Chapter 1

Framing the study

Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the purpose and nature of the study. Firstly, the aim and the research questions guiding the investigation are formulated. Subsequently, the conceptual framework of the study is presented and explained. The last part of the chapter is about the research approach and the rationale for the study.

1.1 Aim

This thesis builds around an exploratory study that aims at providing an empirically informed sketch of what could be the patterns of epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education of high school students in Mozambique. The impact of those constructs on the learning outcomes of target group is also assessed. Epistemological beliefs studies have provided new insights into students’ attitudes towards learning. Likewise, studies on students’ conceptions of learning - a concept from which our construct of perceptions of education was developed, have yielded instrumental outcomes to teaching and learning practices and to educational research. On those grounds, our presumption is that the findings of the present study are likely to pave the way towards a better understanding of the learning patterns and learning problems of the target group and, consequently, contribute insights to the challenge of enhancing the quality of education in Mozambique. Specifically, the outcomes of the study may inform interventions and further research at different levels (e.g. teacher-student interaction in the classroom, teacher training programs, and curriculum development) about the implications of students’ beliefs about knowledge and learning on their learning approaches and learning outcomes.

The study was stimulated by a scenario characterised by a perennial concern about the quality of education in the country, particularly at the upper level of secondary education (high school), and at the outset of
higher education. In actual fact, it has been acknowledged that “the most worrying problem in secondary education [in Mozambique] is its low quality and efficiency” (UNDP, 2000, p.49). Reflecting awareness to that issue, and also setting to tackle it, the Education Sector Strategic Plan II in Mozambique (MINED, 2004) pledges increased attention vis à vis improving the quality of both secondary education and technical/vocational education, deemed “instrumental for personal and economic development” (MINED, 2004, p.1). Complementarily, the National Strategic Plan for Higher Education (MESCT, 2000) regards quality as one of the major challenges facing the development of higher education in Mozambique.

Amongst the facts that reportedly testify for the low efficiency and low quality of higher education in Mozambique, the following have been emphasised: High dropout rates, abnormally long average time spent by the students to complete their undergraduate programs (one and a half years more, in average), and their low level of satisfaction with the quality of the lectures and with the intellectual development they happen to attain in attending national institutions of higher education (Mário, Fry, Levey, & Chilundo, 2003; Fry & Utui, 1999). It is also noteworthy that it has been amongst first-year undergraduate students (high school leavers) that the highest repeat and dropout rates have been reported. The unbearable amplitude of this problem in the eighties of last century jeopardised quite seriously the effectiveness¹ of the institution to an extent of urging the adoption of a long-term intervention programme at the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), the oldest and largest institution of higher education in Mozambique. That programme consisted of mathematics and science remedial courses, offered to university freshers during one semester, before they could enrol in their actual graduate programmes (UEM, 1996). Named BUSCEP (Basic University Science Project), that remedial programme was similar to some others that, around the same time, had been launched in most Southern Africa countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (the so-called ‘Boleswa’ group) then also grappling with the same issue (Ferreira, 1995; Cantrell, Kouwenhoven, Mokoena, & Thijs, 1993; Stoll, De Feiter, Vonk, & Van den Akker, 1996). Notwithstanding that, and as far as the UEM and Mozambique is concerned, pass rates at the final year

¹ - As proposed by Scheerens (2000, p.18), by effectiveness we refer to the performance of the educational institution (the UEM), expressed through its output, and measured in terms of the average achievement of the student.
of high school and at the end of first-year degree studies have remained rather unsatisfactory².

Obviously, many factors, inter alia material, financial and organisational, contribute to the quality of the outputs of educational systems. However, our concern in designing this study was to address some of the personal factors, specifically students’ epistemological beliefs and their perceptions of education. Two underlying assumptions motivated our endeavour. Firstly, the presumption that at a theoretical level, these constructs could represent valuable inputs for the deepening of our awareness and understanding of high school and first-year university students’ learning patterns and, most likely, a broader and diligent view of their learning problems. Secondly, the conviction that education, while rather powerless in itself to affect and manipulate the material and financial conditions (and constraints) under which it operates, it has the potential to positively influence students’ personal factors. Explicitly, education can purposefully induce ‘sophisticated’ epistemological beliefs, as well as functional perceptions of education, towards learning approaches and learning strategies that yield positive outcomes, thus contributing to the improvement of the overall quality of educational systems.

In the pursuit of a deeper perception of the array of aspects implicated in students’ learning patterns and learning problems, educationalists have striven to devise and propose heuristic models. The 3P Model of Classroom Learning (Biggs, 1993; Biggs & Moore, 1993) appears to be one of the most comprehensive of those models and does support the theoretical position of the present study. That model congregates and relates the main classroom components under a 3P metaphoric description: Presage (students characteristics and teaching context), Process (task processing), and Product (nature/quality of outcome). Students’ learning conceptions and approaches to learning, some of the critical elements within the presage, have been widely investigated. Research outcomes indicate quite systematically that learning conceptions and approaches are, to large extent, related to students’ learning strategies (see, for instance, Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Van Rossum & Schenk, 1984; Schmeck, 1986; Marton, Dall’Alba, & Beaty, 1993; Biggs, 1979; Entwistle, 2000).

² - For instance, in 2002, the average failure rate at the high-school level in Mozambique was of 29.1% (MINED, 2003).
Additionally, empirical evidence has also been found sustaining that approaches to learning and learning strategies influence learning outcomes (e.g. Dahl, Bals, & Turi, 2005). Utmost, epistemological beliefs have been found significantly related to both approaches to learning (e.g. Chan, 2002; Cano, 2005), and to learning outcomes (e.g. Schommer, 1990, 1993; Cano, 2005). That integrative chain of relationships inspired the design of the conceptual framework of the present study, presented and discussed in Section 1.3 of the present chapter. The implication here is that, with reference to the 3P Model, students’ epistemological beliefs and their perceptions of education are regarded as part of the presage (students’ characteristics). Thus, in all, the focus of the study is to examine possible cultural traits the epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education of the target group, and discuss the influence that those may exert on academic achievement.

1.2 Delimitation and research questions of the study

The study was initially envisaged to be restricted to a pioneering survey on epistemological beliefs of Mozambican high-school students. Meanwhile, insights gained in the course of its conceptualisation suggested that added value could be gained by expanding its scope to include a survey of the perceptions of education held by the target group. It became apparent that the outcomes of such a broader scope could hint at eventual relationships amongst those variables and, thereby, allow a variety of analyses to be made. In view of that, while preserving its exploratory character, the study was ultimately designed with a threefold purpose: (i) to depict and interpret the patterns of both the epistemological beliefs and the perceptions of education of a representative sample of Mozambican high-school students, (ii) to identify and explore relationships between the two constructs, and (iii) to assess eventual impact of those constructs on students’ academic achievement.

As the research movement on epistemological beliefs has started to expand beyond the North American and European contexts, studies on the subject begin to find appropriate ground to empirically explore the theoretically sound hypothesis upheld by Jehng, Johnson, and Anderson (1993), advocating that epistemological beliefs are “socially [culturally] shared intuitions about the nature of knowledge and the nature of learning”
Conceived under that assumption, the bulk of the present study lies in its attempt to identify cultural traits that may underlie Mozambican students’ epistemological beliefs. Marginally, and considering that one of the research instruments used in the study, namely the epistemological questionnaire, was developed and validated in Western contexts, the outcomes of the study were interpretable with regard to the degree of applicability and validity of that questionnaire in a cultural setting clearly different from the one it originated from. Considering the aforementioned purpose, the study set out to examine the following specific questions:

1. What kinds (patterns) of epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education are to be found amongst Mozambican high-school students, and how far do these constructs intertwine?

2. To what extent the identified epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education bear specific cultural traits?

3. To what extent students’ epistemological beliefs are related to some selected demographic and socio-cultural variables?

4. Is there empirical indication that the epistemological beliefs and the perceptions of education held by Mozambican high school students do impart their learning outcomes?

To answer the first part of Research Question 1, epistemological beliefs of a sample of the target group were surveyed through a Portuguese version of an existing epistemological questionnaire, namely the one proposed by Jehng and Jacobson (1999). Perceptions of education were firstly elicited through a small scale semi-structured interview and then surveyed on a large scale by means of a questionnaire developed from the interview outcomes. The major processing of data from both questionnaires (i.e. the epistemological beliefs questionnaire and the questionnaire on perceptions of education) was undertaken through Factor Analysis. This is a statistical technique applied in quantitative data analysis in order to achieve parsimony by identifying the smallest number of descriptive terms to explain the maximum amount of common variance in a correlation matrix (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). Correlation analyses were performed to examine the interrelatedness between epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education, thus...
answering the second part of research question 1. Research Question 2 was addressed by processing and interpreting the outcomes from the previous question (patterns of epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education) with regard to hypothesised cultural dimensions of the target group. Correlation and regression analyses were performed to answer Research Question 3, while Research Question 4 was dealt with via a path model. Through that model, the relevant direct and indirect relationships amongst variables were depicted and analysed, with emphasis on the direct and mediating role of epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education on academic performance.

1.3 The Conceptual Framework of the study

The conceptual framework of this study is depicted in Figure 1.1. It assumes that both epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education – the main constructs of the study, are culturally imparted and that, direct and indirectly, both exert some influence on students’ learning outcomes. Miles and Huberman (1994) have sustained that a research conceptual framework ought to be a heuristic tool that “explains, either graphically or in narrative form the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables – and the presumed relationships among them” (p.18). The pertinence and appropriateness of a diagrammatical presentation of the conceptual framework for the present study was drawn from Robson (1993). He argues that in explorative studies, the overall system of supporting concepts, assumptions and theories is better captured if the respective conceptual frameworks are presented diagrammatically. Even so, in order to spell-out further the gist and the rationale of the proposed conceptual framework, a brief explanation of the diagram will be subsequently provided.

3 - The presumption of direct and indirect influence of epistemological beliefs on academic achievement, portrayed in our conceptual framework, was drawn from the findings reported by Ryan (1984) and by Cano (2005), respectively. As for the impact of and perceptions of education on academic achievement, our presumption was grounded on the research findings described by Van Rossum and Schenk (1984) and by Meyer (1988). Further discussion about that is presented in Chapters 3 and 4.
1.3.1 On the main constructs of the study

Epistemological Beliefs and Perceptions of Education, the featuring constructs of the study are highlighted quite at the top of the diagram. The former construct stands for what individuals believe about the nature of knowledge and learning, while the later refers to perceptions about education and learning. The double arrow on a broken line stands for the hypothetical relationship between these constructs. That hypothetical relationship is subject of examination in this study.

The general theoretical assumptions encapsulated within each of the two main constructs of the study (i.e. epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education) are listed in the adjacent rectangles. Hence, regarding epistemological beliefs, and according to the supporting theory (e.g. Schommer, 1990, 1993, 1994), Certain vs. Tentative, Innate vs. Acquired, and Simple vs. Complex are assumptions about the nature of knowledge, while Handed down vs. Formed, and Quick vs. Slow are assumptions about the nature of learning⁴. Concerning perceptions of education, the study

⁴ - These concepts are elaborated in Chapter 3
adopts the hypothesis that education is perceived from the *Aims* and from the *Goals* people expect to achieve through it. Complementarily, it is hypothesised that specific conceptions of learning are to be accounted for through the *Requisites*, the *Behaviour* and the *Regulation* that people believe those conceptions entail. Those conditions, which may also be termed conceptual categories (Maxwell, 1998), constitute operational dependent variables in a specific part of the study\(^5\).

### 1.3.2 On the subsidiary constructs

Approaches to Learning congregate students’ conceptions of learning, their experiences about learning situations, and their strategies and motivations to learn (Cano, 2005). ‘Levels of Understanding’ refer to the extent and to the quality of meaning-making, while ‘Learning Outcomes’ refer to academic achievement. In other words, academic achievement reflects the appropriateness of the learning outcomes.

*Approaches to Learning, Levels of Understanding and Learning Outcomes* are presented in a way consistent with the hypothesis that these constructs may constitute the downstream levels of the impact of both epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education. It should be, however, noticed that ‘Approaches to Learning’ and ‘Levels of Understanding’ do not stand as operational variables in the study since they are not dealt with empirically. Instead, they are just discussed conceptually\(^6\) and understood as mediators between the chief independent variables of the study (epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education) and the main dependent variable (academic performance), here represented as Learning Outcomes. The relationship between approaches to learning and the quality of the learning outcomes assumed in our framework has been empirically validated by several studies (e.g. Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Biggs, 1979; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991). Complementarily, other studies have shown that epistemological beliefs influence academic achievement directly and also indirectly, via students’ approaches to learning (e.g. Cano, 2005), and

\(^{5}\) - See Chapter 5

\(^{6}\) - Miles & Huberman (1994, pp.19-20) have sustained that, contrary to inferential inquiries, exploratory designs may adopt frameworks that include all the existing and foreseeable relationships, without necessarily examining all of them empirically: “Only some relationships will be explored, certain kinds of outcomes measured, and certain analyses made” (p.19). In those cases, the linking arrows between variables are purely logical and are meant to usher the reader into conceptual interpretations.
that students’ epistemological beliefs are associated to students’ learning strategies (e.g. Dahl, Bals, & Turi, 2005).

1.3.3 On culture and cultural context

What lends this study quite distinctive as an investigation into personal epistemology research is the social and cultural context in which it took place. Emphasis on contextualised educational constructs has been a characteristic of the ongoing paradigm shift in educational psychology, from ‘cold’ and de-contextualised cognition to ‘hot’ and situated cognition. The latter is supposed to be impacted by authentic contextual factors, such as values, beliefs, perceptions and motivations. To account for that, the conceptual framework has purposefully included the component ‘culture’. In the following, we elaborate on that component and outline how it was addressed in our data interpretation.

Defining concepts is a common practice in scientific writing. Yet, sometimes, it proves to be an awkward exercise, due to a cumbersome character of some concepts, which seem to challenge any clear-cut definition. Culture is one of those concepts. As a matter of fact, the numerous definitions of culture to be found in the literature describe it as a prolific and all-embracing concept, even when addressing it from an apparently narrow disciplinary perspective (e.g. anthropology, social psychology, sociology, economy). Such a diversity of definitions of culture seem to suggest that the concept refers to almost everything human beings do, think and believe in, lending the concept of culture to be somewhat vague and illusive.

Undoubtedly, one of the characteristics of African cultures is the diversity and multiplicity of their constituent elements, such as philosophies (or worldviews), religions, languages, art and craft, and other values, including those historically and politically imposed by means of distressful processes (e.g. foreign languages and religions). Consequently, in Africa, the interaction and even the conflicts amongst those elements cannot but cause the notion of culture to be even more fluid and tricky. Arguing on those lines, some viewpoints have gone to the extreme of suggesting that culture should be regarded as a foreign concept to Africa, once built on Eurocentric disciplines and rationality (e.g. Van Staden; Thorton, as cited in Kouwenhoven, 2003). Aware of that enduring debate, but yet compelled to define culture in a way that does justice to its comprehensive scope and to the realm of the present study,
we have, ironically, ended up with a quite broad definition. It results from a combination of two amongst the numberless definitions. Specifically, we drew from the definitions of culture set-forth by Brown (1991) and by Reeves and Baden (2000), hence coming to conceptualise culture as a set of distinctive and conventional patterns of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, norms, activity and art, that characterise the way of life and relations of a society, and that are passed on from generation to generation through formal, non-formal, and informal education. Two segments of such definition of culture are pivotal and particularly pertinent to the nature and aims of the present study, which is about beliefs and perceptions and their role in learning. One of the segments refers to ‘patterns of ideas, thoughts and beliefs’, and the other reads: ‘passed on through formal, non-formal, and informal education’. Though one cannot assume that what may be supposed to be the ‘society’s culture’ exerts a linear and inescapable influence on an individual’s epistemologies, perceptions and behaviour towards knowledge and education, the above definition of culture entails that a cultural context does have some general overtones on the specific traits of the epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education of the target group. In fact, culture is ubiquitous and permeates society members and their activities (Hatano & Miyake, 1991; Boekaerts, 1998).

In view of expressing and illustrating the above discussed notion of culture, our conceptual framework depicts the Cultural Context as an umbrella dimension, covering and imparting activities, phenomena, and relationships occurring under it. Specific to this study, those aspects include, apart from the two main constructs of the study, the supposedly influential independent variables, such as school environment, gender, language, religion, and study habits of the target group. It should, however, be noted that because of the nature of the investigation, cultural considerations will be quite often addressed on a comparative basis. To that end, whenever appropriate, the framework proposed by Hofstede (2000) will be considered. Accordingly, countries’ cultures can be classified along five dimensions: Individualism (high individualism vs low individualism or collectivism), Masculinity (masculinity vs femininity), Power Distance (large power distance vs small power distance), Uncertainty Avoidance (weak uncertainty avoidance vs strong uncertainty avoidance), and Long-Term Orientation (high long-term orientation vs low long-term orientation). We are aware that, apart from limitations inherent to presumptions resulting from a widely generalised
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This study, Hofstede’s framework has at least two additional debatable assumptions, which have given ground to sharp criticisms, up to the point of suggesting that “he [Hofstede] might not have studied culture at all”, but confused cultures with nations (Baskerville, 2003, p.2). The first problematic assumption is that of equating nation states with cultures, whereas, in reality, cultures are not countries, as reality shows that, generally, diverse cultures coexist in one country (Wildavsky, cited in Baskerville, 2003). The second tricky assumption entails the apparent reduction of the delicate enterprise of understanding and characterising culture to simple numeric indices and matrices (Baskerville, op cit.). Both assumptions are particularly valid regarding most of the Sub-Saharan African countries/cultures. For that reason, it seems fair to think of Hofstede’s (2000) framework not as a tool to be linearly and sweepingly applied in all countries to describe culture. In view of that, in referring to that framework, later on, we will solely be making use of its suitability and potential for assisting in the interpretation of certain epistemological belief dimensions, for the benefit of some comparative analyses.

1.4 Research Approach

Commonly, research approaches in the social and behavioural sciences are typified according to the ways in which the actual studies are designed and conducted. The nature of the data collected and the techniques used for analysis usually stand as the criteria for such a categorization. That has given ground to a rather dichotomised classification of social sciences research in two clusters of approaches, namely the Quantitative versus the Qualitative approaches. Meanwhile, as social and behavioural phenomena get inextricable and more complex, deciding on a research approach and on data collection methods tends to be more dependent on the nature of the inquiry and on the type of information required to attain the envisaged purpose (Bell, 1999). Otherwise, a combination of approach is advisable. This was the case of the present study.

As stated at the outset, this study has endeavoured to address the traits of a specific target group regarding two rather complex constructs: the epistemological beliefs and the perceptions of education. Epistemological beliefs were approached under a quantitative-inductive paradigm, in which samples of students were submitted to a pre-established
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epistemological scale and their responses computed in order to extract the underlying belief-factors. Meanwhile, in addressing students’ perceptions of education, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Firstly, an interview (a qualitative-deductive approach) was conducted to elicit students’ categories of description of their perceptions of education. Subsequently, and based on those categories of description, a questionnaire was developed and applied in a quantitative-inductive survey, to identify the most significant factors featuring those perceptions of education.

The overall design of this study is guided by the rationale of the so-called ‘mixed-method inquiry’ (Greene & Caracelli, 1997a, 1997b). This kind of inquiry acknowledges that since social phenomena are so complex, “different kinds of methods are needed to understand the important complexities of our world more completely” (Greene & Caracelli, 1997a, p.7). Furthermore, in mixed-method inquiries, it is assumed that each paradigm and its respective procedure of data gathering and analysis has to be used for its potential to offer meaningful and legitimate ways of knowing and understanding, as well as for allowing a full understanding and deeper and broader insights towards knowledge claims (Greene & Caracelli, 1997a).

Having hinted at the issue of research purpose, it is perhaps pertinent to retain that, in one way or another, research methodology theorists (e.g. Fox, 1969; Bickman & Rog, 1998) seem to agree on that there are two chief purposes of social and behavioural inquiry:

i. to gain or supplement the knowledge and the understanding of social reality or behaviour, and

_Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000)_ provide another perspective equally helpful for addressing the issue of approaches in research. Considering the prevailing two contending views of the social sciences, namely the _traditional_ and the _modern_ one, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (op. cit.) regard the _traditional_ view as the one sustaining that social sciences are essentially the same as the natural sciences in that they are concerned in discovering natural and universal laws regulating and determining individual and social behaviour. On the other side, they see the _modern_ view as focusing on how individuals differ not only from inanimate natural phenomena but also from each other, without, however, neglecting the rigour of the natural sciences. For Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (op. cit.), these competing views and their corresponding reflections in educational research originate from different conceptions of the social reality and of both the individual and the social behaviour. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (op. cit., p.8) conclude by holding that educational research absorbs the two views (i.e. the _traditional_ and the _modern_ views of the social sciences), as they complement each other.
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ii. to propose solutions (interventions) towards observed social phenomena or behaviours.

It is implicit that these purposes are not mutually exclusive, considering that a given study may aim at both. Though specific interventions may be drawn from its findings, the present study was conceived as an explorative one, primarily concerned in lending some acquaintance with the patterns of epistemological beliefs and perceptions of education of a specific target group. Therefore, it can be categorised as pertaining to purpose (i), which is to say that it is a theoretically oriented study.

1.5 Rationale for the study

It has been observed, with regret, that “developing countries are still clinging to competitive advantages based on natural resources and cheap labour”, in a world context in which the role of knowledge has become of paramount importance for social and economic development (Brito, Brouwer, Menezes, & Mlay, 2005, p.1). In actuality, more and more, the quality of knowledge superimposes itself as a springboard for competitive advantages in the ‘global village’. Along those lines, jargons such as Knowledge and Information Society, Knowledge-based Economy, and Learning Society have been gaining wide currency in education and in development policies. These and other typical terms testify that qualified knowledge has, probably, become a commodity - a kind of a very subtle and powerful export product. Those terms also unveil that learning has definitely become not just a lifespan need for individual citizens and for societies, in general, but also a social need and a social ‘quality’ (Smith, 2000). Thereupon, building and strengthening indigenous human capacity becomes a prerequisite for countries to promote and sustain the inexorable knowledge and learning-driven development, which characterises current and foreseeable trends, worldwide. Synthesising the role of knowledge and learning as requisites for social participation (towards development), Van der Kamp (2004) argues in the following terms: “In knowledge and learning societies, competences, skills and learning have come to be recognized as fundamental for participation by individuals in modern life as well as the hallmarks of dynamic economic units and thriving social communities” (p.5).
The above discussed state of affairs calls for more effective and efficient educational systems, capable of yielding high quality outputs. Such challenge turns to be rather overwhelming in the Third-World countries, particularly in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, where, in general, the school system has remained rather scanty and ailing. Consequently, expanding access and improving quality of education in this region have been relentless issues. Mozambique, the setting of this study, is no exception (MINED, 1995, 2004; UNDP, 2000; Mário, Buendía Gomez, Kouwenhoven, Alberto, & Waddington, 2002).

Issues of access and equity are more palpable and, certainly, more pressing, due to their social and political volatility. Owing to that, governments tend to handle those issues as matters of relatively greater concern and priority. Actual actions to tackle them can be seen more perceptibly in educational national policies, quite often overriding those related with quality enhancement. The quote that follows, taken from the draft Mozambique Education Sector Strategic Plan II for the period 2005-2009 is outspokenly illustrative of the foregoing:

Progress in the enhancement of quality was more limited, and, indeed, some indicators suggest that enrolment expansion was, in some instances, at the expenses of quality. Examples of such indicators include the use of double or even triple shifts in urban areas, a decline in teacher/student ratios and increasing class sizes (MINED, 2004, p.5).

Undoubtedly, quality is that subtle element that really matters when it comes to regard education as an agent for social and economic development. After all, the technological developments that have imposed rapid and profound transformations worldwide rest on the quality of knowledge. In recognition of that, the draft Strategic Plan for the Educational Sector in Mozambique (MINED, 2004) highlights quality assurance as one of the top priority goals. Furthermore, it states that the expansion of access to education “must not be at the expenses of quality. On the contrary, the vision puts quality at the centre of education reform in a way that supports access” (p.2). The assumption is that better quality also entails higher efficiency, through lower failure, dropout, and grade repetition rates.
In sum, in contexts like Mozambique, where improving the quality of education is a burning issue, studies and interventions conducive to that end are overdue. Hereunder lies the rationale and the contextual relevance of the present study.