

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL CLUSTER SYSTEM AS A SUPPORT SERVICE
FOR TEACHERS: A CASE OF OLUNO CIRCUIT IN THE OSHANA
REGION OF NAMIBIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate views of respondents on how the school cluster system serves as a teachers' support service with the ultimate goal to improve learners' academic performance and teachers' professional development.

The study used a qualitative approach and adopted a case study research design. The study involved three Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), two Satellite School Principals (SSPs) and five teachers from secondary schools. Data were mainly collected through semi-structured interview guide and semi-structured questionnaire, supplemented by document analysis. Semi-structured interview guide were administered on the Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs) and Satellite School Principals, while semi-structured questionnaires were administered to teachers. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis on emerging themes that guided the analysis. Research ethics was maintained by ensuring that confidentiality, right to self-autonomy, privacy, were observed and informed consent was obtained from respondents.

The study revealed that the school cluster system could become a forum to accord teachers an opportunity to creatively develop and generate ideas on best ways to facilitate learning, concepts in subject areas, and develop teaching and learning materials. However, it also emerged that CCPs needed to know more of their responsibilities and roles in terms of providing teacher support services. Furthermore, it was established from the findings of the study that school cluster system is not guided by a policy framework, but rather is operating in a vacuum.

The study concluded that in the absence of the school cluster policy successful implementation school cluster system as a teacher support service hampered. Despite

the identified challenges, school cluster system was perceived to be a noble initiative aiming at promoting support services for teachers' professional growth.

As a result the study recommended the development of the school cluster policy and that CCPs should receive induction in order to increase their commitment and job satisfaction to assist teachers' professional growth and quality service delivery of teaching. The researcher further recommended for a future study a critical examination on the effectiveness of the school cluster system in Namibia.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father Thomas Uugwanga Nakambonde. I wished you witnessed my success, and may your soul continue resting in eternal peace. I also dedicated this work to my daughter Johanna Meitavelo-Letu Daniel and my niece Klaudia Nemuno Kainde. I would love my achievement to be a source of inspiration to them and that they may tow down into my footsteps.

DECLARATION

I, Johanna Nakambonde-Daniel, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research and that this work or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any institution.

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22 October 2018

Student Name

Signature

Date

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION/ACRONYMS

BEP	Basic Education Project
CBCI	Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry
CC	Cluster Centre
CCP	Cluster Centre Principal
CGI	Cognitively Guided Instruction
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
RO	Regional Office
SCP	School Cluster Policy
SCS	School Cluster System
SSP	Satellite School Principal
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TSS	Teacher Support Services

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation to the study

School clustering has become the international norm on how to support schools particularly in the developing world, as countries seek ways of addressing the many educational challenges that confront and beset their educational systems (Chikoko and Aipinge, 2009). According to Dittmar, Mendelsohn and Ward (2002) a ‘school cluster’ is defined as a group of schools that are geographically as close and accessible to each other as possible. While this definition is suitable, in the context of this study, school cluster means more than just geographically located and easily accessible schools within given perimeters. It refers to the grouping of schools that are closer to each other and are able to share teaching and learning resources to improve the delivery of quality education and for administrative purposes (Giordano, 2008). In the same token, Dittmar, Mendelsohn and Ward (2002) further describe a cluster as consisting of between five to seven schools, and one school in each group is selected to serve as a Cluster Centre.

Having said the above in Namibia, educational reform and development has been guided by the overarching goals of “access, equity, quality and democracy” (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 23). To this Aipinge (2007) asserted that the society-wide demands for better quality education prompted a need for an overall school improvement programme concerning school management and the curriculum. The former Minister of the then Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture Hon. Nahas Angula urged the Namibian nation “...to commit itself to the improvement of education through change, reform and renewal,” according to (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 24).

Tracing down the memory; and going back to the origin of the schools cluster system, one noted that this concept was first “introduced in Great Britain and India in the early 1940s, to promote efficiency in their education systems, for rural schools to join hands together and share teaching and learning resources; and to enhance quality teaching and learning by promoting collaboration between teachers and learners to share skills and fruitful teaching and learning approaches” (Giordano, 2008, p.34). Moreover, Giordano (2008) emphasized that school clusters strengthen areas of administration, sharing of materials, pedagogical and extracurricular activities, because they are resource centres equipped with materials and resources that are available to teachers from the surrounding schools.

During the educational reform process after independence, the Basic Education Project (BEP) as part of the educational reform process in Namibia identified the need to introduce the school clusters system to the Rundu Education Region in 1996, as a pilot phase. The benefits which arose from Rundu clusters strengthened the subsequent development of similar clusters in all regions of the country for the purpose of: 1) improving teaching and learning through sharing experiences and expertise among staff; 2) improving educational quality through teacher development, supervision and support; 3) enhancing the professional performance of teachers and principals; 4) facilitating administration to pool resources from several small schools by breaking isolation through effective professional network; and 5) achieving greater levels of decentralized decision making, ownership and accountability (Mendelsohn & Ward, 2001; Dittmar, et al., 2002). In sync with the above Giordano (2008) argued that, school clusters were introduced in Namibia due to the following reasons: 1) low level of management and support given to schools, 2) greater need of teacher support, 3) achieving greater level of participation by all

stakeholders in decisions making, and 4) because most schools work in relative isolation. By the end of 2002 the cluster system was operational throughout the country (Aipinge, 2007). Namibia's cluster strategy planned to restore organizational problems of small school size and geographical isolation by grouping all schools in Namibia into clusters of five to seven schools, since before the reform, schools tended to operate as small empires, (Giordano, 2008). Cluster centres in practice set good examples for leadership, management, and good teaching practices with a vision to extend beyond compliance to standardisation of practices within the geographical location of school (Gibson & Cameron, 2005).

Needless to say it was envisaged that the introduction of a school cluster system in Namibia would improve teaching and learning at grades 0-12. In connotation with the above, Aipinge (2007) indicated that, school cluster evolved as a useful tool providing opportunities for better education management and planning practices, increasing the participation of major stakeholders in education and fostering co-operation among schools in democratic ways. In agreement with the above proposition, Mphahlele (2014) conducted a similar study on school cluster system, an innovative network for teacher development in South Africa. Yet the question that was not addressed despite the plethora of research (Aipinge, 2007; Pomuti, 2008; Chikoko and Aipinge, 2009; Nghatanga, 2010) on the school cluster system in Namibia was: What is the role of the school cluster system as a support service for teachers? In the absence of available literatures, the researcher undertook to carry out an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although several studies on the school cluster system were conducted in Namibia, for instance Aipinge (2007) dealt with perceptions of the implementation of the

School Cluster System; Nghatanga (2010) looked at Cluster Centre Principals' roles; Pomuti (2008) analysed the relationship between Cluster Based School Management and improving teaching; and Uirab (2006) studied clustering as an effective model for clustering schools, little had been said in their studies on school clustering as a teacher support system. Thus, apart from a similar study by Mphahlele and Rampa (2013) which paid attention on school cluster system as an innovative network for teachers' development in South Africa, the researcher did not come across any study focusing specifically on the role of the cluster system as a support system for the teachers in Namibia. As a result, the researcher found it useful to undertake this study in order to evaluate the role of a cluster system as a support service for teachers to enhance teachers' professional growth and classroom effectiveness through an improved school cluster system in Namibia with the ultimate goal of improving learners and teachers' performances in Oluno Circuit.

1.3 Research questions

In order to carry out a thorough and in-depth investigation on the problem the researcher was guided by the following research questions:

- How does the cluster system serve as a support service for teachers?
- What policies and mechanisms did the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture put in place to support the school cluster system in Namibia?
- What challenges do teachers face in utilising the cluster centres in the process of enhancing their professional growth and improve teaching and learning?

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings of the study would be relevant to various stakeholders in education; specifically teachers, principals and policy makers who would gain evidence based insights into the underlying reasons behind the success or failure of the cluster system. The findings of the study would also contribute to global literatures on school cluster systems and create a broad understanding on how the school cluster could be used as a support system for teachers. The findings herein would further help policy makers to develop mechanisms to review the initial idea of school clustering and enable them to develop an effective policy on the school cluster system; and to enable them to evaluate its effective implementation so that it could achieve its intended objectives. In addition, the study would also benefit the Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs) in terms of enhancing their leadership and management skills and thereby contributing to the efficient and effective management of the school cluster system.

In equal measures, effective implementation of the findings from this study might help to improve cluster performance because of improved teacher performance in terms of effective delivery of instructions. It would ultimately improve the learners' performance and enable them to gain access to institutions of higher learning in Namibia and elsewhere.

1.5 Limitation of the study

There was a potential threat that the successful completion of the study could be affected by the availability of respondents who claimed to have much workload, and their willingness to participate posed a threat. The researcher could not gain access to one Satellite School Principal who could not be reached during the time of appointment. However, given the nature of the study, the findings from the two

Satellite School Principals (SSPs) provided valuable and in-depth data that addressed the research questions. A number of documents intended to be studied and reviewed during and after the interviews, such as: the minutes of the cluster management meetings, circuit management meetings, clusters' year plans and reports on cluster activities were not available as evidence apart from the cluster programme calendar. Although, the findings of this study could not be generalized to other circuits or regions due to the qualitative nature of the research; they however, provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In order to address the potential limitations on the study, the researcher took time to explain the purpose and the significance of the study to the respondents and gained their informed consent before the actual data collection.

1.6 Definition of terms

The following terms and concepts were prominently used and were defined in the context of the study.

School Cluster: school cluster refers to a grouping of schools, which are geographically as close and accessible to each other to redress the imbalance in the administrative and educational purposes (Dittmar et al., 2002).

In the context of this study, a school cluster is a school network that brings teachers together to learn and acquire knowledge and experiences from each other; share resources and expertise to improve quality service delivery of education.

Clusters, according to Chikoko (2007) are groupings of schools within the same geographical location aiming to improve the quality and relevance of the education in schools. Tekaligne (2013) defined a cluster as a grouping of schools for administrative and educational purposes.

Cluster Centre Principal (CCP): in this study, it refers to a principal who is given the mandate and authority to supervise and lead the satellite principals as well as to facilitate and guide the cluster's activities.

Satellite School Principal (SSP): in this study refers to an ordinary school principal heading a school that is linked to the nearest cluster centre.

Teacher Support Services (TSS): in this study, it denotes activities such as workshops, subject meetings, school visits, sharing of resources, and sharing of teaching methods.

Teacher Professional Development (TPD): in the context of this study, it implies any professional development activities engaged in by teachers which enhance their professional growth, knowledge and skills to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes (Jita & Mokhele, 2014).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature on the school cluster as a support system for teachers. It examined the *Education Change Theory* that informs the education change process, and the *Cooperative Learning Theory* that informs teamwork to accomplish shared goals; and how these influenced the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It further critically analyses the usefulness of school cluster, challenges encountered by teachers and principals, and interrogates how the existing policies provide operational guiding principles in the implementation of the school cluster system.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the *Education Change Theory* and *Cooperative Learning Theory*. According to Fullan (2007) this theory recognises humans' participation in the change process. This researcher is of a view that school cluster system as a process of educational change should involve humans' roles and effort to make such a change a success towards the attainment of better academic and professional goals. More-so Fullan (2007) viewed an individual as a change agent who influences clients' innovation-decision in a desirable direction. In this case school principals should be agents of change to influence their teachers positively in democratic, academic and professional participation (Giordano, 2008). In addition, Fullan (2007) also considered every stakeholder in education as an agent of change. He further pointed out that principals' actions serve to legitimate whether a change is to be taken seriously and to support teachers both psychologically with resources.

As a follow-up to the above, Fullan (2007, p.6) identified four basic phases under which *change theory* operates namely, 1) “initiation, 2) implementation, 3) continuation and 4) outcome”. The *Initiation Phase* includes the decision to embrace the change. Moreover, in the initiation phase, analysis is made on the strength, weaknesses, and all the opportunities and the threats (SWOT) analysis in the system that we need to change. In addition, it also caters for the existence and quality of the innovation and access to innovations. The *Implementation Phase* attempts to put change into motion. It also focuses on how the external factors (government and other agencies) and internal factors (teachers, principals and learners) are affecting the change process. In the *Continuation Phase*, an embrace of the change is recognized; and the assessment of the system continues to see if there are any notable results with regard to the problem that is cited. Lastly, the *Outcome Phase* becomes an opportunity and the results of what is implemented and this requires the support, pressure, change skills, thinking and commitment actions.

In light of the above the researcher assessed the implementation phase to find out what role was being played by the school cluster in teacher support. In the process the researcher also viewed how useful the cluster was from the perspectives of the Cluster Centre Principals, Satellite School Principals and teachers. Thus, *Education Change Theory* underpinning in this study would help the stakeholders to understand that education is a dynamic process that its success and failures could be determined by various factors around it. In addition, because the introduction of the cluster system was part of the educational reform process the researcher viewed the *Education Change Theory* within the context of education reform. School cluster is a form of educational decentralisation, which in this context entails the hierarchy of power and authority; moving from higher level of Inspectors of Education to the

lower level of Cluster Centre Principals, who supervise and run the administration of schools. In this respect, the *Education Change theory* acknowledges that human beings are active participants in knowledge formation and can therefore; make meaningful contributions to the change process. Mphahlele and Rampa (2013) in their study conducted on cluster system as an innovative network for teacher development in South Africa believed that change is a continuous slow process and the willingness of participants is hence essential. The change can be successful and effective when the people involved understand it and play an influential role.

Another theory that informs this study is *Cooperative Learning Theory*. This theory implies working together to accomplish certain goals. Cooperative learning has increasingly become a popular form of active pedagogy employed in academic institutions today. Slavin (2011) referred to cooperative learning as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and one another's learning. In school clusters, teachers team up to share educational experience, and do not only benefit by gaining knowledge, but also improve their social and personality qualities. When teachers assemble for an anticipated purpose, they can generate a learning environment that maximizes their capability to interact with each other face to face through discussion, collaboration and feedback in active learning communities. Teachers also support, assist and motivate each other in an attempt to facilitate the achievement of their goals. The school cluster system therefore opens a platform for schools to practice supportive learning by sharing educational resources and teaching methodologies with an ultimate goal to deliver quality education and gain professional growth. Cluster systems work with teachers where they are, allowing them to collaborate with their peers, practice in their classrooms and build local resources networks with each other (Mphahlele, 2014).

Furthermore, this study adopted three useful models of the cluster system, 1) Mentoring, 2) Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry (CBCI) and Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), and 3) Lesson Study. Each of these is examined in detail below.

2.2.1 School Cluster System Models

Mphahlele (2012) concurred with Smith (2012) that *Mentoring* is one of the best model for teacher development in the school cluster system to improve and promote the relevancy and quality of teaching and learning. He further pointed out the advantages of mentoring at school cluster level as it can help new teachers to learn effectively in meeting day-to-day challenges of teaching through coaching, feedback and collaborative teaching at cluster activities.

In addition to that, *Content-Based Collaborative Inquiry (CBCI) and Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) model* are other approaches where teachers work together at cluster meetings to create an insightful understanding of how their learners capture the subject content. This model enables teachers to see the best ways in assisting the learners through analysing their learners' results and draw up reports regarding their learners' performances for answering particular questions (Cohen, Hill & Kennedy, 2011). Mphahlele and Rampa (2013) submitted that in the process, teachers build an understanding of content and pedagogy that supports learners' education.

Whereas Wantanabe (2012) in an article on "learning from Japanese lesson study" believed that the *Model of Lesson Study* is also a multi-step process that enables teachers to interact in their clusters to enhance study and improve their lessons. This model can be linked to the *Mentoring*, and *CBCI* and *CGI* where the relevance and quality of teaching is being promoted through working together to help the learners. This is likely to happen as a result of the *Model of Lesson Study* where teachers are

able to demonstrate their teaching skills and knowledge on certain topics while at the same time observing to learn; and sharing their strengths and weaknesses. It is therefore, against this nuanced background that the researcher found all three models very meaningful to the cluster system in terms of teacher support towards the professional development and growth of teachers.

2.4 Usefulness of the School Cluster System as a Teacher Support Service

2.4.1 Teamwork

Aipinge (2007) associated the teamwork concept with a sense of shared purposes and collective responsibility among team members. Maphosa, Mutekwe, Machingambi, Wadesango and Ndofirepi (2013) studied on the school clusters system in the Zimbabwean context and mentioned that, school clusters provide a forum for teachers to meet, share and even try out ideas to improve teaching and learning. The entire cluster is empowered because principals and teachers develop greater competencies through working and dealing with education related issues together (Edward Jr & Mbatia, 2012). Schools belonging to the cluster's networking are expected to work together collectively to share resources and subject knowledge for the benefit of effective support teaching and learning. Cooperative learning occurs as a group of teachers work together to learn from each other and share ideas to gain knowledge related to their field and improve teaching and learning. Heaney (2011) in his educational article: "Learning professional development" postulated that, benefits for school cluster system include improving the quality of teaching and learning through breaking solo engagements to network with other teachers and creating collegial support. On the same concept, Mokhele (2011) studied teachers' perspectives on continuing professional development and stated that the avenue of sharing ideas of teaching-learning techniques and experiences, were proven to

promote team building amongst the teachers, and enhance learners' performances and teachers' professionalism. Shikalepo (2018) suggests that, school cluster system is essential for nurturing and strengthening the spirit of cooperative learning among teachers of different schools. Equally so Trigu (2014) looked at the Malawi Secondary School cluster system and reported that through school clusters schools are encouraged to practice lesson planning and evaluation, team teaching, vary teaching methodologies, identify teachers' subject content needs, and then organize in-service training through workshops. Consequently, school clusters could enable teachers to measure learners' competencies and prepare them for the end of the year examination. In addition, as teachers give common examinations they ensure that they share common practices of how to interpret the syllabi effectively. Henceforth, Maphosa et al. (2013) stressed that syllabus interpretation is one area teachers should exchange ideas on in order to properly implement given curricula.

In the same wave length, Nwagbara (2014) studied on the 'Effectiveness of Teachers and School Cluster Model of Primary School Mathematics Teacher Professional Development in Cross River State, Nigeria'. In his study, he discovered that school cluster attempts to bring teachers together and facilitate a process where they become creative in problem-solving, effective utilization of available resources, through teaching materials, classroom management and other pedagogical skills in a happy environment. When teachers work in the happy environment, the rest of the work would fall into place.

Informed of the above, "Schools should serve as supporting centres for teachers to provide resources and information dissemination platforms" (Maphosa et al., 2013, p. 295). Maphosa et al. (2013) further stated that teachers should not work in isolation, but should be supported by the cluster in providing the mostly needed

resources for them. That entails that, teachers' network enables teachers in the cluster to come together to flourish and grow professionally through sharing their expertise and gaining confidence to partake in decision making in the changes around them. Augmenting the above stance Mokhele (2011) supported that teacher network brings teachers together to address the problems which they experience and thus promote professional development.

Moreover, Topnaar (2004); Aipinge (2007) and Nghatanga (2010) concurred in their findings that clusters encourage teamwork by bringing people together in various collaborative groups for successful outcomes. In addition, Steyn and Birman (2012) stressed that, teamwork can improve quality management in schools because improvement teams utilize resources more effectively, increase organizational effectiveness, improve the quality of educational programmes and generally create better learning environments. Whereas, Muijs and Reynold (2012) revealed that, teachers from schools in mutual clusters experience less stress and difficulties when implementing a new curriculum. They further pointed out that schools in disadvantaged communities, in particular, benefit more when resources are combined and leadership shared. When teachers collaborate, they are likely to take courageous risks, learn from mistakes, share successful strategies and integrate their knowledge with research-based knowledge in ways that contribute to successful practices (Mphahlele & Rampa, 2014). Successful schools, share values and goals and teachers are given ample time to reflect and work collaboratively to focus on issues of curriculum and instruction (Steyn & Birman, 2012). Based on these findings it could be stated that clusters are important because they improve collaboration among teachers in the clusters through its leadership, which also enable teachers to practically solve their problems and promote their own professional development.

Commenting on the stated notion, Nghatanga (2010, p. 25) pointed that “the leadership in the cluster centre is likely to play a major role in enhancing teachers, principals and parents’ participations in teams and groups for the better performance of the school.” There is also a need to create linkages with other teachers and supervisors to help them solve problems and support each other through discussion, modelling and coaching, and involvement with other aspects of school and educational change (Craig, Kraft & Du Plessis, 2011).

2.4.2 Teacher Professional Development

Jita and Mokhele (2014) in their journal article entitled “When teacher cluster work” in South Africa, considered teacher professional development as an essential mechanism for deepening teachers’ content knowledge and developing their teaching practices in order to teach to high standard. In this parlance, Fareo (2013) in her journal article headlined “Professional development for teachers in Africa”: A case of Nigeria, defined professional development in a broad sense referring to it as the development of a person in his or her professional role, the growth the teachers achieve as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching. The use of teacher clusters form part of the drive to improve teachers’ professional development and learners’ performance (Mokhele, 2011). Leaders must take a lead in creating a positive climate for professional development, and principals should act as facilitators, not as controllers of professional development (Steyn & Birman, 2012).

It is therefore imperative to note that cluster centres could also be utilized as meeting centres to bring both teachers and other educational stakeholders together to learn from one another and assist themselves to grow professionally. Under such circumstances teachers can develop each other professionally through their

experiences and sharing of their knowledge in a well-managed climate. Teacher professional development is most successful when teachers are actively involved; reflecting on their own teaching practices; and when they experience sustained, high quality professional development (Steyn, 2013).

It is a common cause to note that professional development includes formal experiences such as attending workshops and professional meetings for teachers and mentorship (Fareo, 2013). Fareo (2013) further highlighted that teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically. To this end, Evans (2012) contended that in learning, teachers were developing their beliefs and ideas, developing their classroom practices, and attending to their feelings associated with changing. The teacher cluster generates a process whereby teachers can communicate, share and address issues, observe one another's work and develop expertise in various aspects of their teaching practice (Jita & Mokhele, 2014).

In connotation to the above, Alderman (2014) confirmed that teacher development is positively influenced by improvement of teaching skills, competence feedback, social support by colleagues and supervisors, collaborative working relationships and directly addressing efficacy through workshops. "One of the common forms of professional development is the typical service staff training which uses workshops, seminars and courses to help teachers develop professionally" (Makaye, 2015). In this regard, O'Sullivan (2013) observed that, school cluster system as a professional development approach ensures that all teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for improving learners' performance. Professional development can become more meaningful to teachers when they exercise ownership of its content.

Consequently, the change process is about establishing the condition for continuous improvement to persist and overcome inevitable barriers to the reform (Fullan, 2007). To this end, Mphahlele and Rampa (2013) and Fullan (2007) acknowledged that, making the change process to work will require energy, ideas, commitment and ownership of all those implementing improvement. Thus, this researcher believes that education stakeholders need to understand the needs of a cluster and have clarity about its ultimate goals and ways to achieve them. It is therefore, imperative that the goals of the school cluster system be clear, measurable and achievable and should be a reasonable quality for teachers to have a better comprehension of the system. Studies basing on the Namibian context show that there is a lack of how school cluster system serves as a teacher support service. In supporting the above statement, Lee (2015) argued that, professional growth in teachers occurs when a professional development programme acknowledges teachers' needs. There is a need to build the capacity of clusters and their members both intellectually, structurally and physically so as to manage change and earn positive outcomes (Catholic Relief Service, 2013).

2.5 Teachers' Perceived Challenges in Utilizing the Cluster Centre

Fullan (2011) indicated that the subjective world of principals is such that many of them suffer the same problem in implementing a new role as facilitators of change as do teachers in the implementation of new teaching roles. In furtherance, Evans (2001) argued that change immediately threatens people's sense of competence, frustrating their wish to feel effective and valuable. It shakes their confidence and makes them doubt their ability to adapt to the new requirements. School clusters help to enhance the culture of sharing powerful strategies as principals and teachers would meet in the unit to learn from each other, discuss the challenges and find common solutions (Ali, 2013).

2.5.1 Understanding of School Cluster System

Giordano (2008) noted that, grouping schools by clusters means bringing supervision and support one step closer to the school level. School cluster system aims to contribute to the desired quality education through identification and solving common problems together in order to improve learners' and teachers' performance. The system was introduced with great benefits of which one is to simplify the governance of schools with the ultimate goal to support learners' academic performance and teachers' professional growth. Shikalepo (2018) claim that even though majority of the teachers and principals possessed a thorough understanding of what school cluster system is, the system is not well understood by some stakeholders. The lack of the system's understanding can make it difficult for stakeholders to execute cluster activities successfully. More importantly, the system needs to be clearly presented and explained to build consciousness and clear understanding of its intended purpose.

2.5.2 Distance and Poor Communication

While the school cluster centre has numerous benefits to both the teachers and learners as previously noted, there are many challenges which, if they are addressed, could contribute greatly to the improvement of education in Namibia (Aipinge, 2007). Fullan (2007) further acknowledged that some school clusters are geographically far apart from each other and poor communications networks may impede the successful dissemination of information from schools to the teachers which may result in teachers not gaining as much as they should gain in terms of knowledge. On this note, Mphahlele and Rampa (2013) advised that there should be a good telecommunication setup that will enable the information flow to be smooth

among all the education stakeholders. “Cluster coordinators need the crafted competency and literacy to effectively discharge their mandates; hence it underscores the importance of principals engaging in staff development programmes organized by them” (Makaye, 2015, p. 54).

2.5.3 Teachers’ Attitudes

In contributing to the debate on challenges facing teachers to utilize the school cluster system, (Mphahlele and Rampa, 2013) revealed that, teachers’ attitudes and compliance are the major impediments to quality teaching and teacher development. They concluded that teachers who receive little or no professional support are not capacitated to be innovative and creative to look beyond compliance. A Cluster Centre Principal should be a strong and committed manager, with a vision that can extend beyond his or her school to the needs of all schools and the community in the cluster

Supporting the above notion, Mahlangu, (2014) studied on the strategies for Principals-Teacher Development, A South African’s Perspective and established that principals are expected to inspire, motivate, and appeal to teachers through an array of skills and behaviours which communicate their values to their schools. In this respect, Fullan (2011) argued that when schools establish professional learning communities’ teachers should constantly search for new ways of making improvements. Additionally, a supportive school climate is one factor that influences a high sense of teacher support; and the support of administrators and colleagues is important.

In the same scope, though school clusters are aimed at bringing necessary quality teaching and learning worldwide, it seems to be not so easy to bring about changes without mobilizing and campaigning to educate the people for successful changes.

The cluster system might serve as an innovative network for teacher development though it is not easy to bring about changes in the attitudes of teachers. Particular challenges experienced by teachers in their clusters need to be identified and addressed to enable teachers perform to their best abilities in their clusters to experience a smooth education process (Mitchell & Jonker, 2013).

2.6 Policies and Mechanisms to Support the School Cluster System

A book titled “The School Cluster System in Namibia” is disseminated to schools, outlining the benefits and functions of the school cluster as to: improve the quality of teaching and learning; improve management applications; improve efficiency; ensure teachers’ training and encourage community involvement. It also outlines the aims to provide stakeholders at all levels in the education sector with information about: a) “the structure and function of clusters; b) the range of benefits that clusters can offer; c) administrative and management structures which enable cluster systems to operate effectively; d) the role of clusters in improving teaching and learning practices, e) contributions made by clusters to major educational goals and policies and f) ways in which the cluster system can develop in the future” (Dittmar et al., 2002, p. 1).

There are no any recent ministerial reports on school clusters in Namibia apart from the reviews, which were done in 2001 and 2007 by Mendelsohn and Ward. The latter seems to suggest that the stakeholders in education might not be well informed about the importance of school cluster system. They also seem to hold misconceptions on the role of the cluster system as a teacher support service. Shikalepo (2018) indicated that, a proper legal framework would have ensured benefits were accrued to those involved in cluster activities so that they are motivated to keep the system operational.

In addition, Steyn and Birman (2012) explained that, the ability of the educational manager to build, lead and manage the teams is important to accomplish a productive and harmonious working environment as well as to implement planned strategies. Ali (2013) who studied school cluster policy of Maldives expressed that a policy acts as a regulatory tool that serves as a framework upon which measurements of the feasibility can be measured in the similar regard.

Mendelsohn and Ward (2007) confirmed that clusters have functioned over the past 11 years in the absence of any formally approved policy, and the ETSIP programme makes the firm recommendation that this omission be corrected. They further emphasized that policy sets firm, minimum parameters for the functioning of clusters, but then also creates sufficient latitude for all schools to use clusters to best advantage.

2.7 Summary

The chapter presented the theoretical framework of the study. It also deliberated on the various existing school cluster models and the usefulness of the school cluster as a supporting service for teachers in particular. In addition, it also reviewed on the relevant literature on the research topic and the research questions. Various challenges faced by Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), Satellite School Principal (SSPs) and teachers in the utilisation of the school cluster as a support service for teachers were also discussed in depth. Finally, this chapter also presented the various mechanisms that could be used to support the school cluster in order to make it more beneficiary to the teachers. The next chapter presents the methodology that was adopted during the data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted in the study. It also describes the research design, data collection process, instruments, data analysis techniques used in the study as well as ethical issues taken into consideration.

3.2 Research approach

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach. According to Gay, Mills and Airsian (2012, p.173) “ A qualitative approach seeks to probe deeply into research settings to obtain an in-depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context understand them”. For the researcher to understand the participants’ views on the school cluster system as a teacher support service, it required the qualitative methods to interact with the participants during the study. The use of qualitative approach necessitated the researcher to be able to explore and describe what was not already known to the researcher and gain an in-depth understanding of the use of cluster as a support system for teachers based on the perceptions of Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), Satellites School Principals (SSPs) and teachers

3.3 Research design

A case study is defined as a design that is suited for the examination of a bounded system, or a case over time, which employs multiple sources of data found in the setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The study adopted a case study research design. It was suitable for the study as it allowed the researcher to remain focused on

exploring in details, the meaning and context that the participants held about the school cluster system as a teacher support service.

3.4 Population

Johnson, Christensen and Turner (2010) defined a population as a set of all elements to which a researcher wants to generalize his or her sample results. The population for this study was made up of ninety eight (98) secondary school teachers, (3) three satellites school principals and (4) four cluster centre principals from Oluno Circuit in the Oshana Region.

3.5 Sample

This study used a mixture of both simple random sampling and stratified purposive sampling to select the sample. By way of definition, Creswell (2012) conceived of stratification as the process of dividing members of the population into homogeneous subgroups before sampling. Homogeneous subgroups were used before sampling. The strata were mutually exclusive and every element in the population was assigned to only one stratum: teachers (stratum 1); secondary school principals (stratum 2); and cluster principals (stratum 3). By using Stratified Purposeful sampling, one (1) teacher from each of the five (5) randomly selected schools; three (3) principals from the five (5) randomly selected schools; and three (3) cluster centre principals from the four (4) randomly selected clusters centres in the Oluno circuit of the Oshana region were selected to participate in the study. These sampling techniques narrowed the sample to eleven (11) participants that comprised five (5) teachers, three (3) satellite principals and three (3) Cluster Centre Principals.

3.6 Research instruments

The data collection instruments used in this study were document analysis, semi-structured questionnaires for teachers only and semi-structured interview guide for the Cluster Centre Principals and the Satellite School Principals. Cluster programme calendars were the only documents reviewed in each cluster. Semi-Structured Questionnaires were used by teachers (stratum 1) to give their views and thoughts on how the school cluster system was contributing to their professional growth. Semi-Structured Interview Guide was administered to the Cluster Centre Principals (stratum 2) and) Satellites School Principals (stratum 3). The foregoing gave opportunities for generous articulation and open up platforms for probing on school cluster as a teacher support service and the challenges experienced in operating under cluster centres.

3.6.1 Document analysis

The researcher used document analysis as a method of collecting data for this study. Document analysis is defined by Creswell (2012) as a data collection instrument which is done through analysing documents or written records of an organization. Specifically, this study only analysed clusters' programme calendars which were developed by the cluster centre principals and their subordinates with regard to cluster effectiveness as a teacher support system. In this parlance, Creswell (2012) stated that one of the strengths of document analysis is that it serves as a concrete evidence of what the researcher is looking for, and can save time and expense.

3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interview guide

“Research interview is a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or

explanation” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 215). This study adopted semi-structured interview guide due the fact that this was a qualitative study hence wanted to gather data from a face to face interaction, making sense of the non-verbal cues and gestures. Semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that are used to collect qualitative data (Creswell, 2012), and were administered to three (3) Cluster Centre Principals and two (2) Satellite School Principals. However, the third respondent among the SSPs could not participate in the study because, he was not available to discuss the role of school cluster system as a teacher support service and the extent to which teachers were utilizing the cluster for their professional growth and the challenges they faced.

The semi-structured interview guide allowed the CCPs and SSPs to express their subjective views based on their experiences regarding the school cluster system as a teacher support service. It also allowed the researcher to extract rich information from the participants. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed after the data collection process was completed.

3.6.3 Semi-Structured questionnaire

This study used a semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from the teachers only. Johnson, Christensen and Turner (2010) defined a questionnaire as a data collecting instrument which can be administered to participants. The advantages of a questionnaire are that it is more reliable since it is anonymous, encourages honesty, and save time, enabling the researcher to collect more data in a short period of time, (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, the questionnaires were provided to five teachers from the secondary schools within the three clusters to respond to semi-structured questions about the roles of school clusters as a teacher support service. Furthermore,

teachers were able to express to what extent they were utilizing the cluster centres for their professional growth and the challenges they encountered.

3.7 Procedure

The researcher obtained the ethical clearance letter from the University of Namibia's Ethical Clearance Committee and sought permission from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Furthermore, permission to access the area of research was obtained from the Director of Education, (Oshana Region, Education Directorate), Inspector of Education (Oluno Circuit), Cluster Principals for three different clusters from which the (3) three secondary schools are satellites and three satellites school principals to seek permission to collect data at the selected clusters and schools.

Semi structured questionnaires for teachers were hand delivered to the teachers by the researcher, whereas the semi structured interviews conducted with CCPs and SSPs by the researcher took place in their respective schools after school working hours, and in a quiet and conducive place. Each interview session lasted for an average of an hour.

3.8 Data analysis

Cohen, et al. (2011) explained that, qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining of data in short, deriving meaning from the data in terms of the participants, definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. The researcher analysed the findings generated from documents, which were semi-structured questionnaires administered to teachers and transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with CCPs and SSPs. Responses were

coded and sorted into categories in relation to the research questions, and analysed in conformity to content analysis.

3.9 Research ethics

When conducting a research in “an academic or professional setting, one needs to be aware of the ethics behind the research activity” (Driscoll & Fowler, 2011 p.154). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) reinforced that ethics should be a primary consideration rather than an afterthought, and it should be at the forefront of the researcher’s agenda. After the researcher acquired the clearance letter from the University of Namibia in order to carry out the study, permission from Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture was sought and granted. All participants in the study completed the informed consent form before they took part in the study; and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality during the completion of the questionnaire and during the interview. Pseudonyms were used during the completion of the questionnaire and also during the interview sessions. Privacy on the collected data was enhanced by keeping the collected data in the researchers’ lockable cabinet and all the captured electronic information was stored on the researcher’s personal computer for which its password is always protected. All the collected data will be destroyed five years after the current study is completed. Electronic data will be deleted and all hard copies will be shredded in the researchers’ shredding machine.

3.10 Summary

This chapter presented the research designs, population, sample and sampling which were adopted in the study. It also presented a detailed explanation of the various instruments which were used in the study, their strengths and weaknesses were also explored in this chapter. In addition, the chapter presented the data collection procedure, and qualitative data analysis techniques adopted. Furthermore, ethical

considerations which were followed in this study were also explained. The next chapter presents and critically discusses the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the respondents' biographical data, while the second part presents the results of the findings and discusses the implications of the findings emanating from the data in relation to the research questions of the study within the qualitative perspective.

4.2 Results according to respondents' biographical data

4.2.1 Gender, Age, Qualifications, Experience Categories

Table 1: Respondents according to gender and age

Respondent	Gender		Age				
	M	F	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46 above
Teacher	3	2	1	3	0	1	0
CCPs	2	1	0	0	1	1	1
SSPs	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
TOTAL	7	3	0	0	3	2	1

With respect to age, there were (9) respondents from the age categories 30-45 years compared to 45 and above age category with one (1) respondent. The age of the respondents determined the quality of responses as there was a direct correlation between age and work experience. Table 1 also shows that a high number of males participated in the study.

The data in Table 2 show that the majority (6) of the respondents had Bachelors of Education (Hons) as highest qualifications. Based on the data, these respondents

were academically and professionally well qualified and the researcher assumed that their responses were credible in relation to the research questions. Such credentials would provide the cluster with potential capacity to develop and enhance teaching and learning.

Table 2: Respondents according to qualifications and teaching experience in years

Respondents	Qualifications				Teaching/Working Experience in years			
	Dipl.	Bed Degree	B Ed Hon	Master	5-10	11-20	21-30	31-Above
Teacher	2	0	3	0	2	3	0	0
CCPs	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	1
SSPs	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	2	2	6	0	3	6	0	1

All the CCPs have shown that they have vast experiences in the teaching profession with one female being the most experienced CCP. It could be assumed that their teaching experiences for years in their clusters could have positive influence on their responses.

Based on the data, the respondent with the longest experience had between 10-15 years of teaching. This implies that this CCP was responding authoritatively as being influenced by her experience in the role of being a CCP. In this respect, Mahlangu (2014) affirmed that greater experience allows the array of skills and behaviours in providing affluent information.

4.2.2 Training received as Cluster Centre Principals

The respondents were asked whether they received training as CCPs. The data revealed that only one of the CCPs had undergone training as a CCP, but the other two were not trained as CCPs. It could be assumed that the lack of training could affect their ways of running cluster centres and satellite schools in terms of teacher support services provision. Untrained CCPs may lack adequate knowledge and skills to provide satisfactory work in their clusters (Mahlangu, 2014). To support this claim, Fareo (2013) argued that the aim of training is to produce supportive innovative individuals equipped to act as agents of change implementation. If CCPs could all receive training, their knowledge base would be expanded and this would improve their job performance.

4.3 Results and discussion of findings on school cluster as a teacher support service

4.3.1 Views on the definition of ‘school cluster system’

This section presents the results according to responses of CCPs, and SSPs on open-ended questions as well as the responses from the teachers regarding the school cluster system as a teacher support service. The data in Table 3 show the CCPs and SSPs responses with respect to the definition of ‘school cluster system’.

Table 3: CCPs and SSPs' understanding of 'School Cluster '

RESPONDENT	RESPONSES
<i>CCP1</i>	<i>- A cluster is a group of schools that are found closer to each other, whereby they have to share teaching and learning expertise, and resources.</i>
<i>SSP 1</i>	<i>- A school cluster system is a system that divides schools in the circuit into smaller groups for the purpose of proper control and for easy implementation of programs at schools.</i>
<i>SSP 2</i>	<i>- A cluster is a grouping of schools within a certain perimeters from each other whereby they share different educational resources; and enhance the collaboration of teachers.</i>

While these respondents (CCP 1 and SSP 1) have a general understanding of what the school cluster system entails, the definition of SSP 2 is related to the definition by Ali (2014) and Tekaligne (2013) who defined 'school cluster' as a grouping of schools together for the purpose of collaboration and partnership in sharing teaching and learning resources. Dittmar, et al. (2002) defined 'school cluster' as a group of schools that are geographically as close and accessible to each other as possible, while Mokhele (2011) defined it as a grouping of schools for educational and administrative purposes.

It was therefore unveiled from the study that CCPs and SSPs have an idea of what a school cluster system is, though there was no proper single definition. They perceived it as a model for clustering schools to create schools network collaboration and allowing the sharing of teaching and learning assets. It is noted in the data that,

respondents' (CCPs and SSPs) definitions were aligned to the aims and objectives of the school cluster system. The data further show that CCPs and SSPs are aware of the purpose of the school cluster system establishment as they have mentioned the sharing of education resources; improve teachers collaboration and proper monitoring of schools. The importance of school clusters in ensuring the provision of necessary platforms for teachers' professional development through collaboration and sharing is, therefore, an important function of clusters for practising teachers (Maphosa, et al., 2013).

It was also established from the study that the school cluster system brought team work in schools as it incorporates schools to work together, unlike in the past when schools were working in isolation without sharing teaching and learning resources. Today teachers and learners who are being exposed to the importance of team network, sharing of expertise, knowledge, skills, and resources in their subjects areas are sharing all the possible tools and strategies needed for the successful teaching and learning. Jita and Mokhele (2014) found out that the sharing and exchanging of expertise are improved when teachers learn together and solve problems collaboratively. It is again shown in the data that the school cluster system was introduced to strengthen the proper monitoring and administration of schools; and to bring teachers and learners closer to each other and to their leaders. In the context of this study a cluster is a school network that brings teachers together to learn and acquire knowledge and experiences from each other; share resources and expertise to improve quality service delivery of education.

4.3.2 CCPs and SSPs' views on how the school cluster system serves as a “Teachers' Support Service”

Respondents (CCPs, SSPs) were asked on how the school cluster system serves as a teachers support service. Data in Table 4 indicate their responses.

Table 4: CCPs' and SSPs' views on how the school cluster serves as a teacher support service

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 1</i>	- <i>Novice and experienced teachers can come together, and share issues related to teaching and learning, setting examinations and tests; and also sharing best practices on how to interpret the syllabi and schemes of work in the fulfilment of the curriculum objectives.</i>
<i>CCP 2</i>	- <i>A school cluster system serves as a platform for workshops which can be very effective for teachers to share common schemes of work, tests and examinations; and when results are analysed teachers would be able to see their successes and weaknesses and the way forward to improve on the outcomes.</i>
<i>CCP 3</i>	- <i>When teachers come together they help each other in planning what to teach, assessments activities and sharing subject related information.</i>
<i>SSP 1</i>	- <i>Cluster system does serve as a teacher support service, because teachers come together and discuss issues which pertain to teaching and learning and find amicable solutions.</i>

The respondents (CCPs and SSPs) shared similar views on how the school cluster system supports teachers. According to one respondent (CCP 2) the school cluster system offers an opportunity for teachers to come together in harmony to share ideas and educational resources for both teachers and learners' development. This finding concurs with Mokhele (2011) who discovered that, teachers in school clusters should host meetings to share and discuss problems regarding the teaching and learning pedagogy.

On the same concept, Mphahlele and Rampa (2014); and Makaye (2015) shared similar sentiments with reference to the benefits of the school cluster system as they maintained that there is an increase in collaboration at cluster level; whereby teachers teaching the same subjects co-operate in setting local tests and exams, holding meetings, analysing results; and sharing ideas and expertise as well as gaining knowledge and experience from others.

In addition to the benefits of the school cluster system, novice teachers significantly benefit from experienced teachers, as they are empowered and capacitated with knowledge and skills to enable them perform quality teaching. The participants (CCPs and SSPs) were in agreement with Aipinge (2007) who found out that cluster-based meetings serve as platforms where teaching and learning problems in certain subjects are shared and addressed. The study established that the school cluster system could become a forum to accord teachers an opportunity to creatively develop and generate ideas on best ways to facilitate learning, concepts in subject areas and develop teaching and learning materials. Makaye (2015) claimed that when teachers plan together, they can perhaps help each other interpret curriculum frameworks better, and discuss methodologies as well as identify instructional materials to use for effective teaching. In the same vein, Dittmar, et al. (2002, p.11) outlined the

benefits of the school cluster system in terms of being a teacher support service, as they assert:

“...teachers get together to discuss and interpret the syllabi and draw common schemes of work; set test papers; assess and moderate as a group effort; expose all learners to similar level of testing; principals and teachers meet within committees and learn from each other; sharing experience and ideas assisting each other with problems; teachers from various schools sharing good teaching practices and teaching resources”.

Teachers need to know that the assessment, setting of exam papers and moderating them is not all they can relate to teachers’ professional development. There are other professional development activities that they could do.

In agreement with the foregoing assertion, Mphahlele and Rampa (2014) established that when teachers collaborate during such meetings, they are more likely to take risks, learn from mistakes and share successful strategies. In addition, one participant (CCP 1) shared a similar sentiment, “... *that cluster meetings help older and more experienced staff to help the novice teachers through sharing ideas and solving problems*”.

This study also further established that teachers’ meetings accord them the opportunity to develop and generate ideas on how they could facilitate teaching and learning to enhance both teachers’ and learners’ performances. It can also be inferred that planning and assessment are the imperative tools for effective quality teaching in a school cluster system. Relating to the respondents’ responses, they demonstrated an understanding on how the cluster system serves as a teacher support service, although their responses were shortfall of (Mphahlele and Rampa, 2014) who argued

that a school visit as a support service creates a culture of mutual understanding. It boosts teachers' morale and confidence when they meet to share knowledge and skills. Based on their conceptualization, I am plausible to say CCPs and SSPs do not really know all that a cluster can do in terms of being a support service. Information on how the school cluster system should serve as a teacher supporting service needs to be disseminated to CCPs and SSPs to enable them to provide effective support to both teachers and learners.

4.3.3 Support services provided to SSPs and teachers

The CCPs were asked to respond to a question on what support services they provided to the SSPs and teachers, and their responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: CCPs' responses on the support they provide to SSPs and teachers

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- <i>Nothing is done apart from assisting satellite principals and teachers with facilitating the setting of examinations, test series, workshops and extra-mural activities for improving learners' physical and cognitive development.</i>
CCP 2	- <i>Very little support is being offered due to the challenge of lack of funds with a few workshops to enable the sharing of information.</i>

Based on the data in Table 5, respondents (CCPs) concurred that even if the school cluster system is in existence to maximize school teams and resources utilisation, not much is happening. The lack of resources is might affect the provision of the

necessary support to teaching and learning as well as teacher professional development. CCPs are willing and have shown enthusiasm to support Satellite School Principals and teachers. Funds are supposed to enhance a proper engagement of teachers and learners from various schools in teaching and learning developmental programs. Mphahlele (2014) found out that the financial constraints hamper the effectiveness of the cluster system. According to Dittmar, et al. (2002) the Education Regional Offices in general is supposed “to provide clear directives as to how clusters should function and planning should be done on the basis of clusters, and cluster centres should be developed as a priority” (p. 22). However, with the absence of proper mechanisms and effective policies to guide and support the system, these school cluster centres will remain simply centres that are not providing proper services to the teachers as it supposed to be. The school cluster system’s roles need to be clearly presented and explained to build awareness and understanding as well as tap into the potentials it has to contribute teaching and learning.

Makaye (2015) whose findings are based on the Zimbabwean context; Tekaligne (2013) and Dittmar, et al. (2002) shared similar findings that cluster centre principals should co-ordinate and promote cluster activities in collaboration with other principals in the cluster.

Maphosa, et al. (2013) relating the Zimbabwean setting expressed that school clusters need to be well established to ensure that, there are no draw backs to damage the system. There are a lot of roles CCPs could implement to support both SSPs and teachers. Nwagbara (2014) whose findings are based on the Nigerian context claimed that CCPs could do class visits to offer support and solutions, organize the functioning of the cluster management committees and to provide strong leadership and supervision to influence the followers as support services to teachers. It

emanated from the data that CCPs need to know more of their responsibilities and roles as CCPs in terms of providing teacher support services.

4.3.4 SSPs views on the support services they received from CCPs

The SSPs were asked to respond to a question on what support services they receive from the CCPs. Their responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: SSPs responses on the support services they receive from CCPs

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>SSP 1</i>	<i>-The CCP encourages us to improve our knowledge through lifelong learning which a good thing is really.</i>
<i>SSP 2</i>	<i>-The CCPs support us to grow professionally as they keep on updating us together with the teachers on current information and issues related to our subjects.</i>

The findings in Table 6 show that CCPs are attempting to offer professional support through guiding teachers in the subjects of their teaching areas and motivating them to upgrade their knowledge through lifelong learning. However, little was said by SSPs showing insufficiency and lack of CCPs' roles to support teachers whereby it can be concluded that the role of the cluster centre principals needs to be clearly presented and explained to them. This will help create consciousness and understanding of what they should expect from CCPs as teacher professional development service. Dittmar, et al. (2002) mentioned the core functions of the CCPs

as to coordinate and promote activities in the cluster in collaboration with other principals in the cluster.

One way a principal may improve teachers' quality is to support the networks in school cluster systems by empowering SSPs and grouping teachers to see the outside world on education related matters (Mphahlele & Rampa, 2014).

4.3.5 Teachers views on the support services they received from CCPs

Teachers were asked to respond to a question on what support services they receive from the CCPs. Their responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers' responses on the support services they receive from CCPs

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
TEACHER A	- The CCP initiates subject workshops and encourage the sharing of learner support materials, grouping teachers within the cluster to solve indiscipline problems among the learners, and address poor parental involvement.
TEACHER C	- The CCP assists in linking the schools within the cluster allowing teachers to work together with others from different schools to share knowledge and teaching strategies.

The data in Table 7 show that respondents (teachers) agreed that the cluster centre principals offer support services. It may then be appropriate for this study to assume that teachers embrace the CCPs for uniting and forming teachers' network from schools within and other clusters. This gives them an opportunity to share learning

support materials and identify areas of problems in teaching and learning. Makaye (2015) revealed that clusters improve teaching when teachers benefit from making their practices public and sharing them with others. Teachers in the school cluster become more equipped with knowledge on how to strategize what is contributing to their professional development (Mphahlele & Rampa, 2014).

This study also revealed that when teachers share knowledge and experiences in a free open academic debate, school clusters system could serve as a useful centre for teacher professional development. Maphosa et al. (2013) shared similar views, in a different setting, that the school cluster plays pivotal roles in assisting teachers to gain knowledge from one another.

It is also shown in Table 7, that the teaching and learning strategies are essential actions to be put into practice to direct teachers on what to do, how to do it and what to avoid. All these are aimed at improving learners' academic performances and teachers' own professional development. Maphosa, et al. (2013) reported that teachers need support to accomplish their tasks, to reflect on their day-to-day experiences and to improve their skills. They also need to exchange with others learning support materials.

4.3.6 The support services SSPs provide to teachers

The SSPs were asked to indicate how they were supporting teachers to enhance their teaching. The data in Table 8 reflect the responses.

Table 8: SSPs responses on what support services they provide to teachers

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>SSP 1</i>	<i>- Teachers are being assisted through class visits whereby they are able to identify their strengths, weaknesses and the areas to improve.</i>
<i>SSP 2</i>	<i>- I encourage the integration of ICT in teaching to be strengthened to enable teachers to use internet to search information related to teaching and learning. Teachers are assisted to develop and expand in their subject content and are guided for professional development through class visits.</i>

The data in Table 8 show that the implementation of key area 3 (curriculum attainment) and key area 2 (teaching and learning) in the National Standard Performance Indicator of Namibia are monitored and measured through class visits; and teachers are made aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Nwagbara (2014) shared a similar sentiment that a class visit creates an opportunity for teachers in the cluster to be assisted and to improve their teaching style.

In terms of ICT integration, it can be deduced that the creative innovation of ICT integration in teaching and learning can be pivotal to teachers' professional development as it will enable teachers to be professionally on par with others in the world network.

4.3.7 Views of CCPs on how cluster activities are organised to enhance teaching and learning

The above question was asked to the CCPs in order to determine how cluster activities are organized to enhance teaching and learning.

Table 9: CCPs' views on how they organise cluster activities to enhance teaching and learning

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 1</i>	<i>- Cluster Centre Principals and Satellite principals come together in order to draw up a year calendar or pedagogic programme calendar for the cluster activities in line with the circuit calendar of activities. The calendar of activities is not much effective due to the lack of motivation.</i>
<i>CPP 3</i>	<i>- We draw a calendar of activities.</i>

A calendar of activities dated 23.01.2012 - 16.11.2012 for one cluster centre was studied, and it put strong focus on repeated subject meetings per phase looking at how activities pertaining to those subjects could be carried out in the cluster. Another calendar of activities for a different cluster centre dated 13.01.2014 – 09.12.2014 was also studied and it included parent-teacher conference, subject meetings, quizzes competitions and examinations. However, there was no evidence found to prove that what was on the calendar had taken place. The study also established that cluster centres did not have common activities' in their calendars, as each centre designed its own calendar of preferred activities, which led to some stakeholders benefiting more than others in their respective clusters. The developmental growth of teachers also depends on the planning of quality activities in the particular cluster centre.

However, it also unearthed from the study that though the cluster management drew up their cluster calendar of activities, not all planned activities were effectively implemented due to lack of funds. This turned clusters into white elephants although initially activities were intended to benefit teaching and learning, as well as to enhance the professional growth of the teachers. Tekaligne (2013) shared a similar finding that the lack of funds is one of the factors affecting the effectiveness of school clustering program.

4.3.8 CCPs, SSPs and teachers' understanding of Teacher Professional Development'

CCPs, SSPs and teachers were asked to give their views on how they understood “teacher professional development”. Their responses are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: CCPs, SSPs and teachers' understanding of "Teacher Professional Development"

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 1</i>	- <i>Teacher professional development is a model that aims to improve the quality of teachers in schools through Continuous Professional Development (CPD).</i>
<i>CCP 2</i>	- <i>Teacher professional development is the program to develop teachers, training them, capacitating them and finding a mentor who can take charge of getting them through the framework of the education system within the school context.</i>
<i>CCP 3</i>	- <i>Teacher professional development is a program of grooming teachers to grow from within and professionally. At school level teacher professional development is taking place through an induction program which grooms and mentors novice and old teachers to grow and develop in the teaching and learning process.</i>
<i>SSP 1</i>	- <i>It is the assistance that teachers receive from the principal, HODs and colleagues through workshops that serve as the professional development.</i>
<i>TEACHER B</i>	- <i>Teacher professional development is when teachers gain knowledge and skills through learning from each other.</i>
<i>TEACHER D</i>	- <i>Teacher professional development is the process of expanding teachers' knowledge through learning in workshops, meetings and functions.</i>

Although definitions given by the respondents on teacher professional development may be somewhat different, most of the respondents shared a common view that teacher professional development gives teachers an opportunity to learn from one another by acquiring knowledge and skills through workshops to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This means that teachers are able to update their knowledge, sharpen their skills, and acquire new teaching techniques to enhance the quality of teaching and learning through teacher professional development. Mahlangu (2014) defined teacher professional development as a method of updating individual's knowledge and skills, application of new strategies and changes as well as improving teachers' expertise.

Professional development in a broad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role (Fareo, 2013). Mphahlele and Rampa (2014); and Mphahlele (2012) defined teacher professional development as a professional growth, which a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experiences and the essential driver of good quality education. "Professional development includes formal experiences (such as workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc.); and informal experiences (such as reading professional publications and watching television documentaries related to academic discipline)" (Fareo, 2013, p. 64).

Nwagbara (2014) in his study conducted in Nigeria discovered that professional development does not only update the knowledge and skills of the teachers but also increases the productivity and potential of teachers' thinking capacity as well as the student's achievement. The respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) could not explicitly mention a prominent aspect of increasing productive and potential of teachers' thinking capacity which shows that they did not fully comprehend the definition of teacher professional development as it could be viewed from different

angles by individuals. As a result, this study saw the need to provide a clear definition of professional development in the teaching context and how it serves as a teacher support mechanism at a cluster level.

Furthermore, this study also established that teachers were capable of mentoring and moulding one another for better improvement through professional development. Mphahlele (2014) is of the opinion that teacher development as carried out in most schools today is not just designed to develop the teaching expertise needed to bring about improved learners' achievements, but also to focus on the psychology of teachers. Whereas, Tekaligne (2013) designated that the purpose of school cluster was to support teachers' professional development and provide for the establishment of a network for teachers. None of the respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) included the aspect of the establishment of teachers' network in their understanding of teacher professional development. However, the feature of mentorship in the findings of this study is in harmony with Mahlangu's (2014) argument that teacher professional development was made part of induction and orientation for the newly appointed teachers, and serves as evidence for cluster to serve as an innovative platform for teacher development in South Africa. It is also shown in the findings that "teacher professional development" is broad and accommodates a lot of areas pertaining to the professional developmental growth of the teachers.

Fareo (2013) discovered a workshop model as useful for teacher professional development which this study corresponded with as an essential grouping of teachers out of their schools to a venue where they are exposed to a core of information and skills. It could be concluded that teacher professional development is a continuous process for teachers learning to grow personally, socially and professionally through professional interaction and coaching.

4.4 Results and discussion on the “ministerial policies” of school cluster available in schools

4.4.1 Views of CCPs, SSPs and teachers on school cluster policy

Respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) were asked to indicate any ministerial policy on school cluster available in their schools.

Table 11: Responses on the availability of “ministerial policies” on school clusters system

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- <i>There is no cluster policy.</i>
CCP 2	- <i>I do not know of any policy.</i>
CCP 3	- <i>There is a book titled School Cluster System in Namibia.</i>
SSP 1	- <i>I am not aware if there is an existing policy.</i>
SSP 2	- <i>I remember I have seen a cluster policy for 2010, but I forgot it and I could not find it.</i>
TEACHER B	- <i>I only saw it from my – former school.</i>
TEACHER E	- <i>I am not sure if there is any policy.</i>

The data in Table 11 show that there is no effective schools cluster policy in schools. Although some respondents have tried to recall seeing the policy, they could not trace it in their schools. This implies that the school cluster policy might be missing in schools as a result of poor dissemination of information and improper filing system, or it does not just exist at all. It also emanated from this study that the lack of school cluster policy in schools can have destructive impacts on the organisation set-

up and the effective implementation of the school cluster system's aims and objectives. The fact that the system was not gazetted made the system exploitative to its implementers, as they were to do extra work without recognition. The lack of the legal policy framework on the operation of school cluster system does not mandate CCPs resulting into being ineffective in the administration of the cluster system activities. Cluster Centre Principals, Satellite School Principals and teachers might devalue the importance of implementing cluster related activities and that might affect teaching and learning. According to Ali (2013) a program without a policy guideline does not warrant any recognition of its existence.

The School Cluster System's aims and objectives are published in a booklet titled "*The School Cluster System in Namibia*" which is commonly known in schools with some considering it as a school cluster policy. The content of the booklet outlines information on school cluster and aims to provide stakeholders at all levels in the education sector with information about: 1) the structure and function of clusters; 2) the range of benefits that clusters can offer; 3) administrative and management of structures which enable cluster systems to operate effectively; 4) the role of clusters in improving teaching and learning practices; 5) contributions made by clusters to major educational goals and policies; and 6) ways in which the cluster system can develop in the future (Dittmar, et al., 2002).

The school cluster system's aims and objectives need to be shared with all educational stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners) in order to build awareness of the importance of the system as a teacher support service.

4.4.2 CCPs and SSPs' views on the negative effects of operating a school cluster system without a legal policy

CCPs and SSPs were asked to share their views on the negative effects they encounter when operating in a school cluster system without a policy.

Table 12: CCPs and SSPs' views on the negative effects of operating without a school cluster policy

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- <i>My mandate as a CCP is weakened as there is nothing legal empowering me to execute the duties of the cluster.</i>
CCP 2	- <i>Working with teachers is not an easy task as they may also challenge my leadership for being a cluster centre principal operating with no policy. I currently do not have any power to even reprimand a teacher who might fail to carry out cluster activities hence I may implicate myself before the law and the constitutions of our country.</i>
SSP 1	- <i>The absence of the policy makes it difficult to convince teachers to take cluster activities seriously for there is no policy document to refer too.</i>
SSP 2	- <i>It is discouraging; because the school cluster system is really a useful system to boost quality teaching and learning in terms of its aims and objectives and really deserve legal recognition.</i>

The data in Table 12 shows that CCPs were not empowered to carry out their roles as cluster centre principals since there is no legal policy on school cluster system in their possession to facilitate the effective execution of their duties. Despite the absence of the school cluster policy the school cluster system booklet that was created to show the need for clusters in Namibia is available. It contains a description of benefits that clusters can provide; outlines the ingredients that make clusters work more effectively; and several aspects of how clusters can develop in the future. This study revealed that the absence of the policy could negatively influence the attitudes of teachers as they might not be willing to comply with school cluster affairs. This could make it difficult for both the CCPs and SSPs to reprimand them as there is no any legal guiding tool on school cluster. While it is evident that leaders should inspire and motivate their subordinates, these CCPs might lead with low confidence in carrying out their tasks as CCPs, owed to the missing school cluster policy to protect and empower them. Almost a similar finding was revealed by Aipinge (2007, p. 100) who found out that “It was difficult for the Inspectors of Education or the regional officials to reprimand CCPs for failure to deliver because there was no regulating mechanisms or system to make them accountable”.

Despite the system being good, the absence of the school cluster policy could be dismay to teachers’ support services for professional development. Following the latter, it could be a challenge for both CCPs and SSPs to involve teachers who had little or no understanding about the school cluster system.

4.5. Results and discussion on common challenges CCPs, SSPs and teachers encountered in utilising the cluster centre

The CCPs, SSPs and teachers were asked to state the challenges they encountered in utilising their cluster centres. The data in Tables 13-25 provide responses to the identified challenges.

Table 13: Lack of School Cluster Policy

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 2.</i>	- <i>Being a cluster centre principal is a very big challenge since the cluster system is not legalized.</i>
<i>SSP 2</i>	- <i>The absence of the policy is imposing threats to the cluster operation.</i>

The data revealed that school cluster is operating somewhat informally. This then implies that the system is not strengthened, nor valued. As a result, this challenge has undesirable impacts on the objectives of establishing a school cluster system in the Oshana region.

Table 14: Lack of cluster fund

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 2	<i>-There is a lack of finances as there is no budget allocation for the cluster centre.</i>
CCP 3	<i>-There is no money given to clusters at all, though on paper it reflects that the region budgeted N\$ 5000.00 for professional development and N\$15000.00 for purchasing cluster needs.</i>

Financial resources in the Clusters were required to enable the smooth implementation of cluster activities. The lack of funds emerged as a crucial problem in the school clusters system. Shikalepo (2018) affirmed that, the lack of fund resulted in cluster centres not being developed to better serve their satellite schools up to expectation. It could be concluded that school cluster's financial challenge is negatively affecting the implementation of school cluster activities leaving the people involved in organising cluster activities feeling discouraged. Maphosa, et al. (2013) argued that a school cluster should be well funded so that teachers in various clusters do not operate as loners in their schools, but provided with opportunity to meet with fellow professionals to share knowledge, expertise and experiences. The cluster fund would enable CCPs to address relevant issues to support teaching and learning.

Table 15: Transport

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 1</i>	<i>There is no transport meant for cluster activities, so one had to fork out money from school development fund (now Primary Education Grant - PEG and Secondary Education Grant – SEG) to fill up petrol in their cars in exercising the duties for the cluster.</i>
<i>CCP 3</i>	<i>There is no subsistence and travelling allowances (S and T) to give to teachers once we invite them for professional development programme, and teachers always have to complain of transport, which at some point discouraged the organizer from inviting the teachers.</i>

The data in Table 15 show that there is no cluster vehicle, neither subsistence nor travelling allowances meant for clusters. The findings on the challenges regarding transport were contrary to (Jita & Mokhele, 2014) as they discovered that cluster activities in South Africa are conducted using the vehicle of the cluster. This is unlike in Namibia as cluster centre principals have to coordinate the school cluster activities making use of their own vehicles without any allowance, which may leave some activities, not carried out. It can also be correct to assume that CCPs may have excuses of not visiting schools, which are placed under their supervision blaming it on the lack of transport. Makaye (2015) argued that cluster leaders need to be

encouraged in order to establish coherence, maintain equity focus, and create social engagement in their schools.

Table 16: CCPs Work Load

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- <i>The combination of being a CCP and a full time subject teacher is not easy. I am really supporting the cluster system provided that the teaching load is taken away from the cluster centre principals, so that one can only concentrate on the administration of satellite schools.</i>

The findings in Table 16 may imply that an overloaded person could not perform his or her tasks effectively and efficiently, as time would be a big constraint preventing the excellent performance of tasks. Respondents indicated a concern of the workload that cluster centre principals had to perform. To carry out cluster centre activities the CCPs have to divert from leading their own schools as their primary responsibilities, to other extra duties for the cluster resulting in depriving giving the full attention to their own learners as they are also full time subject teachers.

Jita and Mokhele (2014) also discovered similar findings in their study conducted in South Africa “When teacher cluster work” that, cluster centre principals are classroom teachers and leaders of the clusters at the same time, which become a burden on their duties performance. It is shown in this study that CCPs perceived their workload as having negative impacts on the effective teaching, monitoring and

supervision of their own schools and that within their clusters. Edward and Mbatia (2012) shared a similar finding that CCPs are overwhelmed with responsibilities under the school cluster system and cannot support schools in addition to supervising their respective classes.

Table 17: Lack of infrastructure

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 2	- <i>There is no operational building for the cluster, and instead the library or any open area is being used as a meeting venue</i>
CCP 3	- <i>There is no venue. If you invite teachers here you have to suspend a class from being utilized by the learners</i>
SSP 2	- <i>No cluster venue</i>
TEACHER E	- <i>There is a lack of infrastructures that affect the teaching and learning</i>

These findings imply that the cluster centre principal have to struggle with the venue where teachers and parents can gather for cluster activities to take place. It then becomes a responsibility of the cluster centre principal to ensure that he/she secures a space by suspending classes and that becomes detrimental to the teaching and learning process. Infrastructural development to cater for cluster affairs such as planned meetings is thus a great necessity. Makaye (2015) who studied, *school cluster as site for instructional leadership: A case of the better schools programme of Zimbabwe*, also found similar findings of lack of venues, which disturbs the teaching process. Although the school cluster aims for excellent teaching and learning, lesson

suspension causes learners to become victims of losing their time to acquire knowledge and skills that is supposed to be imparted onto them during the teaching period. The on-going suspension of classes harms and disadvantages the teaching and learning pedagogy. A study conducted in a different context by Trigu (2014) about the, *Impact of the Malawi Secondary School Cluster System on the management of community day secondary school: A case of Blantyre district*, shared that a cluster system should advocate good management of student welfare to ensure that pupils' education is not disrupted by the suspensions of lessons.

This study also discovered that teachers might not be able to complete their syllabi at the end of the day, and lazy teachers may use that as an excuse; and thus learners end up being disadvantaged. A conclusion can also be drawn from this finding that if teachers were to be compelled to compensate for the lost lessons, a burden and stress may be imposed on them as to how they would plan a convenient time to cover up for the lost lessons time.

Table 18: Provision of human resource personnel

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 2	- <i>There is no additional staff to run cluster activities thus the school administrator had to assist doubling his or her work; and putting a big burden on him or her.</i>
CCP 3	- <i>No additional staff to run cluster activities in terms of administration, so this then becomes the duties of the school secretary.</i>

The findings in Table 18 imply that the overall administration tasks of the cluster centre is carried out by the respective school administrator of that particular cluster centre who was merely not appointed as a cluster administrator, but just as a school

administrator. The foregoing doubles his/her work without being compensated which leads to the unproductive performance for the school, which is earmarked as a cluster centre. In contrary to this finding Jita and Mokhele (2014) found that school clusters in South Africa had administrators who are responsible for organizing and facilitating the administration of clusters with efficiency. If clusters do not appoint a specific cluster's administrator, there would be a malfunction in the cluster administration and in the implementation of both school and cluster activities.

Table 19: Lack of cooperation

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- <i>There is a lack of cooperation from the teachers' side in terms of absenteeism and failing to cooperate when they are entitled to attend to certain events of the cluster.</i>
SSP 1	- <i>Teachers some times are not willing and showing interest to participate in cluster activities.</i>

It might be right to assume that where there is cooperation, the probability of negative behaviours may be rare since teamwork spirit would be prevailing. The data show that teachers might absent themselves and some maybe unwilling to attend cluster events because of the lack of information on the importance of school cluster system and how it could support them to grow professionally. In addition, teachers may also not cooperate and respond positively to the invitation to participate in the cluster activities since there is no legal framework to compel them. On the other hand CCPs might not involve teachers in the initial planning of cluster-based activities and teachers may feel that they are not given opportunities to exercise their freedom of

choice. Moreover, the study also revealed that the leadership of clusters might not be strong to influence teachers achieve the objectives of the school cluster system. It emerged from the study by Mphahlele (2014) that teachers' attitudes and compliance are the major impediments to quality teaching. It is however, said in the National Professional Standard for Teachers in Namibia (2005) that not all schools are willing to participate in a cluster structure; and the attitudes of teachers differ as not all are willing to share; with participation regarded as a burden.

Table 20: Lack of motivation and remuneration

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>CCP 3</i>	- <i>There is no remuneration to motivate us to abide to our work as CCPs.</i>

CCP 3, claimed that CCPs are performing extra work without being paid, which points to lack of remuneration as being one of the challenges. The data show that not being remunerated can cause a big threat to the growth of the school cluster system. This study also shows that cluster centre principals are still not compensated for the extra responsibilities of supervising, monitoring and coordinating activities in their clusters ever since the system was introduced. It emanated from the findings that the CCPs felt that their rights were being violated as they are being used without any recognition. This could possibly lead to teachers being disadvantaged from receiving the necessary professional supports from the CCPs.

Ali (2013) found a similar finding in his study on, *Cluster School Policy in the Maldives*, that cluster heads are given big tasks with no recognition or incentives to their roles. Whereas Nghatanga (2010) supported that CCPs are supposed to be given

extra money since they have additional duties to perform for their clusters, which they now do without being given anything. This study confirmed that the lack of remuneration affects the performance of the CCPs, which in a long run may cause a natural death of school cluster system as CCPs, may not feel obliged and dedicated to run their clusters, because there is no recognition or any motivation, despite its aim to excel.

Beside the earlier challenges alluded to by CCPs, SSPs and teachers, the following were some of the unique challenges mentioned only by the teachers.

Table 21: Few cluster activities

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>TEACHER A</i>	- <i>There are few activities taking place.</i>

This finding concurred with the CCPs whom in terms of how they support teachers all indicated that “... *very little is taking place due to the capital constraints*”. This finding implies that not much is taking place at the cluster level, because for activities to take place would depend on the availability of funds to enable the effective implementation. Trigu (2014) shared a similar finding in a different setting that clusters at some point are neglected leaving only a few activities to be taking place. It emerged from the finding that useful cluster activities might collapse and cause negative effects for teachers as they may not benefit from the support services the school cluster system intends to provide.

Table 22: Weak link between the region and the cluster

A prominent element was pointed out by one teacher among all the participants that:

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
TEACHER B	<i>The link between the cluster and the region is weak hence the region does not render support on time in terms of the supply of papers, ink and master-roll.</i>

Makaye (2015) who also unearthed that the link between schools and the district office in South Africa was weak in the transition of cluster activities found a similar finding. It emerged from the study, that a weak link between the cluster and the region could disadvantage the teachers, learners and parents as they may lose trust in their leaders. It might also be correct to assume that the region is at some point causing delay in the dispatching of school cluster resources that teachers may need to use at the cluster level for effective teaching and learning. This may ultimately affect teaching and learning including the implementation of the co-curricular activities. However, Nwagbara (2014) reiterated that CCPs should form links between schools, the circuit and the regional office for the smooth running of their cluster centres. Jita and Mokhele (2014) supported that there must be a link between schools and the region to ensure the proper provision of resources; effectiveness of cluster activities; and to maintain that strong link between schools and the region.

Table 23: Lack of support and motivation for the underperforming teachers

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
TEACHER C	- <i>There is no support and motivation for the underperforming teachers.</i>

Interestingly only one participant (teacher C) among all the participants (CCPs, SSPs and other teachers) had identified the lack of necessary support to the underperforming teachers and learners from the principal and subject facilitators leaving teachers not feeling empowered to carry out their duties effectively. This study established that the underperforming teachers seemed not to be getting the necessary support from within and outside the cluster. A lack of support and motivation could have a lifelong negative impact on the teachers' professional development and learners' academic performance. While it is evident that leadership is about inspiring and motivating people, this study established that underperforming teachers experience a lack of motivation and inspiration from their principals and subject facilitators that supposed to assist in improving their quality teaching delivery and assessment. Maphosa, et al. (2013) posited that teachers need support and motivation to accomplish their tasks, to reflect on their day-to-day experiences and to improve their skills.

Table 24: Lack of subject facilitators

RESPONDENT	RESPONSES
TEACHER D	- <i>There is a lack of subject facilitators to facilitate activities related to the respective subjects.</i>

While in this study lack of subject facilitators was found to be a challenge; Tekaligne's (2013), Aipinge's (2007) and Nghatanga's (2010) findings elsewhere uncovered that, it was not a challenge since in their studies subject facilitators were found hosting subject meetings for teachers to plan and set same tests. From the findings of this study, it is evident that though subject facilitators are appointed to assist teachers, not all clusters have subject facilitators, or if they might have, they might not be actively performing their roles and responsibilities as subject facilitators to support teachers in their particular subjects. This could possibly affect the quality implementation of the curriculum as the lack of facilitators will impede teachers' exposure to the quality educational atmosphere that would allow them to show their intellectual, emotional and psychological growth based on their subjects. The subject facilitators need to be made aware of their roles of supporting teachers in their particular subjects for the best benefits for both teachers and learners.

Table 25: Lack of meetings

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>TEACHER B</i>	<i>Sometimes we do attend subjects meetings.</i>
<i>TEACHER E</i>	<i>Some teachers are not coming together to tackle issues of concern in their teaching.</i>

This finding revealed that not all cluster centres are hosting meetings for teachers to share and learn from each other and this can really have a negative impact on their development and growth personally, physically and socially. In addition, the findings discovered that subject meetings are taking place in some clusters, while in some, teachers are not committed to the school cluster system and do not attend meetings. It could be that teachers are not attending meetings because they were not involved in the planning of meetings and are not given any chance to plan professional development activities or perhaps they felt that they do not learn much. If teachers could be committed to cluster meetings then the cluster system would serve the goal of teacher development (Mphahlele, 2014). Teachers need both general and subjects meetings for them to embrace the latest approaches in teaching and learning and to discuss issues in their educational lives and not just during workshops.

The study also established that when teachers come together for information sharing workshops in their clusters it is regarded as meetings. However, there is a need for a clear distinction to the CCPs and SSPs between a workshop and a meeting. Nwagbara (2014) found that the cluster teacher meeting is the forum where the major professional support is provided to the teachers; and teachers meeting also afford

them of the opportunity to develop and generate ideas on the best ways they could facilitate learning.

Meetings supposed to be platforms where people can convene together to share strategies, ideas, skills and information in everyday lives aspects (Maphosa, et al., 2013).

In conclusion, despite the noble initiative of establishing school clusters the findings of this study show that the cluster system is faced by numerous challenges affecting its functions and existence.

4.6 Result and discussion of possible solutions to mitigate the identified challenges CCPs, SSPs and teachers

Based on the findings, the following suggestions were raised by various participants.

4.6.1 CCPs' and SSPs' suggestions

The analysis of cluster centre principals and satellite school principals' suggestions show that there is a need to improve the school cluster system, as reflected in Table 26.

Table 26: CCPs and SSPs' suggestions

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	- The government should establish the allowances for the CCPs as a motive and appoint a support staff.
CCP 2	- The cluster should be provided with the cluster building with all the necessary resources.
CCP 3	- The system should be legalized, because as we speak this system is illegal.
SSP 1	- Cluster centres should also be assigned with a support staff member responsible for cluster activities.
SSP 2	- The government through the regional decentralization should allocate funds for cluster centre activities.

The findings in Table 26 show that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should start recognising the need to support school clusters in terms of funds allocation and CCPs incentives in order for the planned activities to take place effectively. The findings of this study further show that CCPs need empowerment in order to facilitate cluster activities provided that the system has the policy framework to guide the process. The provision of a legal framework in the form of a policy document is pivotal so that CCPs would have an obligation to carry out their duties effectively as cluster centre principals. It is also crucial for cluster centres to be provided with cluster venues for cluster meetings and workshops. The lack of cluster

venue negatively affects staff development activities thereby causing disturbances to the normal teaching and learning processes.

In addition, there is a great need for the appointment of a cluster support staff to administer cluster activities which would also lighten the burden of the school administrators. These administrators were only supposed to deal with activities for their respective schools, but now they have additional workload.

4.6.2 Teachers' suggestions

The analysis of teachers' responses indicated that they placed emphasis on improving the school cluster system through collaboration and provision of incentives.

Table 27: Teachers' suggestions

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
<i>TEACHER A</i>	<i>- There is a need for team work encouragement and collaborative tasks to be done at the cluster level.</i>
<i>TEACHER C</i>	<i>- There should be departmental meetings at least once per term.</i>

The study established that there is a need for teamwork reinforcement and collaboration of tasks in the school cluster system, as it is an important model that may enable teachers to grow professionally through acquiring knowledge, skills and a variety of approaches from each other. Moreover, Jita and Mokhele, (2014) recommended that teachers' collaboration is the key ingredient of any successful

teacher in the cluster. Evidence is shown in the data that respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) in this study made several suggestions that maybe useful if adopted to improve the effectiveness of the existing school cluster system as a support service for teachers. It is therefore imperative for the cluster centre to be kept effective and viable in its support for teaching and learning within schools.

4.7 General comments made by CCPs, SSPs and teachers

The respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) were asked to give their general comments regarding the school cluster system.

Table 28: Cluster Centre Principals and Satellite School Principals' comments

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
CCP 1	<i>The cluster system is a good idea that desires to bring teachers together creating a strong bond between schools in information sharing.</i>
CCP 3	<i>The school cluster system as a teacher support service is highly commendable, and thus needs to be strengthened so that it benefits the teaching and learning pedagogy.</i>
SSP 2	<i>The system is excellent, but its evaluation is needed to prove its usefulness.</i>

The study established that both CCPs and SSPs embraced the school cluster idea, and agree that it has the potential to improve the teaching and learning. An important element was also established that the system could be evaluated in order to prove its

effectiveness and efficiency; its strengths and weaknesses or whether it should be abolished. Fullan (2011) strengthen the importance of evaluating a new change to determine its strengths and weakness.

Table 29: Teachers' comments

RESPONDENTS	RESPONSES
TEACHER A	<i>The cluster system can be an effective way to promote quality service delivery, thus all stakeholders need to be involved in cluster activities to help each other face and deal with challenges together.</i>
TEACHER D	<i>Advisory services should start operating at the clusters to set papers, tests and schemes of work; hence as teachers do cluster work it can waste their time of teaching.</i>

It was useful to note that teachers are supporting the cluster system by noting its useful benefits to teaching and learning. It was also established from comments made that advisory services should move closer to schools so that the smooth transition of learners' assessment by teachers is well organized and monitored. However, Mahlangu (2014) in a different setting recommended that teachers should get together to discuss and interpret the teaching and learning methodologies and mould each other, which in this study is the lack of collaboration which has surfaced as a concern.

4.8 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present and discuss the findings in relation to the research questions identified in chapter one. From the responses it was evidence that participants have a narrow understanding of the school cluster system from their own perspectives. It was also shown in the data that respondents could define teacher professional development in relation to personal, social and professional growth. The school cluster is a model of teacher development that brings teachers together in order to capacitate them in the teaching and learning process. Basing on the findings, cluster activities are not effectively implemented due to the lack of proper understanding and support of the system from the Oshana Regional Education Office. The theories of “*Education Change*” and “*Cooperative Learning*”, and the literature reviewed, supported and informed that the school cluster system was initiated as a reform to enhance teachers’ network for teacher professional development. The school cluster system is a noble idea though with a number of challenges threatening its effective implementation. The following critical challenges were identified, namely: lack of policy, lack of cluster funds, cluster human resources, and lack of remuneration for cluster centre principals. Despite those challenges, schools are trying though not effective to implement the cluster system’s aims and objectives, without any policy framework to guide them.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the summary of the chapters in the study, and the conclusions that drawn from the study. It also presented recommendations and suggestions on areas for further research. The aim of this study was to investigate the usefulness of the school cluster system as a support service for teachers in Oluno Circuit, Oshana Region. This study was informed by the “*Education Change Theory*” and the “*Cooperative Learning theory*”; and various literatures were reviewed to validate the findings of the study. The main research questions for the study were: 1) *How does the cluster system serve as a support service in schools?*; 2) *What policies and mechanisms does the Ministry of Education put in place to support the school cluster system in Namibia?*; 3) *What challenges do teachers face in utilizing the cluster centres to enhance their professional growth and improve teaching and learning?*.

5.2 Summary

Chapter 1 presented the orientation of the study and the rationale behind the study as well as the statement of the problem. It also indicated the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Chapter 2 explored various literature and related models underpinning the school cluster system as a teacher support service and in response to the research questions.

Chapter 3 focused on the qualitative approach and the design used to respond to the research questions; and the results of this study providing in-depth data on school cluster as a teacher support service. This chapter also elaborated on the sample and sampling procedures applied. The respondents of the study were the CCPs, SSPs and teachers; who were selected through a mixture of simple random sampling and

stratified purposeful sampling. The research instruments used were document analysis, semi-structured interview guide and semi-structured questionnaires guide. Responses were coded and sorted into categories in relation to the research questions and analysed in conformity to content analysis.

Chapter 4 presented the findings and the discussion as per the research questions.

Chapter 5 presented a summary, conclusion and recommendations emanated from the study.

5.3 Conclusions

It can thus be concluded that school cluster is a noble initiative that aims to develop and capacitate teachers to grow professionally. It is also a model for clustering schools to create schools network collaboration and allowing the sharing of teaching and learning assets. It is also viewed as a forum to accord teachers opportunities to creatively develop and generate ideas on best ways to facilitate concepts in subject areas, and develop teaching and learning materials. Though CCPs have shown willingness and enthusiasm to support satellite school principals and teachers, the weakness lies in the lack of support from the Oshana Regional Education Office in terms of funds allocation. Maphosa, et al., (2013) indicated that school clusters need to be well funded so that there are exchange and sharing programmes as clusters in different localities should share experience to enhance cluster operation.

Regarding the organisation of cluster activities to support teachers grow professionally; clusters' activities are done differently causing teachers' professional competencies to vary which might ultimately affect both learners and teachers' performance.

The study established that the school cluster's aims and objectives in the 'School Cluster System' booklet are not really well understood by all educational stakeholders (teachers, education officers, parents and learners) in order to create awareness of the importance of the system as a teacher support service. The aims and objectives of the school cluster system would enable CCPs to position themselves as effective leaders in rendering professional support.

It can further be concluded that there is no school cluster policy or legal mechanism in schools to guide the operational of school cluster system. The lack of such policy is causing negative effects on the organisation set-up and the implementation of the school cluster system's aims and objectives. In addition, it was also unveiled that the lack of school cluster policy is adversely influencing the attitudes of teachers as they are not obliged to comply with school cluster affairs, and that could make it difficult for both the CCPs and SSPs to reprimand them. It can therefore be concluded that there would be no best practices to probably work well for the cluster if there is no legal policy framework to regulate and strengthen the system. Moreover, it can be assumed that the absence of the school cluster policy could be an impediment to the provision of cluster funding, CCPs remuneration and cluster infrastructures and other significant benefits to the cluster.

In spite of the noble initiative of establishing the school cluster system in Namibia this study noted that the school cluster system is faced with major challenges affecting its functions and its effective implementation. Several common critical challenges were mentioned by the participants such as the lack of school cluster policy, lack of CCPs remuneration, lack of cluster funds, unavailability of transport, lack of infrastructures, lack of human resource personnel, lack of cooperation and lack of cluster meetings. Maphosa, et al., (2013) discovered that without a strong

resource-base, school clusters might continue handling peripheral issues and not realising the significant curriculum improvement and teacher development. However, among all challenges stated by the participants the most striking one holding back the effectiveness of the system is the lack of the school cluster policy; and all other challenges threatening the system could be a result of such. The lack of school cluster policy also shows that CCPs are generally not empowered to carry out their roles as cluster centre principals in rendering teacher support services for professional development to teachers with little or no understanding about the school cluster system. Ali (2013) confirmed that the lack of cluster policy would limit the development and cluster capacity leaving no possible actions to benefit teaching and learning.

School cluster system is an excellent idea that is aiming to serve as a platform for teacher professional development. Despite the absence of the regulatory laws, school clusters need powerful leaders to ensure better practices of the system. In assumption, this study is expected to add new knowledge to the inadequate literature on school cluster system as a teachers support service particularly in Namibia.

5.4 Recommendations

Several suggestions were made by the respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers); however, the most crucial suggestions made were the establishment of the school cluster policy and the provision of the support staff. The provision of the cluster support staff needs to be boosted by the policy. Without the policy, nothing legal would likely happen. In addition, the absence of the policy is the obstacle to the success of all other cluster related affairs.

Based on the articulate aims and objectives of the school cluster system, respondents (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) have made significant general comments regarding the school cluster system as a teacher support service. They embraced its establishment as an excellent thought to the development of quality teaching and learning pedagogy. Makaye (2015) recommended that the excellent implementation of the school cluster initiative is aimed at enhancing quality teaching and producing excellent results. The school cluster system has the potential to influence teacher professional development, but there is a clear lack of support for the system.

Based on the discussions of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following general recommendations for improvements are made to various stakeholders, on how to improve the school cluster system. For the cluster to enhance teacher professional development, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should put the following measures into practice:

1. Cluster Centre Principals need to undergo training in order for them to clearly know their roles and responsibilities in order to increase commitment.
2. The School Cluster System should be funded and get support from the government for the smooth operation of the system.
3. There is a need to examine the concept 'teacher professional development' to educate teachers (CCPs, SSPs and teachers) to know what is expected of them to enable effective teacher professional development.
4. It is also very crucial that the School Cluster Policy be established to accord CCPs the mandate to exercise their authorities and accountabilities.

5. A support staff could be appointed to run the administration of the clusters effectively and efficiently.

Furthermore, this study also made further recommendations for further research to investigate and explore the school cluster concept in terms of supporting teaching and learning.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

This study was done in Oshana Region, Oluno circuit in Ondangwa. In order to have an in-depth understanding of the school cluster system concept, further research needs to be conducted in other circuits or regions to investigate the perceptions of all stakeholders on the usefulness of the cluster system.

The following are recommendations for further research:

- Given the lack of support for the system, further research to assess the effective implementation of the cluster system in Namibia as a comparative study in other regions should be conducted.
- It has been established that there is no policy framework to regulate the system, there is thus a great need to investigate the challenges the absence of the policy has on the CCPs in operating school cluster system in Namibia.

5.6 Summary

This chapter presented the conclusions of the findings. It also looked at the recommendations of what needs to be improved to enhance the effective implementation of the school cluster system in Namibia. Recommendations for future research were also presented as they outlined areas that need to be explored on the school cluster system in Namibia. The school cluster system

was a great thought; however, it has numerous challenges that are impeding the quality service delivery to teaching and learning.

It is also a useful model for clustering schools to share resources and expertise. Moreover, SCS also has the potential to improve professionally the standard of teachers, and learners' academic performance. It emerged that SCS is aiming to take teachers' collaboration beyond a level where teachers could support each other and provide opportunities for areas of improvement, and not to operate as loners. If the challenges in the system are addressed, the school cluster system will vigorously contribute to the teaching and learning pedagogy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form 1

I hereby agree to participate in an interview with Johanna Nakambonde-Daniel. I understand that she will be enquiring about my understanding on the role of cluster centres as support services for teachers.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Consent Form 2

Johanna Nakambonde -Daniel is hereby given permission to record a semi-structured interview conducted with me as part of the process of her data collection for a research report that she will be writing for the completion of her Master's degree. I understand that transcripts will be made of the interview and that extracts from these may be used in the final report.

I have been assured that my cluster and I have anonymity in the report. I have been further assured that I have the right to quit the research at any time.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Semi Structured Interview Guides for CCPs and SSPs

INTRODUCTION

I am Johanna Nakambonde-Daniel (student number 200531042) a University of Namibia student pursuing a Master of Education in Education Management, Leadership and Policy Studies. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to take part in this research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of school cluster system as a support service for teachers in Oshana Region. I assure you that your responses will be treated confidential and no records of your responses will be kept for any purpose other than this research.

INSTRUCTION

- All answers will be treated confidential; please feel free to respond to the semi-structured interview guides
- Be assured that your responses will remain anonymous
- Do not discuss the content of this semi-structured interview guide with your colleagues or any other person
- Your personal opinion is highly valued in this semi-structured interview guide

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

In this section I would like to know a little bit about you

1. Code: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Age group – tick (✓) in the appropriate box

AGE Group	Tick (✓)
20-25	
25-30	
30-35	
35-40	
40-45	
45 and above	

4. Highest qualification:

5. Position and/or responsibilities held in the school:

6. Years of teaching experience:

7. Number of years teaching under the current cluster: _____

8. How long have you been a Cluster Centre Principal (CCP) / Satellite Principal?

9. What is your role as CCP / Satellite Principal?

10. Did you receive any training to facilitate cluster activities? Yes / No

**SECTION B: SCHOOL CLUSTER AS A SUPPORT SERVICE FOR
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In this section you are required to provide information on how school cluster is a support service for teacher development.

1. Questions for CCPs and SSPs

1.1 What is your understanding of a cluster system?

1.2 How could a cluster system serve as a teacher support service?

1.3 What kind of teacher support services do you provide to teachers and satellite school principals (applicable to CCPs only)

1.4 How are activities in your cluster organized to support and enhance teaching and learning?

Questions 1.5 and 1.6 (applicable to Satellite Principals only)

1.5 What kind of teacher support services do you provide to teachers?

1.6 What support services do you receive from your CCP?

1.7 Describe how you understand teacher professional development?

**SECTION C: CHALLENGES FACED IN UTILISING THE CLUSTER
CENTRE**

In this section you are required to provide information on the challenges
faced in utilizing the school cluster

1. What challenges do you experience in enhancing teacher professional
development in the cluster?

2. What do you suggest could be done to address the challenges you are
experiencing?

SECTION D: REGARDING POLICIES AND MECHANISMS IN PLACE

In this section you are required to provide information regarding policies and mechanisms in place regarding your school cluster.

1. What ministerial policies regarding school cluster are you aware of?

2. How are these policies implemented?

3. State the aims and objectives of your internal cluster policy if any?

4. Are there other mechanisms in place to enhance the school cluster system as a support service for teachers? (**Motivate your answer**)

5. What are your suggestions for improving the management of your cluster?

SECTION C: GENERAL COMMENTS

State any additional comments regarding school cluster as a teacher support service.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this study!

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Questionnaire for teachers

INTRODUCTION

I am Johanna Nakambonde - Daniel (student number 200531042) a University of Namibia student pursuing a Master of Education in Education Management, Leadership and Policy Studies. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to take part in this research. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of school cluster system as a support service for teachers in Oshana Region. I assure you that your responses will be treated confidential and no records of your responses will be kept for any purpose other than this research.

INSTRUCTION

- All answers will be treated confidential; please feel free to respond to the semi-structured questionnaire
- Be assured that your responses will remain anonymous as such you are not required to write your name on this questionnaire
- Do not discuss the content of this semi-structured questionnaire with your colleagues or any other person
- Your personal opinion is highly valued in this semi-structured questionnaire

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

In this section I would like to know a little about you.

1. Code: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Age group – tick (✓) in the appropriate box

AGE Group	Tick (✓)
20-25	
25-30	
30-35	
35-40	
40-45	
45 and above	

4. Highest qualification:

5. Position and/or responsibilities held in the school:

6. Years of teaching experience:

7. Name of your cluster:

8. Number of years teaching under the current cluster: _____

**SECTION B: SCHOOL CLUSTER AS A SUPPORT SERVICE FOR
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In this section you are required to provide information on how the school cluster is a support service to teacher development.

Semi-Structured Questions

1. What kind of teacher support services do you receive from your Cluster Centre Principals and your principal (SSP) to enhance teaching and learning programme?

2. What support services do you expect to receive through the cluster centre, and why?

**SECTION C: CHALLENGES FACED IN UTILISING THE CLUSTER
CENTRE**

In this section you are required to provide information on the challenges faced in utilising the school cluster

1. What challenges do you face in utilizing the cluster centre?

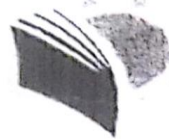
2. What do you suggest could be done to address the challenges you are experiencing?

SECTION D: GENERAL

State any additional comments regarding school cluster as a system supporting teaching and learning.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this study!

Appendix E: Ethical Clearance from the University of Namibia



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

STUDENT ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FOE/35/2015

Date: 9 June 2015

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: The Role of School Cluster System as a Support Service for Teachers: A Case of Olundj Circuit in the Oshana Region of Namibia.

Nature/Level of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: J. Daniel

Student Number: 200531042

Host Department & Faculty: Faculty of Education

Main Supervisor: Prof. E. Amukugo (Main) Dr. G. Likando (Co)

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. I. Mapaire
UNAM Research Coordinator
ON BEHALF OF UREC

Appendix F: Student request to conduct educational study

Mrs. Johanna Daniel
Student Number: 200531042
PO Box 6219
Oshakati
23 July 2015

Mrs. Sanet Steenkamp
The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Art and Culture
Republic of Namibia

Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN OLUNO CIRCUIT, OSHANA REGION

My Name is Johanna Nakambonde-Daniel, a Master student at the University of Namibia (UNAM). I am pursuing a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy Studies. I have completed my course work and now have to embark on my thesis work.

The research topic is: **School Cluster System as a teacher support service, a case of Oluno Circuit, Oshana Region.**

It is therefore against this background that I seek permission to conduct a study in the above field in order to fulfill my studies.

Thanking you in advance. Attached please find my clearance certificate

Yours faithfully

Johanna Nakambonde- Daniel

Appendix G: Permission letter from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Oshana Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
Aspiring to Excellence in Education for All

Tel: 065-230057
Fax: 065 - 230035
E-mail: otrc_physical_science@yahoo.co.uk
Enquiries: Maria Udjombala
Ref 12/2/1

Private Bag 5518
Oshakati, NAMIBIA

28 September 2015

Ms Johanna Daniel (Nakambonde)
P/ Bag 2030
Ondangwa
081 285 9381

Dear Ms. Daniel (Nakambonde)

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
IN OLUNO CLUSTERS, OSHANA REGION**


Your correspondence dated 18 September 2015 regarding the above mentioned subject has a reference.

The Office of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture has granted you permission to conduct research study in the Oluno Clusters, Oluno Circuit, Oshana Region.

However, please kindly take note that the research activities should not interfere with the normal programmes of the schools and the participation should be on a voluntary basis.

We wish you the best of luck with your research and hoping that your findings will be shared with other stakeholders in the Region and beyond.

Yours Sincerely


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MRS. DUTTE N. SHINYEMBA
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

CC: Inspector of Education, Oluno Circuit