financial difficulties to attend classes.

There are discrepancies between their perceptions about all the other SRL skills needed to cope with ODL. Contrary to the learner participants, the tutor participants believe the majority of Grade 10 NAMCOL learner participants do not use SRL skills effectively to improve their academic performance. In contrast to the learner participants' responses, the tutor responses indicated that the Grade 10 NAMCOL learners do not take responsibility for their own learning. They are dependent on the extrinsic motivation, regulation and academic assistance of the tutors. Owing to the nature of ODL, the tutors have minimal contact with the Grade 10 learners and do not live up to the learners' expectations regarding academic support. The learner participants alluded that not all tutors are committed to giving extra academic support in the afternoons, after working a full day in their teaching positions. The poor English proficiency of the Grade 10 NAMCOL learner participants, coupled with their low motivation and self-efficacy beliefs, contributed to the learners' and the tutors' low expectancy of academic success.

The challenges and demands of ODL experienced by Grade 10 NAMCOL learners are similar to the experiences of most ODL learners, according to the literature. However, the Namibian school setup is unique in some ways. In most countries, learners who fail Grade 10 are allowed to repeat the grade in the formal school setup. The Namibian learners are unique in the sense that they have to leave the formal school sector and may only return after passing Grade 10 through NAMCOL. According to the literature, the majority of ODL learners are employed, earn salaries, and thus can provide for the financial requirements of ODL. The NAMCOL Grade 10 learners, however, are not yet economically independent, and their poor socio-economic conditions exacerbate the financial burdens of ODL.

Recommendations

NAMCOL should educate learners clearly, prior to their enrolment, about the programme design and the requirements of the ODL mode of delivery. The learning content and instructions in the study guides should not be above the comprehension level of the learners and should include specific task strategies and guidelines on how to learn the particular subject. The study guides should offer sufficient cognitive support

and scaffolding for learners who struggle with the English language. The study guides should have detailed time schedules to guide learners on time management.

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education appoint full-time tutors to ensure commitment to the academic and other needs of NAMCOL learners. Tutors should be trained to incorporate and develop SRL in their teaching and study material. It is also recommended that tutorial lessons and vacation schools should be recorded on compact discs and digital video files in DVD format. In light of the socio-economic conditions of many NAMCOL learners (Silinda 2013), more sophisticated and recent software for data storage on computers and phones such as Cloud and WhatsApp applications might not be affordable. The use of compact discs and digital video files could be an effective instructional strategy for NAMCOL learners who have been absent from contact sessions, for struggling learners who benefit from repetition, and for reviewing and preparing for examinations. Motivational speeches or showing motivational videos of people who have succeeded through NAMCOL should be organised.

Tutors should reinforce the importance of all the SRL skills so that learners begin to understand and value them. For example, tutors should give the learners instruction on a strategy to promote learner autonomy. Learners should be taught explicitly how to analyse tasks, set goals, plan their strategies and resources and manage time. Written and verbal feedback should be motivational and interrogative on strategy use. Positive help-seeking skills should be promoted, as well as the use of additional sources to aid comprehension. Learning tasks should be designed in ways that compel learners to go through SRL processes, such as task analysis, goal setting, planning, the use of different task strategies and reflection, in order to complete of their tasks. Test questions could also include explanations of how SRL skills should have been applied to prepare for the test.

It is recommended that future research should be expanded to different NAMCOL centres to explore other challenges NAMCOL learners might experience as well as the influence of tutors' perceptions on the motivation and outcome expectations of NAMCOL learners.

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