

VIEWS OF BOARD MEMBERS ON MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS:
A CASESTUDY OF CAPRIVI
EDUCATIONAL REGION OF NAMIBIA.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine views of Board members on management of schools in the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia. Through the provision of the Education Act of 2001, there was an establishment of School Boards comprising of parents, teachers and learners. The rationale for the establishment of School Boards was to address the inequalities and practices that occurred in the past. Previously parents, teachers and learners did not participate in school-based decision-making processes. The qualitative research method was utilised and data was obtained by means of in-depth interviews on selected School Board members to gain a comprehensive understanding of views of Board members regarding their roles and challenges in school governance. Interviews were supported by minutes of Board meetings and relevant school policy documents. A semi-structured interview was utilised to establish themes that appear in the discussions of roles and challenges regarding school governors. The emerging themes included knowledge and understanding of School Board roles; challenges faced by Board members in school governance and suggested improvements (mitigations) of school governors in response to challenges. Data obtained was analysed based on purposive sample of 8 Board members from two combined schools in the Caprivi Educational region. The findings suggested that problems still exist on lack of knowledge and understanding of the Education Act. Other negative factors include: poor education of parent governors, poverty, lack of resources in rural communities, lack of capacity building and lack of understanding between governance and management of schools.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Mrs Sepiso Mubonenwa.

DECLARATION

I, Rejoice Khama, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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ACRONYMS

MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education Sports and Culture
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
SB	School Board
SBM	School-Based Management
SGB	School Governing Bodies
WBR	World Bank Report
WDR	World Development Report

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the introduction of the study, the orientation of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, the significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, as well as the definitions of terms used in the study.

This study sought to investigate School Board members' views regarding their roles and challenges they face in school management at selected combined schools in the Caprivi region of Namibia. Two instruments were used to collect data from participants at the identified schools. School Board members who included teachers, parents and learners (at secondary level) were interviewed using an interview guide with open-ended questions and relevant documents such as minutes of School Board meetings and school policies regarding School governance were requested to support data collected through interviews. The data from participants were used to answer research questions and afforded the researcher an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion with participants on their perceptions regarding school governance roles and challenges.

1.2 Orientation of the study

Namibia inherited a policy of racial discrimination from the apartheid era which was practiced at all levels of governance and administration (Tötemeyer, 2002). During this era, schools in Namibia were managed by committees which were dominated by

principals who reported directly to the government. Parents were less involved in school governance and had no relevant experience regarding their roles and responsibilities in school management (Mendelsohn, 1997). Cohen (2007) further points out that at independence, Namibia inherited a segregated education system and parents' involvement in the affairs of the school was very minimal. In recent years, Namibia has been undergoing a process of change from a segregated system to a more democratic education system. The changes have culminated in reform legislation and policy initiatives. One of the current developments in the Namibian education dispensation is that the Education Act (No 16 of 2001) mandated the establishment of the democratic School Board in all schools. This would ensure active participation of stakeholders to help promote the development of the school and of learners (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2001).

The rationale for the establishment of School Boards by the new Namibian government was to address the inequalities and practices of the past, to improve the educational quality and to provide for the democratic school-based decision-making to be realised.

The Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) compels stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners (at secondary level only) and the principal as an ex-officio member to participate in the activities of the school (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2001). Through this Act, the new government accommodated the participation of the school community in decisions affecting the education of their children by being School

Board members. The underlying principle is to ensure that educators, parents and learners actively participate in the governance and management of schools with a view to providing a better teaching and learning environment.

The concern on lack of participation was also advanced by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (1993), stating that, parents of learners in black schools were not involved in the education of their children like their white counterparts. The education system then was not open to most essential stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners. In other words, they did not have access, experience and the right to participate fully in education matters.

In 1990, Namibia realised the importance of ensuring an effective participation of black parents, teachers and learners, especially in decision making processes in schools. It is in light of this acknowledgement that Namibia adopted a new philosophy of education “Toward Education for All...” which is based on four goals of education - access, equity, quality and democracy (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1993). Democracy as the fourth goal aims at broad participation in decision making to promote clear accountability in the management of schools in Namibia.

To provide a legal framework, the Education Act No. 16 of 2001 was passed. Part V of this Act details the roles and responsibilities of School Boards (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001, p15). These are:

1. To develop the mission, goals and objectives of the school.

2. To advise the school's management on the extra-mural curriculum of the School.
3. To advise the regional director of education on educational needs and the Curriculum of the school.
4. Subject to the Public Service Act, to recommend to the Permanent Secretary the appointment of teachers and other staff members at the school.
5. Subject to the restrictions imposed by the Permanent Secretary and upon conditions as the school board may determine, to allow the reasonable use of the school facilities for community purposes.

This Act (Education Act No. 16 of 2001) is the pivotal document which has provided for the creation of School Boards which include teachers, parents and learners at all government schools (MBESC, 2001). School Boards were officially established in Namibia in 2003 (Niitembu, 2006). The Act, in accordance with the Namibian Constitution, is used as a tool to address the past imbalances and practices in the education system. It is also used to improve educational quality by the establishment of democratic structures of School Boards in all Namibian schools. This body compels parents, teachers and learners to be involved in the decision-making processes of schools which they serve. This new education system expects parents to be in the majority on School Boards and encourages them to play a pivotal role in school governance and decision-making concerning the education of their children (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1993).

Similarly, Guidelines for Namibian School Board members (2004) outline the rights and responsibilities of School Board members in the management of schools in Namibia. In addition, Guidelines for school principals (2005) underpins the Education Act by stating that:

Every state school shall have a School Board to function as a body through which the community of the school (parents, teachers and learners at secondary level) is able to participate in the administration of the school and its activities. The overall aims are to promote the development of the school and the best interest of its learners (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture 2005, p.8).

The legal framework and policy guidelines clearly articulate that the new political dispensation mandated the schools to allow the Namibian people the right to fully participate in issues which affect the education of their children through School Boards which comprises of teachers, parents and learners of secondary schools at all government schools (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2001). With the recent adoption of the concepts of democracy and decentralisation in school governance, it is believed that the majority of black parents might suffer lack of experience of being involved in the school governance of their school (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Another concern is that most Namibian schools are faced with the legacy of an under-educated and uneducated majority of black parents because of the imbalances of the past (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1993). As a result, parents with low education may experience problems coping with the changes and challenges of

participating in decision-making processes of their respective schools. Also, since the inception and the implementation of the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) and the establishment of School Boards in Namibia in 2003, there was no study that had been conducted to investigate the views of School Boards in the Caprivi region. It is against this background that a case study on views of School Board members regarding their roles and challenges was a necessity to be pursued by the researcher in the two selected combined schools.

1.3 Statement of the problem

According to Epstein (2001), decentralisation generally implies devolution of power from the state to those deemed to have a more direct interest in the process of education. Sayed (1999) asserts that the policy of educational decentralisation has in recent times become a key aspect of educational restructuring in the international arena, urging the replacement of direct, centralised control with broader macro controls which enable schools to exercise autonomy over their management in pursuit of system-wide objectives (Sayed, 1999).

In South Africa, the decentralization of education control and decision-making is evident in discussions surrounding educational restructuring and it has been expressed in the call for greater community and parental participation in schooling (Sayed, 1999). The 1996

South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) requires representation of parents on school governing bodies. The Act grants parents the right to participate as citizens in the determination of key areas of school policy and -governance.

Buckland and Hofmeyr (1993) in Maile (2002) define governance as:

Not simply the system of administration and control of education in a country, but the whole process by which education policies are formulated, adopted, implemented and monitored. Governance is an issue not only at the national level, but also at every level of the system down to the individual school. Because it is centrally concerned with the distribution of power, it is often summed up to be the question: Who decides? (Buckland and Hofmeyr, cited by Maile, p.30).

According to Potgieter, Visser, van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997), school governance is the act of determining policy and rules by which a school is to be organised and controlled. School governance is widely agreed to be concerned with the formulation and adoption of policy and management for the day-to-day delivery of education (Department of Education 1995).

In the case of Namibian, the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) provides for the creation of School Boards which include parents, teachers and learners (at secondary schools only) at all state schools. The Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) stipulates the powers and functions of the School Boards. These relate to a school's mission statement, extra-

mural programme, staffing recommendations to government and student discipline, among others.

The researcher is an educator who has been active in the teaching profession for more than twenty years and has been a member of the School Management Team for more than eight years. During that time, she was privileged to serve in the School Board for a three year term. Her interest in the study was aroused during her tenure as a board member to investigate.

The study was necessitated by the fact that the concept of the School Board as a mechanism of running schools is relatively new and was only introduced in 2003 after Namibia's independence (Niitembu, 2006). It is a concept that seeks to move away from a top-down management approach to a more participative one that involves a group of people in the decision-making process (Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, 2001).

As School Boards are a new phenomenon in Namibia, few, if any, studies have been conducted on the decentralisation of education and school governance, especially on the views of School Boards members regarding their roles and challenges in the management of combined schools in the Caprivi Region of Namibia. In the absence of a thorough study on the implementation of the Education Act especially in the Caprivi Region, it is not certain whether these School Board members are carrying their roles and responsibilities as expected. Therefore, the problem this study sought to address is:

How School Board members view their roles and challenges in school governance considering the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001).

Another concern is that most Namibian schools are faced with the legacy of under and uneducated majority of black parents because of the imbalances of the past of which the case understudy is not an exception. The current research shows that there is an indication that the level of education of some of the existing School Board members is too low and this has a negative impact between policy intentions and practical outcomes. Consequently, there is a clear indication that there are gaps of knowledge in this study with regard to Board members' views in relation to the successes and failures of their roles as related to the Act. Amongst others, the literature revealed that parental beliefs and perceptions have also shown to be a strong predictor of their effective involvement in school management activities and training is critical for their effectiveness. The literature shows that since the inception and the establishment of School Boards, no study has been conducted to find out about board members' views on how the situation could be improved. Therefore, it is not certain whether these School Board members are carrying their roles and responsibilities as expected.

In the absence of a thorough study, this study is worth underrating in order to find out how Board members deal with the challenges associated with their roles in relation to, among others, the setting of school mission and vision, as well as the appointment of

teachers as articulated in the Education Act. Therefore, this study will fill this gap and consequently be an important documentation to parents, school managers and Board member, educators, stakeholders, policy makers and the entire Education sector.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the views of School Board members regarding their roles and responsibilities at the two selected combined schools in the Caprivi region?
2. What challenges do School Board members experience in carrying out their roles?
3. What could be done to mitigate challenges School Board members face in executing their roles in schools governance?

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is three-fold. Firstly, the findings may inform the Ministry of Education on the effectiveness of the implementation of the provision of the Education Act (No.16 of 2001) pertaining to School Boards in Namibia. It may also communicate whether the need exists for capacity building when the existing guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of School Boards are being revised. The findings may

also expose challenges School Board members experience in executing their roles and responsibilities in schools and how these challenges could be mitigated.

This research is also of vital importance to parents, school managers and Board members, stakeholders, educators and policy makers, as it may shed more light on how School Board members perceive their roles in school management. Finally, the findings may also contribute to the existing literature on the roles and responsibilities of School Boards in Namibia and may reinforce improvement in good practice of Board members thus enhancing the quality of education.

1.6 Limitations of the study

First, the study was confined to two selected schools in the Caprivi Region; therefore the results would be limited to these schools. Second, lack of detailed research on School Board matters in Namibia in general and in Caprivi Region in particular might have limited the review of local literature. Third, the researcher was a full time worker and therefore it was not feasible to have a broader sample. Moreover, the participants were also occupied with their own work such that at times it was very difficult to commit to the set appointments. Furthermore, people were cautious when a tape recorder was used, especially if the shared information portrayed bad images about their institutions. There could also be a possibility of bias related to some responses.

However, in order to minimise these limitations, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants before the actual interviews were conducted. Finally, the findings may contribute to the existing literature on the roles and responsibilities of the School Boards in Namibia in general and Caprivi Region in particular. Furthermore, the efficiency and effectiveness of School Boards might close the existing achievement gap and increase quality education among learners.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study was defined by the following delimitations. The study was restricted to School Board members in two selected schools in the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia. The study did not exceed the stated number of schools because the intention was to conduct an in-depth investigation on the roles and challenges of School Board members such as, parents, teachers, learners and principals in performing their governance responsibilities.

The participants were limited to eight. This number of participants was therefore appropriate for such a purpose, especially because of the time constraint experienced by the researcher. In addition, schools which were chosen had participants who had enough information with regard to the problem under investigation.

1.8 Definition of terms

This section provides definitions of terms as they are used in the current study.

Democracy is one of the major goals of education in Namibia which advocates broader participation of stakeholders in the education process, decision-making and school governance (Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, 2000).

Decentralisation describes a process by which powers (political decision-making and financial and managerial powers) are transferred from the centre to local governments (corporate bodies) giving them more autonomy and liberty to manage their local within the framework of a unitary state (Hanson, 2000).

School Board is a body composed of parents, teachers, non-educators, co-opted members of the community and learners (from grade eight and above) and the principal as an ex-officio member which is elected by the school community to administer the affairs and promote the development of the school and learners (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2001).

School Governance refers to determining the policies and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled and ensuring that rules and policies are carried out in terms of the law and the budget of the school (Potgieter et al., 1997).

Parental involvement is the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational. It extends from supporting and upholding the school ethos to supervising children's homework at home. It implies mutual cooperation, sharing and support (Kruger, 2002).

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the introduction, the background information of School Boards, the orientation of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, and the significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, as well as the definitions of terms used in the study. The afore-mentioned sub-headings were outlined in relation to Board members' views regarding their roles and the challenges they face in school governance of rural schools in the Caprivi Region of Namibia. The next chapter deals with the review of literature that underpins the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND A CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This study investigated the views of School Board members regarding their roles and challenges they face in the governance of two combined schools in Katima circuit of the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia. This chapter has two sections. The first section presents the importance of the conceptual theoretical framework associated with school governance such as democracy and participative management theories and definitions of concepts such as decentralisation and governance. The second section deals with a literature study regarding School Board roles and challenges faced in school governance.

2.2 Theoretical conceptual framework underlying the study

A conceptual framework must explain the relationship among concepts used in a study. In research, it is used to outline possible causes of action or a present preferred approach to an idea or thought and to connect it to all aspects of inquiry: (cbdd.wsu.edu/eDev/NetTOM.ToT/Research/...htm, 2009).

A conceptual framework's importance is in understanding the purpose of School Boards in a democratic society, and why it is necessary as a decision-making body in schools. Thus the researcher undertook the study to fully understand parents', teachers' and learners' views regarding their roles and the challenges which face them in the governance of schools in the Caprivi Region.

2.2.1 Democratic Education Theory

In this study, the researcher used Guttman's Theory of Democratic Education (Fisher, 2004). This theory is important because it recognises School Boards as decision-making bodies in schools. This theory states that:

A democracy is deliberate to the extent that citizens and their accountability representatives offer one another morally defensible reasons for mutually binding laws in an on-going process of mutual justification (Fisher, 2004 p.16).

This implies that education should be aimed at developing the capacity to cultivate skills of deliberation among citizens. It further states that the control over education must be shared among parents, citizens and professional educators (Fisher, 2004). Guttman's democratic theory of education argues that education should remain within the shared authority of the state, parents and educators. Guttman further argues that this model is democratic because of the following reasons:

Democratic citizens are persons partially constituted by subcommittee (such as their family, their work, play, civic, and religious groups), yet free to choose a way of life, compactable with their larger communal identity because no single sub-community commands absolute authority over their education, and because the larger community has equipped them for deliberating and thereby participating in the democratic processes by which choice among good lives and the chance to pursue them are politically structured (Fisher, 2004, p.17).

The theory of democratic education argues that local School Boards should remain free to set their own standards based on the national and state standards and can use their discretion in deciding how to implement state standards (Fisher, 2004). This implies that School Boards (like in this case parents, teachers and learners) are empowered by the theory to retain substantial control and freedom to exercise their discretion over education and they should operate within the legal framework of the state.

This principle of deliberation is based on the premise that it is a form of freedom most suitable to a democratic society in which adults must be free to deliberate and disagree. It is based on a principle of non-repression and non-discrimination which ensures the participation of all citizens to have a chance of shaping the society. Deliberative democracy could be understood to be a form of democracy in which citizens, in this case, School Board members, come together to deliberate about problems with the aim of resolving them.

The researcher adopted Gutmann's (Fisher, 2004) justification of the theory of deliberation being inextricably associated with democracy and optimally used as a tool in the decision-making processes. Gutmann and Thompson in Fisher (2004) identified principles of deliberative democracy.

First, it promotes the legitimacy of collective decisions. Second, it creates forums in which citizens are encouraged to take a broader perspective on question of public policy. Third, it can promote mutually respectful decision-making. Fourth, deliberation has the potential of correcting previously committed errors.

The concept of democracy is also supported by deliberative theorist Young (1996) with her theory of inclusion. She describes inclusion as a backbone of democracy and asserts that the prevention of exclusion is very important. She argues that the inclusive democratic participation might positively influence life in the School Boards. Young (1990) further describes inclusion as an interaction among participants in decision-making processes in which people hold one another accountable. This implies that the rightful people who are mandated by law should participate in deliberation without excluding others. Young (2000) suggests that, in order to achieve inclusion, a consensus must be reached as to the supremacy of the transformative ideal before there can be democracy. Implied here is that for democratic participation to happen, there should be consensus arising from deliberations and reasoning.

The researcher adopted Guttmann's (Fisher, 2004) view which indicates a democratic theory of education based on deliberation as the most desirable option. It recognises the importance of empowering citizens, in this case, school board members, especially parents, to make educational policies and decisions which are non-discriminatory and which preserve the intellectual and social foundations of democratic deliberations.

2.2.2 Participative Management theory

Participation Management theory evolved in 1920 when Lewis and Naido (2004) realised that scientific management was incomplete. He believed that the old management formula of planning, measuring, controlling and leading was very hard to apply unless everybody is included in the process (Weisbord, 1987). Lewis et al, argue that education in which members actively participate in decision making are considered more productive with regards to human satisfaction and the achievement of goals than when applying authoritarian approaches (Luneburg & Ornstern, 1991).

Max Weber's notion of bureaucracy indicated a tight hierarchy which gradually penetrated all social institutions including schools. Because of the concept's emphasis on power and authority, it received overwhelming era, where it was accepted by everyone as the best way of managing educational organisations. Bureaucracy as a form of management came under severe criticism towards the end of the 20th century. As

Mclagan and Nel (1995), emphasised: So conditions as we enter the twenty-first century are ripe both for the decline of authoritarianism and for the rise of participation.

According to Masschelein and Quaghebeur (2005), since the end of the 1980s, there has been a concern to promote participation in educational practices for students, parents and teachers for the purpose of an increased and active involvement of these target groups in the activities and decisions that concern their lives.

It is in light of the above that participative management and democracy seem to be desirable options for this study because their foundation makes sense both in theory and in practice. The afore mentioned theories together with concepts of decentralisation and governance, are viewed by the researcher as requiring mutual understanding and co-operation among participants in this case, School Board members and can become more effective if they all contribute to the achievement of the organisations mission and visions.

Most importantly, the concepts democracy, decentralisation, participative management and governance are underpinned by the constitution, the Education Act and relevant policies to enhance the effective running of schools. The concepts of democracy, governance and decentralisation were adopted in the study to provide conceptual

understanding of community participation in education through School Boards and they were used interchangeably throughout this study.

In a nutshell, there is a strong relationship between these two theories. The relationship is that, they both recognise the need for School Boards in an effective Education system. They all value this Board much as it can contribute towards building a more effective system because it represents the community at large. The participative management theory points mainly at participation due to the fact that its foundation makes sense both in theory and in practice. It shows how multiple stakeholders in Education can efficiently and successfully manage Education as a system.

The Democracy Education theory also points mainly at the need to empower citizens such as parents, teachers and other heads of schools so that they can independently make decisions and policies that can bring a more effective Education system. The decisions made must be non-discriminatory and should preserve the intellectual and social foundations of democratic deliberations. This theory stresses that the principle is also vital in the Education system due to the fact that it ensures that all citizens are educated so as to have a chance to share in the shaping of the structure of their society (Fisher, 2004). This theory also sees the role each individual in the School Board especially parents can play in Education as they are the voice of the community and this in most cases predisposes children toward some ways of life and away from others (Fisher, 2004).

These two theories contribute much to the understanding of the researcher's topic because they both point at how the School Boards and other Education stakeholders can effectively manage the Education system. They both point at the need for citizens to be empowered so that they can actively and freely participate in the managing of school hence the Education system. This drives us to the understanding that, just like any other system, Education also has many structures that are interrelated and interdependent that all work towards the functioning of this system and School Boards are one of those structures.

2.2.3 .A discussion of the terms- democracy, decentralisation and school governance

2.2.3.1. Democracy

The term democracy was first used in the fifth century B.C by the Greek scholar, Herodotus and it originated from two Greek words 'demos' which means people and 'Kratos' which means 'to rule'. Democracy therefore means 'rule by the people' (UNESCO, 2001).

Beetham (1995) defines democracy as a system which belongs to the area of collective decision- making. In other words, democracy implies inclusiveness of all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Similarly, the concept of democracy was once defined by

Abraham Lincoln, the sixth president of the United States of America, as the governance of the people, by the people and for the people (Beetham, 1995). This implies the notion of a participative rule or governance. This concept gives people an entitlement to make decisions on issues or tasks which are assigned to them. To develop education for democracy also implies that teachers, parents, school communities and learners through the School Boards, should become co-creators and managers of schools (MBESC, 2004).

The concept of democracy is further defined by Keulder (2000) as a system of governance that protects civil freedoms and rights such as freedom of speech, associations and participation and equity before the law. In this regard, democratic institutions like schools are expected to produce outcomes that do not only guarantee and protect the civil liberties of citizens, but those that also improve the quality of education in their communities (Guidelines for Namibian school board members, 2004). These guidelines further outline that when School Board members are actively involved, empowered and committed to reform their own schools, they will be able to develop and implement school policies to meet challenges they face in schools.

The relevance of this conceptual framework is the emphasis of reorganization of schools through their governing bodies to advance the decision-making (Department of Education, 1996). Since this study deals with views of School Board members regarding

their roles and challenges they face in the management of schools in selected schools in the Caprivi Educational Region, the concepts democracy and decentralisation and participative management they are appropriate in informing us about the need for involving stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners in the study.

2.2.3.2 Decentralisation

Decentralisation is defined by Hanson (1998) as the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility and tasks from higher to lower organisational level or between organisations. Decentralisation moves decision-making processes away from the centre and closer the users of the service. Advocates of decentralisation, claim that the concept provides opportunities for local people to have a say in School governance, restore them the feeling that they are not powerless and are in control of their own destinies (Winkler 1989, Department of Education 1995, Sayed 1999). Therefore, the importance of decentralisation is to promote participation in education and to move towards collaborative decision-making involving principals, teachers, parents and learners.

The central point in the debate regarding educational decentralisation and governance is the demand for greater parental participation in schooling (Department of Education 1995, Sayed 1999). Some theories claim that decentralisation is of vital importance for the reformation of education in many countries. Decentralisation is also equated with the

concept of democratisation of education (Hanson, 2000) which others equate to privatisation of education, school based management, school-based budgeting, people centred development and maximum participation of local communities in the management of school (Brown, 1991).

Decentralisation therefore implies that decisions ought to be made by people who are closest to the institution, in this case, School Board members at a school having the power to make some decisions.

2.2.3.3 School governance

Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997) define school governance as an act of determining policy and rules by which a school is to be organised and controlled. This statement gives people, like in the case of this study such as parents, teachers and learners in secondary school level who serve in School Boards, a far greater role in the governance and development of their schools. Governance, therefore, refers to the act of ensuring that the school fulfils its functional responsibilities of providing quality education to the learner and to the community it serves.

In this case, School Board members must accept responsibility for the organisation of schools and are at the same time asked to account for their performance (Farrel & Law 1999). The current transformation of Namibia's education system, such as the advent of inclusive, democracy and decentralisation, have a major impact on school governance.

Inclusive in the sense that parents, educators and non-teaching staff, learners and other people are willing participate and able to make a contribution to the school (Department of Education, Act No.84 of 1996). In this case, transformation indicates that school governance includes ensuring that rules and policies are carried out effectively in schools. To cement this, School Board members are allocated functions (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport& Culture 1993).

2.3 Decentralisation and School governance on international perspective

Governments around the world are introducing a range of strategies aimed at improving the quality and quantity (enrolments) in education. One of such strategy is to decentralise education decision-making by increasing parental and community involvement in schools (World Bank Report, 2007). The decentralisation of education in Japan was done with the intention to establish School Boards which enables community participation. The challenges of which this country faces are that it is difficult to change the mind set of those who deal with reform and it is odd that decentralisation, which call for initiative at the grassroots level, have been implemented in a uniform manner from the top by ordering educators at lower levels. Also, those who would like to take some form of independent actions given to them by the authority, lack the necessary training. Also, the facilitation of effective community participation in education is still an unresolved issue.

The World Bank Report (2007) emphasises the point that even though access to education is being addressed with great concern in international initiatives such as the Education for All goal, in which resources are being channelled to low-income countries to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) for education, the challenge which still remain is that, even where children do have access to educational facilities, the quality of education that is provided is very poor and most of students from developing countries fail to excel in their study. This is a clear indication that merely increasing resource allocations will not increase the equity or improve the quality of education in the absence of institutional reform (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007).

The World Development Report (2007) report further cites another challenge underlying SBM programme being that parents and community members have roles to play in this programme, but these roles are not universally clear and not always of vital importance. To remedy this, governments worldwide come up with strategies, one of which is to decentralise education decision-making by increasing parental and community involvement in schools which is popularly known as School-Based Management (SBM). SBM programmes strengthen accountability relationships between parents and students and service providers, teachers, principals and government. SBM programmes also strengthen and simplify accountability by empowering those at school level to make decisions collectively which in turn increases transparency of the process. In the process, students' learning achievement is expected to improve with involvement of

stakeholders for instance, with regard to this research, parents, teachers, community members and learners at the school level can monitor school personnel, improve student evaluations, ensure a closer match between school needs and policies and use resources more efficient.

In short, SBM has the potential to hold school-level decision-makers accountable for their actions. However, the study by World Bank reveals the need to build the capacity of community members, teachers, and principals to create a culture of accountability in many places (World Bank Report, 2007). In sum, training is needed to enable them (principals, teachers, parents and learners) to do new things or to do things in different ways.

The World Bank's World Development Report (2004) argues that school autonomy and accountability can help to solve problems in education such as increasing resources and giving support to the sector which increases the access of the poor to better quality education which is not sufficient. The SBM's purpose is to improve service delivery to the poor by increasing their choice and participation in service delivery by giving citizens a voice in school management by making information widely available, and by strengthening the incentives for schools to deliver effective services to the poor.

SBM programmes also transfer authority of the following activities to principals' budget allocation: the hiring and firing of teachers, teachers and parents and other staff, curriculum development, the procurement of textbooks and other educational materials, infrastructure improvements and the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

The World Development Report (2004), further indicates the core idea behind SBM from developed countries' perspective which emphasise the point that those who work in a school building to have greater control of the management of what goes in the building. In developing countries, the idea behind SBM focuses mainly on involving community and parents in the school decision-making process rather than putting them entirely in control.

The concept of decentralisation originates from the belief that the state alone cannot control schools, but should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those closer to the school, on a partnership basis (Marishane, 1999). The afore mentioned statement is under-pinned by King and Cordeiro-Guerra, (2005), and Montreal Economic Institute (2007), as they indicate that Education systems are extremely demanding of the managerial, technical and financial capacity of governments, and, therefore, as a service, education is too complex to be efficiently produced and distributed in a centralised fashion. It is argued that the devolution of authority will lead

to a healthier and stronger relationship between schools and communities and provide alternative forms of accountability to bureaucratic surveillance (Gamage, 1994).

This is based on the statement that when schools and communities collaborate in making important decisions about educational alternatives, a true mutual responsibility will grow. Therefore, advocates of decentralisation base their reforms on the assumption that to ensure improvement in schools, those closest to the learners should be offered the authority to make key decisions (Parker & Leithwood, 2000).

Some theorists claim that decentralisation is of vital importance for the reformation of education in many countries, and it is equated to the concept of democratisation of education (Hanson, 2000). Other reasons why decentralisation is of paramount importance is the belief that it can increase the quality of education and provide educational opportunities to the poor (Ornelas, 2000). Other researchers equate decentralisation and democratisation to privatisation of education, school based management, school-based budgeting, people centred development and maximum participation of local communities in the management of school (Brown, 1991). Although the local body is not under the control of the ministry, it is nevertheless not entirely free to do as it pleases. It must act within the limits set for it by the law (Cooper, 1997).

Although putting School Based Management into practice involves ensuring that all actors work together in a system of mutual dependence, devolving power to schools means that some groups outside the school, such as local education offices, are likely to lose some of their power. For instance, this might mean that local education offices lose control over funds together with the power that comes with it. This transfer of power will make it difficult to implement because, while some stakeholders will gain, others will lose. Inasmuch as the usual adjective of decentralisation is to improve the efficiency and equity of education by transferring responsibility to local authorities, unless the reform is well planned and implemented, those objectives may not be fully realised. For example, if the act decentralises the source of funding, leaving it up to local authorities to raise funds, there may be a significant lag between the time when the central authority is freed from its responsibility and the time when local authorities have the capacity to raise and allocate funds. In such a case, if legislation does not provide for a transitory solution, such as a compensating grant scheme, regional disparities may develop (Cooper, 1997).

In a conducive condition, all forms of decentralisation such as concentration, devolution and delegation can play a vital role in broadening or strengthening participation in school governance, political, economic and social activities in both developed and developing countries at local levels. When it is effectively implemented, it helps to alleviate bottlenecks in decision-making that are often caused by central government

planning and monitoring of important economic and social activities. Implied here is that decentralisation can reduce cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and can increase government officials' sensitivity to respond to local condition and needs.

The afore-mentioned types of decentralisation that the researcher has discussed are not exclusive. In reality, governments use combinations of these forms. For example, a study by Ornelas (2000) indicates that the government of Mexico had strong motives to decentralise the educational institutions because the highly centralised system was notoriously rigid, inefficient, conflict laden, unresponsive to the needs of schools and unable to improve quality education. However, the transfer of resources, responsibilities and prerogatives does not stick to one form of decentralisation, but rather indicates the reform of a curious combination of all three types of decentralisation which are devolution, delegation and concentration.

Some of the prime motives for educational decentralisation have been fiscal decentralisation, participation, community involvement which has occurred in Chinese reform. A study in China has indicated that decentralisation in this country appears to have characteristics of both centralisation and decentralisation of authority since the foundation of this Republic in 1949. Hence Hawkins' (2000) findings which imply the combination of both centralised and decentralised approaches to education. One study by Tang (1999) cited in Hawkins (2000) concluded that fiscal decentralisation has been costly. There is an indication that decentralisation seems to be working well if the

locality is already doing well economically. There is a clear indication that the poorer areas are wishing that the state were more involved. This is necessitated by the fact that central authorities seem conflicted about how much authority and responsibility need to be devolved to the local level and which ones need to be centralised. With this contradiction, decentralisation in China appears to have characteristics of both. Other contradictions are the weaknesses and strength of China's approach to decentralisation which need specific strategies to resolve them (Hawkins, 2000).

Another challenge is that when deregulation progresses, educational gaps between regions and schools will widen. Also, if school choice becomes widely accepted throughout the nation, maintaining equality and fairness for all students remain a challenge. Another concern is that it is odd that deregulation and decentralisation, which calls for initiative at grassroots level, have been implemented in a uniform manner from the top by conveying orders to education at lower level. An interesting dichotomy exists because while schools have more direction due to deregulation, they are also subject to sanctions if they fail to follow the guidelines set forth by the government.

Another challenge cited by Muta (2000) is a question on how to facilitate more effectively community participation in education which is still an unresolved issue. Another concern is that whether or not a particular school has a School Board through which parents of learners can participate in the administration of that school; it is up to

the discretion of the principal. Recently in Japan, deregulation and decentralisation have been underway in all aspects of education (Muta, 2000). However, a key problem remains to be resolved. Among others, these include questions which exist as to whether principals can carry out such non-traditional tasks those of transferring authority over school principals and vice principals. In this case, there is a need to improve the administrative capacity of school leaders. In sum, even though reforms on decentralisation have been introduced in Japan, the tradition of a standardised education system with centralised control is proving difficult to change (Muta, 2000).

Since the early 1980s, there have been major changes in the governance of education in England and Wales. For example, the devolution of responsibilities from local education authorities (LEAs) to individual school governing bodies has been one of the most important reforms. A research by Farrel and Law (1999) concentrates on schools and analyses the perceptions and practices of the governing body.

Findings indicate that there is limited evidence from the literature about the effectiveness of governing bodies' accountability, or governor perceptions of accountability. In practice, however, official guidance to school governors is confusing. Similarly, a study by Levačić (1995) in, Farrel and Law (1999) of eleven governing bodies indicates that none operate wholly on the basis of the accountable model. The

findings further indicate that annual meetings, despite its status as a key element of accountability, were not well attended in schools.

A recent report by World Bank (2007) came up with a study in Mexico on what School-Based Management implies, Findings show that there is little evidence which indicates that the school climate will change as the stakeholders work together to manage the school in practice. Also, the possibility exists that teachers and principals will come to resent being constantly monitored by parents and school council members, which will cause relations within the school to deteriorate. At the same time, the study further shows that local democracy and political accountability is often weak in developing countries and can lead to the capture of governance at the various levels by elites groups. Furthermore, in more traditional and rural areas, the poor or minorities like in the case of School Board members of two combined schools in the Caprivi region, may feel the need for a strong central authority to ensure that services are delivered to them and not just to the more powerful local citizens. Ultimately, those given the responsibility for managing the school may not have the capacity to do so.

Although Namibia seems to have made significance strides in terms of policy formulation, there are still existing gaps regarding the relationship between policy and practice. Another job is to establish whether School Boards in the sampled schools have the capacity or necessary skills to effectively execute their roles as expected.

After a research done by World Bank (2007), there are still a number of questions which went unanswered until more evidence could be available. For example, do administrative control School Based Management's (SBM) work better, than, say professional control SBMs, and in what context? Should more autonomy need to be developed to the school level to improve intermediate and long-term outcomes? And what sort of accountability arrangements work best and under what condition?

Another education researcher from an international perspective (Buckley & Schneider, 2004) based his study on National Centre for the study of Privatisation in Education Teacher Colleges in Chicago. Results of this research included the following, among other things:

Firstly, traditional democratic theorists may be concerned with the notion of a publicly funded school that provides their students with the tools of being active citizens but insufficient grounding in the foundations of knowledge and tolerance needed for the proper use of those tools. Secondly, an emphasis should be sought for American high schools not to teach about democracy but rather by providing hands on training for future participation. Finally, the collected information does not speak about the permanence of any charter school effects. It is unknown whether any improvement community involvement will persist overtime or decay as students either move on to the next stage of their education or leave school and become citizens.

2.4 Decentralisation and school governance from the perspective of developing countries

Democratisation in the form of educational decentralisation is a popular reform theme of governments around the world based on a different number of goals and outcomes. In some countries, decentralisation has sometimes taken place without any legislative action. A study by Blair shows that in Haiti, for example:

The transfer of service provision has been more defacto than dejure as central governments have simply become unable to exercise their established financial and administrative responsibilities in various sectors, instead passing them along to the local level by default (Blair, 1995, p.4).

This means that the decentralisation of responsibility from some central government to local authority in this country is done haphazardly without following the right procedures in legislative and this is necessitated by failure to execute their roles as expected. In this case, there is a need to capacitate officers who should execute decentralised responsibilities on legal issues.

Ikoya (2006) embarked on a study regarding decentralisation of educational development in Nigeria. Issues discussed ranged from non-availability to inadequacy of relevant structures, poor funding of programmes, inadequate or inappropriate private representation of local community members and inefficiency or efficiency of the systems as well as multifaceted problems facing education, for instance, regional compliance to reform laws.

Ikoya's (2006) findings were that developing nations adopt symbolic education reforms which in most cases produce little or no change despite the establishment of new structures of such reforms. The results of this study indicated low compliance to the provisions of the decentralisations law, in the establishment of committees and membership representation at district and village levels. Another challenge is that the levels of literacy in Nigeria rated low about 57% and even lower among women and rural village dwellers. The findings also show that both the government and the people are still divided as to whether or not they actually want a centralised or decentralised educational system.

In South Africa, a number of education researchers have embarked on studies regarding decentralisation and democratisation of the education system. For example, Joubert's (2005) study of school governance on the topic linking policy and praxis, revealed that the election of parents as governing body members in 2000 was problematic as most

were reluctant to stand for election, which resulted in principals managing schools autocratically and undermining the school governing body (SGBs). Another shortcoming was that decisions at meetings were not taken democratically. Other serious challenges were that the community was not highly involved because parents could not understand their roles as SGB members, their training was also limited and they could as well interfere with the professional work in the school.

Maile (2002) and Beckmann (2000) researched on the topic of Accountability as an essential aspect of school governance. Both researchers point out that accountability follows the exercise of power, use of resources and implementation of policy. The authors further explain that accountability is inextricably linked to democratic management and other related concepts such as participation, decentralisation, empowerment and transparency. The author further asserts that the demands of both democracy and efficiency require some form of accountability in the school.

In this study, the author highlighted problems and issues which emerged from democratisation of the management of schools in South Africa. In particular, the problems emanating from accountability questions are such as: Whose responsibility is it? What are the responsibilities, place and position of parents in school governance? What are their duties and responsibilities with regard to accountability?

The researcher has reviewed a number of studies on the subject of School Boards and roles of parents in schools (Kruger, 2002; Van der Bank, & Squelch, 1997; Steven, 2009), and some of these studies on a global context have shown that parental beliefs and perceptions have also been shown to be strong predictors of effective parental involvement in school management activities (Steven, 2010). A study of literature has shown that school governance is the act of determining policy and rules by which a school is to be organised and controlled (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch, 1997). This implies that school governance is widely assumed to be concerned with the formulation and adoption of policy and management for the day-to-day delivery of education. This also includes ensuring that such rules and policies are carried out effectively in terms of the law and the budget of the school. According to Kruger (2002), South Africa has a plan for active parental involvement in the formal education. The plan involves the following: the creation of a favourable school climate, the establishment of a parents' association, parental involvement in school management affairs and the drafting of an annual programme. In addition, parents' beliefs about their responsibilities and their ability to affect their children's interests in school subjects have been shown to predict their involvement at home and at school.

A recent study by Van Wyk (2007) with regard to the rights and roles of parents on governing bodies in South Africa examined the extent to which this has been achieved. Findings suggest that problems still exist around issues of marginalisation of black

parents in racially mixed schools and levels of education of parent governors are low. This can also be attributed to lack of resources in rural communities and lack of understanding between governance and management of schools. In addition, a model in which governing bodies act in line with the intent of the legislation and are crafting new relationships between parents and school managers. The challenge is to determine how this model can be extended to all schools in the country.

The research done by Mabouula (2009) focused on the roles of learners in the school governance on the topic “giving voice to the voiceless through deliberative democratic school governance.” The findings showed out the irony in the democratisation of school governance which has given all stakeholders a powerful voice in school affairs, of which learners’ voices seemed to be silenced. Obstacles to learner participation which emerged from the analysis of data from different schools are as follows:

1. There was little evidence of democratic participation in the structure of school governance.
2. Deliberation/argument was not practiced by school governance stakeholders.
3. There was a lack of democratic engagement in the structure of schools governance.
4. School governance was characterised by a lack of justice on the part of stakeholders and
5. There was lack of communication among school governance members.

Other South African researchers such as Motimele (2003) pursued a research on school governing bodies and focused on their rights and responsibilities. The article clearly indicated functions and allocated functions of school governing bodies. What came out clearly included limitations on the functions of the school governing bodies. For instance, a member of a school governing body who is a minor (that is under the age of 18) cannot enter into contracts on behalf of the school. If a member of the body has a personal interest in a matter discussed at a meeting of the SGB, he/she must leave the meeting when the matter is discussed and when a decision is made.

In addition, there were some proposed changes to the South African schools' Act and Employment of Educators' Act which may impact on the functions of school governing bodies. For example, the school categories which determine allocation of state funds to schools will in future be decided by the Minister of Education instead of the province. Also, the law will make it clearer that it is illegal to force parents who qualify for exemption to pay school fees. Instead the school governing body will use the law to recover part of what the parents owe.

Another study by Rembe (2005) on the evaluation of education policies and their implementation in South Africa also focused on the establishment of a democratic government and transformation of education. The findings of the study showed that, despite the achievements made, there are various setbacks and contradictions in the

policies which have affected the process of bringing about fundamental changes and transformation to the education sector (Sayed, 2001). For example, setbacks like the current education policies which have maintained inequalities along class lines, lack of articulation within policies, challenges to policy implementation, motivation and commitment among civil servants. A controversy shown in the study is that, despite the availability of structures and avenues for participation, policy formulation in education has not been as inclusive as intended. There is also a clear indication that the institutional norms and rules, inadequate resources and economic environment restrict decision making and policy change and implementation.

2.5 Historical background of School Boards in Namibia

Before Namibia's independence in 1990, the ideal of having a democratic education system had been a challenge in most Namibian schools. During this apartheid era, the policy of racial discrimination was practiced at all levels of governance and administration (Töttemeyer, 2002). Reports by the Ministry of Education have shown that the type of governance and management prior to Namibia's independence was an authoritarian system of educational governance which produced a bureaucracy that was inefficient, ineffective and low of quality (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 2000). It lacked democracy as it excluded the majority of the nation's learners, teachers, parents and community members from education decision making (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 1993). To underpin this statement, Mendelsohn (1997)

asserts that during the apartheid era, schools in South Africa and Namibia were managed by committees which were dominated by principals. In this regard, parents were less involved in school governance and had no past experience regarding their roles and responsibilities in school management.

Though committees were put in place to ensure participation of communities in schools, lack of transparency and denial of black people's participation in political and educational issues discouraged black parents from being involved in their children's education (Ndlazi, 1999).

Likewise, Sayed and Carrim (1997) concur with Ndlazi that the acceptability of committees by the community was contested because they were regarded as illegitimate structures which were imposed by the apartheid government on communities which lacked people representation.

In the past, communities seemed to be involved in school activities but in reality, the committees as structures in place were based on discrimination. Due to the fact that the communities' involvement in education matters was non-existent, parents had limited information.

Similarly, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (1993), emphasises the fact that parents of learners in black schools were not involved in the education of their children unlike their white counterparts. Therefore, the education system during the apartheid

time had structures such as committees in place for the purpose of involving communities in education. But in reality, these structures were not transparent; black parents could not play any role in school activities due to limited information. Also, these committees were surrounded by sanctions (Sayed & Carrim, 1997). In short, the education system then could not accommodate essential stakeholders like parents, teachers and learners to fully participate in educational processes.

Amukugo (1993) concurs with other researchers regarding exclusion of parents, teachers and learners from fully participating in the decision-making process of schools noting that Act 30 (section 4) of 1980, states that the active involvement of parents and communities shall be given a place in the educational system but at the same time the Administrator General was responsible for the establishing the school committees or advisory boards for every state school. He could as well, whenever he deemed it fit, dissolve and a school committee or an advisory board, withdraw powers and duties, as well as replace members of such committees and boards (section 8). In this case, the Administrator Generals had mandatory powers to control and direct education. These actions and regulations made parents and other community members believe that their children's education was a responsibility of only principals and teachers.

2.6 The introduction of School Boards after democratisation in Namibia

Following the first democratic elections held in Namibia in 1990, the restructuring of education was placed high on the political agenda. After a history of lack of community participation, especially by traditional black communities in the affairs of education, it was of paramount importance to create structures that would facilitate the effective participation of communities at the school level.

School boards were legitimate structures which were democratically elected by parents in all Namibian schools. The stakeholders through their representatives (School Board members) were mandated to participate in the decisions which affected the running of their school. The Republic of Namibia, through the Ministry of Education, felt the need to establish School Boards comprising parents, teachers and learners (at secondary level only). With the advent of democracy, the Ministry of Education also had to transform a system that lacked democratic control by establishing governing democratic bodies.

The kind of decentralisation which emerged has been shaped to address the inequalities, practices and conflicting issues and interests that occurred in the then Education system (Ministry of Education, Sport & culture, 1993). Other aims are to improve educational quality, to ensure effective teaching and learning and provide for democratic school-based decision-making (Department of Education, 1996).

According to Wright (1997), high priority is always given to education reconstruction in national strategies for positive social transformation. Implied here is that education is seen to be a symbol which normalises the society, through a process of democratisation. The afore-mentioned statement is underpinned by the Namibian Constitution which became the underlying document on which all Namibian acts are based; it guarantees democracy, quality, equity and access to education.

To cement the involvement of black parents, teachers and learners, especially in the decision-making processes which were only introduced in Namibian schools after independence, Namibians adopted a new philosophy of education *Toward Education for all...* which is based on four goals of education which are access, equity, quality and democracy (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1993). These goals are the guiding principles of the Ministry of Education.

These goals encourage participation in decision-making processes and promote clear accountability in the management of schools in Namibia. To develop education for democracy, a democratic system of education needed to be developed. To cement this, the state, through the Ministry of Education, instituted Regional Education Forums, one for each political region, on which regional councillors and other stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss matters affecting education in the region with staff from the education regional office (Ministry of Basic Education Sport & Culture, 2000).

The purpose of decentralisation is to promote democratic participation in the educational process which focuses both on the region and on the school community. The decentralisation process within the Ministry of Education comes from the growing realisation that many decisions need to be made closer to schools, so that responsibility should be accompanied by authority, and that community and parental involvement in school affairs needed to be strengthened. Currently, the decentralisation process is based on delegating functions to the regions and once the local authority becomes competent to handle those functions, the delegation would change to devolution (Ministry of Basic Education Sport & Culture, 1999). Teachers, parents, school communities and learners should become co-creators and managers. In order to impart democracy, teachers and education systems should practice democracy, decision-making and clear accountability by leaders. (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 2004).

2.7 The legal framework regarding the governance and management of schools

With the advent of the democratic constitution, the Namibian Government through the Ministry of Education established the Education Act 16 of 2001. This Act mandated all Namibian schools to form democratically elected School Boards (Ministry of Education, Sport & Culture 2001) for the purpose of aligning the education system to the constitution changing the nature of decision-making. This means that, among others things, the government is committed to the development of a democratic education

system that provides stake holders such as parents, teachers and learners with rights to be involved in school governance.

2.8 Composition of School Boards

According to the Education Act (Act No. 16 of 2001), the membership of School Boards should comprise elected individuals from the following categories:

1. Staff, who are not educators;
2. Parents who are not employed at the school;
3. Teachers at the school;
4. The principal of the school; and
5. Learners at a secondary school.

Regardless of school size, parents always constitute a majority representation of a School Board. A School Board should elect office-bearers such as a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer only a parent who is not employed at the school may be the chairperson of the School Board. School Boards have the option of co-opting a member, or members, of the community to the governing body. But a co-opted member has no voting right at any School Board meeting. The term of membership of the School Board is three years (except for learners who serve one year period).

This is a clear indication that the regulations (i.e. Constitution, Education Act and Policies) want to empower and encourage community members who are also parents of children in all Namibian schools to be fully involved in the education of their children. The afore-mentioned regulations are underpinned by a democratic ethos which dictates Van Wyk (2004) that parents be placed in a powerful position with authority to influence fundamental issues, such as school budget, language policy, discipline, as well as appointment and promotion of teaching and administration of staff. However, it is one thing to have a School Board, but it is quite another to implement it. It is against this background that the purpose of this study is to explore whether the government's vision of decentralisation, shared responsibility and democratic decision-making through the establishment of school boards is being realised.

Education Act No. 16 of 2001 was passed to make a legal provision for an accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service through the establishment of School Boards in all schools. The School Board is an important advisory and decision-making body at school level and consequently Board members have substantial responsibilities to fulfil (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport & Culture, 2001).

2.9 Functions of School Boards

Part V of the Act (Education Act no. 16 of 2001) details the roles and responsibilities of School Boards which comprises teachers, parents and learners at all government schools (Ministry of Basic Education Sport & Culture, 2001). These include:

1. Developing the mission, constitution, goals, policies and objectives of the school;
2. Advising the schools' management on the extra-mural curriculum of the school;
3. To advise the regional director of education on educational needs and the curriculum of the school;
4. Recommending the appointment of teachers and other staff members;
5. Allowing the reasonable use of the school facilities for community purposes;
6. Considering any case of misconduct by a learner or staff member of the school;
7. Mobilising and controlling school finances;
8. Developing infrastructures of the school;
9. Promoting school welfare; and
10. Exercising other powers and performing other duties and functions as authorized or imposed by or under this Act.

Similarly, a developed guide for School Boards in Namibia (Ministry of Education, Sport & Culture, 2004), highlights key areas of the above mentioned roles and responsibilities of School Boards. They include:

Developing the vision and policies of the school:

1. School goal or vision indicates where the school is aiming.
2. It gives the school a sense of identity, purpose and direction.
3. Making policies which are guidelines for school operations and activities.
4. Policies to be formulated in line with government policies and regulations.
5. Policies should help the principal and the School management to draft school rules.
6. Distribute copies of policies to all learners and parents at the beginning of the year.

Points on which School Board should make policies:

1. School hours: the day school begins for teachers and learners.
2. Appropriate forms of address and communication between learners and educators.
3. Code of conduct for staff and learners.
4. Punctuality/absenteeism.
5. Handling of school funds.
6. School uniform.

The appointments of teachers:

1. Vacant posts must be publicized in appropriate media.
2. Carry out research on the applicants.
3. Interview shortlisted candidates.
4. Recommend or regret appointment on merit.

5. Reject teacher assigned to school if board was not properly consulted.

Mobilising and controlling school resources:

1. The community must take part in school activities.
2. Money contributed to school must be accounted for.
3. Individuals must not misuse school money.
4. School Board must ensure that school keeps good records of all the monies received and how it is used.
5. The School Board should set the school budget, determine sources of income, yearly auditing of financial accounts, control of income and expenditure and regular financial feedback to parents.

The School Board should also support the principal, teachers and other staff in the performance of their professional functions and supplement the resources supplied by the state to improve the quality of education supplied by the state. In this regard, parents may be asked to pay school fees. Such funds are administered by the School Board. The School Board may also oversee the maintenance of the school property and buildings.

2.10 The significance of School Board in the running of schools

Another aim of establishing School Boards in schools was to promote accountability, active participation, effective exercise of powers and performance of functions of governors, to administer the affairs and development of the school and learners of the school.

The other benefit is that a School Board is an important advisory and decision-making body at school level and therefore had to work with authorities to make sure that quality education is provided to all learners (MBESC, 2004). In addition, Squelch and Lemmer (1993) supports the notion of involving parents as being of vital importance as it has benefits such as improving school performance, reducing drop-out rates, decreasing delinquency and developing a more positive attitude towards the school. It is also argued that the devolution of authority would lead to a healthier and stronger relationship between schools and communities and would also provide an alternative form of bureaucratic surveillance (Gamage, 1994).

Similarly, Dekker and Lemmer (1993) emphasise that schools opting for good outcomes need parents who are critical, those who can make sensible judgments and who do not view changes in the education system as a threat. Parker and Leithwood (2000) support the notion of decentralisation based on the reform of the assumption that to ensure

improvement in schools, those closest to the learners should be offered the authority to make key decisions.

The concept of decentralisation of School Boards was based on the fact that the government is unable to manage all aspects of school administration and needs to use local structures to support the management of schools (Mendelsohn, 1997).

Another reason originates from the belief that the state alone cannot run schools, but should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those closer to the school on a partnership basis (Marishane, 1997).

The benefits of School Board Management (SBM) or School Boards in the Namibian context included the full participation of teachers in the decision-making processes which can motivate them to perform better and can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in teaching (World Bank Report, 2007). SBM programmes both strengthen and simplify accountability by empowering those at the school level to make decisions collectively. The involvement of stakeholders at school level can improve students' learning achievement, monitor school personnel, improve student evaluations, ensure a closer match between school needs and policies and use resources more efficiently.

In addition, SBM programmes have been highlighted as a way to strengthen accountability relationships between parents and students and the service providers (teachers, principals and the government) (World Bank Report, 2007). Also, reasons which are advanced for the emphasis on School Boards where parents play a major role in education have been echoed by Anderi and Makori (2012) who report that:

Children learn better and the school becomes more successful; citizens get empowered and become active in education; home environment has been identified as a contributing factor in the children's education; strong home-school relationship has been identified as critical in the academic achievement among children; seen as a mechanism for raising standards as well as promoting local community social inclusion; contributes to educational, social and behavioural gains of the children; when effective, it improves accountability within the education system, it contributes to ownership and commitment.

Other vital benefits of decentralising education through the establishment of School Boards are used as a development strategy to increase participation; as a democratic right to close and relevant government; and as a management strategy to break down the task in geographical manageable units.

In view of what has been stated under the importance of School Boards, the school level is the most important and decisive area of governance in a democratic system of education. It is at this level that communities must know that they have a say in the education of their children and that they are given full responsibility in the form of

allocated functions. In addition, due to the government budgetary constraints, School Boards in state schools are expected to supplement the allocated school funds from government.

A serious concern is that even though roles and responsibilities of School Boards stipulated under the Education Act (2001), these members seem to have been assigned with extensive and complicated tasks which are aligned to a tremendous responsibility.

In spite of the evidence of how School Boards can help improve students' achievement, there are general concerns as regarding people who are unpaid, part-time, volunteers, lay, and non-professional, without correct balance of skills, commitment, expertise, relevant knowledge and understanding. Those who are perceived as ignorant within the education professional circles and without time are given wide-ranging responsibilities and powers in the education system. How can they contribute effectively to school improvement? How effective are they in their roles and responsibilities? These concerns are widespread among various stakeholders (Earley and Creese, 2000; Earley, 2003; Wilson, 2001; Farrel & Law, 1999; Donnelly, 1999).

With all these challenging tasks, it was deemed necessary to capacitate School Board members with skills to ensure effectiveness in the running of schools. The aim of the

training was to empower them and would enable them to develop their schools in line with the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) to enhance the teaching and learning culture.

Currently, all schools in Namibia boast of having School Boards with mandatory functions to govern schools. However, having a School Board is one thing and making it work in another. In addition, it is important to note that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Therefore, the School Board members' rights are a reflection of their responsibility and accountability. These are some of the concerns with regard to the functioning of School Boards or school governance in schools.

2.11 The challenges faced by School Boards in school governance

There are many challenges experienced by school governors on school governance. Among others, this study focused on five main themes derived from the literature review. They include:

1. Participation in policy formulation.
2. Community involvement.
3. The relationship between principals and School Boards.
4. Financial management.
5. Enhancement of the capacity of School Boards.

2.11.1 Participation in policy formulation

School Governing Bodies are tasked to draw up the mission statement of the school to ensure an image of what the school could be like, capture the character, the identity and reason for the school's existence. Similarly, Guidelines for Namibian School Board members (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2004) emphasise policy formulation as a responsibility of School Board members. Policies are guidelines in every school; therefore they should be aligned with government policies and regulations. They should help the principal and the school management to draft school rules and should be known and understood by all stakeholders (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2004).

Governors should also ensure that these policies are clear, consistent and reasonable. They should also be implementable and that all the staff members comply with them in the performance of their duties (Marishane, 1999). However, this mammoth task needs a sound knowledge of schooling, good writing skills and the ability to articulate the content to others in an effective manner. It needs skills which most governors do not have (Gallagher, 1992).

In addition to functions spelt out in the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001), the Auditor-general (1998:B2) cited in Maile (2002) echoed the same sentiments governing bodies or School Boards as stewards of public resources should have. They need to have the knowledge, ability and commitment to fulfil their responsibilities; they also need to

understand their purpose and value the interest of their stakeholders. The members should understand the objectives and strategies of the institution they govern in addition to the knowledge of and access to information required to exercise their responsibilities in order to ensure that the institutions' objectives are met and that performance is satisfactory. Board members should fulfil accountability obligations to those whose interests they represent by reporting periodically on their institutions performance (Maile, 2002). The crucial point depends on whether school board members of selected schools are able to function efficiently and effectively as expected by the Act (No. 16 of 2001).

2.11.2Community involvement

The government's call for greater participation in education has widespread support. This is based on the assumption that if more people, such as, parents were included in school governance, then democracy in education would be boosted and equality in schools would be ensured (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002). However, there are serious challenges regarding community participation. These include claims that increasing participation in school governing bodies will empower disadvantaged communities (Sayed & Carrim, 1998) Participation on its own does not guarantee that their participation will enable them to change their conditions or recognise the hindrances to policy transformation. Karlsson (2002) alludes to the implementation of school governance legislation that governance functions through which school democracy was intended to become a daily activity are dependent on social conditions.

Another serious challenge to the effective functioning of School Governing Bodies (SGB) in traditional rural areas was identified by Mabasa and Themane (2002). They argue that parents and principals were satisfied with stakeholders' participation, but their observations suggest that decisions at meetings were not taken democratically. Studies by Ngidi (2004), revealed that the community is not highly involved because parents do not understand their roles as SGB members and their training was also limited. Marishane (2002) claimed that public participation was centred on democracy. Democratising the governance process enables public participation to convey information about needs and demands from the public to policy-makers and implementers.

As much, as the Government call for greater community participation in education, there is a need for capacity building and provision of resources. Without these, disadvantaged communities may be stuck in a cycle of making demands without effectively being able to change the education policy to their advantage (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002). Also, delegating the responsibility for education to the local level may seem to simply divert attention away from the departmental officials appointed to do the job (Weighid, 2002).

2.11.3 Governance and professional management of state schools

The decentralisation of school governance resulted into the formation of integrated structures which are school governing bodies and school management teams (Squelch, 1999). School governance is about creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules which guide and govern the action of the school and its members whilst professional management (administration) refers to the day-to-day professional activities carried out by the school principal in conjunction with the school management team. These structures are legitimate and have equal participation in the governance and management of schools (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). Another concern is what Mabasa and Themane (12002) confirmed through observation that principals and teachers dominate School Board meetings. This is due to lack of competence, confidence and training in meeting procedure for both the principals and other school governing board members.

A study by Mkentane (2003) conducted at five rural schools revealed that members of the School Governing Bodies are not structurally involved as expected by SASA hence there is still a strong dominance by education members and principals in school governance. Parents of researched schools are poor, illiterate and depend on the principals and teachers to inform them about their responsibilities.

A concern regarding school governance and school management is that some of the responsibilities of those structures overlapped with each other (Matilele, 2003). This is an indicative of a conflict that might emerge regarding accountability and School governance in terms of views regarding policy interpretation and implementation. For instance, school boards and school managers are equally responsible for protecting the rights of all learners to education, for maintaining discipline and for financial management (Maile, 2002). Although the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) is explicit about the school board functions, it remains silent on how both the School Board and the principal of schools should manage their roles. Therefore, the problem remains as to what extent parents will exercise their powers without infringement into the principal's domain and with minimum intervention from the principal.

Therefore, Maile (2002) argues that it is not enough to simply state that parents are responsible for school governance and that the principal deals with the professional management without clearly demarcating their roles and indicating their meeting points. This action will safeguard against any possible misuse or abuse of power. In addition, it is extremely important to note that in as much as it is important for SGB to help principals, educators and other staff members to carry out their respective professional activities, there is a need for the principal and the Education department to give all necessary assistance to the governing body in the performance of their activities related to the Education Act (Potgieter et al., 1997).

2.11.2 Financial Management

Like any other country, Namibia is experiencing financial difficulties in the education sector. The Government (MBESC, 2004) does not have sufficient funds to cover all the necessary resources, so schools have to find ways to raise their additional funds for the purpose of supplementing resources given by the state. Managing finances is one of the obligations of School Boards.

A survey conducted by Van Wyk (2007) on financial management revealed that affluent schools were satisfactory regarding roles of school governing bodies whereas in more deprived communities, educators had doubts regarding the school governing bodies' competence to handle financial matters. One teacher explained:

“The SGB is not well trained, that is why they do not know what is expected of them with regard to the finances”. Another echoed: “They only sign cheques, they do not work according to the budget; there is no financial committee. They do not participate in fund-raising of the school.”

The bottom line in this survey is that many of School Governing Bodies are not well trained and as such, they are not competent and do not know what is expected of them regarding school finances. One of the serious challenges of School Boards concern is that the low educational level of some parents causes the problems of financial accountability. A study conducted by Adams and Waghid, (2005) stressed that the low

education levels and poverty among parents in deprived areas contribute to their lack of financial skills.

Based on the above, the main concern is illiteracy and poverty among parents as school board members based in rural areas. These challenges raise questions as to whether or not an illiterate or semi-illiterate person is capable of managing finances. It is also worth noting that although the School Governing Bodies provide both written financial reports to the parents, this might not give a true reflection of the facts, because due to their low levels of literacy, they might find it difficult to respond or understand the financial information as expected (Mbatsane, 2006).

The delegation of power by the state needs particular capacities from SGB (Van Wyk, 2004) which include financial management skills. Lazarus and Davidoff (1997) concur with Van Wyk by indicating that members of the community need to be equipped to enable them to analyse budgets and financial statements and to manage finances. Nyambi (2004) cited in Joubert (2005) expands this further by suggesting that School Governing Bodies should not only be skilled to manage finances but should as well be capable of translating these financial resources into physical resources for instance, to promote quality education on a cost effective basis.

2.11.5 Enhancement of the capacity of School Boards

The shift to decentralised school governance and management requires SGB members to develop a wide range of skills and capacity to deal with the complex issues and tasks expected of them (Van Wyk, 2007). Findings reveal concerns raised by teachers regarding the necessity of providing appropriate training to school governors. The Ministerial Review Committee (DE, 2004) echoes the same sentiment by emphasising that school governors receive insufficient training in key areas such as managing accounts, appointing educators and developing policies of the school. A parent expressed his opinion regarding the training he underwent: “Without training we can fumble a lot but with training we can see where we are going.” This seems to suggest that School Board members need a variety of skills and should be capacitated in order to be able to deal with the complex issues pertaining their expected tasks or challenges.

A study carried out by Gamage and Sooksomchita (2004) about the effectiveness of the education reforms involving School Board members (SBMs) in education revealed that though principals supported the involvement of School Board members and their important roles in school governance, the principals preferred board members to have a better understanding of their roles, accountabilities and responsibilities. Most participants expressed uncertainty regarding their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of School Board members. This raises a serious challenge indicating that where roles are not clear, conflict may occur among parents, governors and school

managers thereby affecting the effective functioning of the school. In this study, principals mentioned the importance of providing training to both parents, governors about the school management and their roles.

From the Namibian context, Mendelsohn (1997) pursued a study of School Boards in the Oshana region. This study revealed that School Boards in rural areas are mostly composed of elders and people with a low education level who may not have understanding and knowledge about education matters. With this background, these board members may not provide constructive criticism and contribution in order to improve their schools (Mendelsohn, 1997). It is in light of this that the training and capacitating of School Board members regarding their roles are mandatory to enable them to perform their expected functions and meet their day-to-day challenges.

The execution of roles and responsibilities depends on the capacity of school board members. It is for this reason that capacity building programmes were provided to school board members by the Namibian government in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1997).

Although several studies have examined roles of parents, teachers and learners in the management of schools to improve performance (Epstein, 2001), and in policy

formulation and school rules (Potgieter, et al. 1997), most of these studies have not provided any research in the Namibian context on established educational School Boards for decentralised management functions in schools. The rationale behind this is that, even though concepts used in those studies are similar, the environment, the situation and the attitude of School Board members might differ from place to place. Finally, those who conducted those studies conducted them in different places other than Namibia, but mine is focused on School Boards in the Caprivi Region of Namibia. With this background, the existing research is still inadequate; therefore there is a need to carry out a study about the involvement of School Boards in the management of schools in Namibia in general and in the Caprivi Region in particular, there is a need to investigate how School Board members view their roles and challenges in the management of two combined schools in the Caprivi Region.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the study explored and focused on the views of School Board members regarding their roles and challenges they face in the management of schools. The theoretical framework associated with school governance was outlined. It included democracy, participative management theories and definitions of concepts such as decentralisation and governance.

The research explored literature regarding School Board roles and challenges in School governance which was viewed from the perspectives of international and developing countries, including Namibia. This study was viewed against the background of the parents of learners who serve in School Boards in question. This chapter also outlined issues regarding the historical background of School Boards functioning underpinned by the legal framework.

The chapter also explored challenges faced by School Board members. It was established that a number of factors affect parents' participation negatively. From the discussions, it became clear that School Board members need appropriate training so that they can participate more effectively in School Boards. It was also noted that though the ineffectiveness of School Boards in state schools is a universal phenomenon, there are unique problems pertaining to the proper understanding and implementation of the Education Act (No. 16 of 2001) by School Boards especially rural black public schools. This current study seeks to find out if School Board members of selected schools also experience the same problems which were attributed to role overlap, unclear roles, lack of training and low level of education among parents. The following chapter describes the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was on how members of School Boards viewed their roles and challenges in the management of two combined schools in the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia. The emphasis was on the Schools' Board members' views, knowledge and understanding of their roles, and functions with regard to the Namibian Act, No 16 of 2001.

Firstly, the chapter outlines the research design. Secondly, it describes the research paradigm, research methods and sampling methods used. Thirdly, it provides the description of data collection techniques and data analysis procedures. Finally, the researcher highlights issues regarding ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

According to Booyse (2002), a case study design involves only a few respondents with the aim to understand, describe and interpret human experiences from their point of view. Instead of using calculations or numbers, words are used in the analysis and interpretations of results. Booyse further defines a research design indicating the fact that, consideration should be made regarding obtaining reliable, honest, generalisable and valid data so that the pronouncements about the phenomenon of education may be confirmed or rejected (Booyse, 2002). It is of importance to note that there is a belief that underlies qualitative research which indicates that the world is dynamic, neither coherent, nor uniform and therefore, there are many truths (Aisarian et al., 2009).

The researcher used a qualitative approach to obtain reliable and valid data from the members of the School Boards under investigation. According to Ishak (2004), qualitative research typically investigates behaviour as it occurs naturally in non-contrived situations. This means that there is no manipulation of conditions or experiences.

In qualitative research, the researcher collects data holistically; the participants provide the data in a much freer and less controlled way, with much of it occurring naturally (Henning, Van Ransburg, 2004). This approach was perceived as the most suitable for

this type of study. It helped in capturing the richness and complexity of behaviour from the perspectives of the School Board members who were the respondents in this study. Furthermore, the data consisted of words in the form of rich verbal descriptions.

Cantrell 1993 and Creswell (2003) believe that in a research, the selection of a research paradigm represents a choice in a set of beliefs that will underlie and guide the entire research process (Cantrell, 1993 & Creswell, 2003). Implied here is that a paradigm provides a researcher with a unified set of concepts, principles and rules to select the approach suitable to his or her research study and how it should be conducted. It is as well referred by Bailey (1982) as a mental window through which a researcher views the world. In other words, a paradigm influences a researcher to make claims about knowledge and methods used (Denzin & Lincoln (2000). To sum up, a paradigm is the approach the researcher selects to study a particular phenomenon. It is with this background that the researcher had opted to use an interpretive paradigm in the study.

3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

The study adopted an interpretive paradigm guided by a narrative approach. A narrative approach is an interpretive, qualitative method of research. According to Schwandt (1994), an interpretive researcher emphasises more on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records. The researcher believes that reality is in

the minds of people, it is internally experienced and is constructed through social interaction and interpretation.

As underpinned by Cantrell (1993), an interpretive paradigm influences researchers to follow an inductive research path where realities are socially based and the researcher is linked subjectively to the participants in a research study. It is of paramount importance to note that an interpretive paradigm used in most qualitative research sees the world as constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions with each other and within wide social systems (Manson, 1996).

An interpretive qualitative methodology enables participants to speak freely and to understand the investigator's quest for insight into phenomena that the participants experience (Manson, 1996). Similarly, an interpretive qualitative paradigm entails getting close to research subjects in their natural setting in order to describe and understand the world through their eyes. It focuses on the process rather than outcome, the actor's perspective is emphasized and its main aim is in-depth description and understanding of actions and events (Babbie and Mouton 2005).

The research is based on the interpretive paradigm in the sense that it seeks to interpret the meaning, experience and understanding of School Board member in School

governance. The researcher deemed it fit to use the interpretive paradigm because it is based on constructivist belief that reality is socially constructed by people. In this case, the researcher tries to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who lived it (Schwandt, 1994). According to Mertens (2005), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experience they have in this world.

The interpretive paradigm in qualitative research is relevant in this study as it enables the researcher to share the views, feelings and interpretations of the people involved in this study and see things through their eyes. It is for this reason that the researcher employed a case study to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning of those involved.

3.2.2 Research method: Case study

Due to the nature of the study, a case study approach was used. A qualitative research entails the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (nonnumeric) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Airasain, Gay and Mills, 2009). A case study was chosen for this thesis because it enabled the researcher to target a smaller group of people to obtain depth of understanding on a

topic. Furthermore, the strength of qualitative approach lies in its interpretive character, that of discovering the meaning events have for individuals who experience them (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont, 2009). A case study approach in this regard enabled the researcher to gain insight into the phenomenon of democratic participation of School Board members as it permitted an in-depth search of meaning particularly with small-scale research (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

Case studies involve an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence and seeking personal data from the interviewees. The contemporary phenomenon, in other words, is the “case” of the views of board members regarding their roles and challenges in the management in two combined schools in the Caprivi educational region of Namibia. The salient characteristic of case studies approach is to focus on the intensive study of a specific instance in action. They attempt to produce holistic, intensive, descriptive in-depth and contextual data. Case studies mainly focus on an enquiry around an instance offering a researcher an opportunity to investigate one aspect of a problem in some depth within a limited time scale. For this study, information was obtained from members of School Boards from two combined Schools in the Caprivi Region, which are parents, teachers and learners, who have rich information and understanding about school governance, for the purpose of examining their roles and responsibilities and exposure of challenges they face in schools.

The rationale for using a case study approach is that it is termed as an umbrella for a family of research methods that have a common decision of focusing on inquiry around an instance. (Bell 1999) It is of paramount importance to note that it also allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific situation and identify the various interactive processes at work. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) emphasise the purpose of a case study to be that which enables a researcher to understand one person or situation (or perhaps a very small number) in great depth. The researcher used a case study with an attempt to understand in-depth the views, role and challenges of School Board members in the management of Schools from their own perspective. Bell (1999) further emphasises that the case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited scale. A case study research approach was the research design that was utilised in this study. A case study research method is used when the researcher wants to answer either a descriptive or an explanatory question. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), this entails that in-depth data relating to the phenomenon under study can be collected. In this study, the case study research approach yielded a thick description of the phenomenon that was the main focus of the study.

A case study is a qualitative research approach in which a researcher focuses on a unit of study known as a bounded system. A case study is an investigation of a phenomenon that occurs within a specific context. In other words, the phenomenon under study can

only be appropriately studied if it is bounded and identifiable within a specific context. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009), a case study research is unique to a different kind of knowledge compared to other kinds of research. A case study research is more concrete and the knowledge it yields resonates within the reader's experiences because such knowledge is tangible and illuminative.

One of the limitations with this research methodology is the possibility of the collection of irrelevant information during the study because much data are needed in the course of the study. The qualitative approach was perceived as the most suitable for this study in the sense that it helped in capturing the richness and complexity of behaviour from the perspective of the respondents.

3.2.3 The Population

In any research, the population is the larger group to which the researcher would like the results of the study to be generalized (Airasian et al., 2009). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also affirmed that a population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events that conform to specific criteria and to which researchers intend to generalise the results of the research. This study did not intend to make generalisations, but to describe and explain the roles and challenges of School Board members in the selected schools in the Caprivi Region of Namibia. In this case, the

population comprised all parents, teachers and learners who are members of School Boards of the two sampled Combined Schools in the Caprivi Region.

3.2.4 Sampling

According to Airasian et al. (2009), a qualitative sampling method is the process of selecting a small number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individual chosen will be able to help the researcher understand the phenomenon under investigation. Moore (2002) equally refers to a sample as a smaller group selected from the larger population that is representative of the larger population. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling method which is a common feature of qualitative research (Airasian et al., 2009). This type of sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned. Airasian et al. (2009) further explain the benefit of the approach of sampling for case study research is that the purposeful selection of cases that are “information-rich” or those from which the researcher can learn a great deal about the research problem. The sampling procedure allowed the researcher to select participants based on ones’ belief that they have adequate knowledge on this topic. In this regard, four School Board members from each School were selected as target groups for interviews.

The characteristic features of this kind of sampling are that it is usually more convenient and economical and that it allows the researcher to handpick the sample, based on knowledge of the area and the phenomena being studied. This statement is amplified by Airasian et al. (2009) by asserting that the advantage of using purposeful sampling is that the sample selection is based on researcher's knowledge and experience of the group to be sampled. In this case, two Combined Schools one from a rural area and the other from an urban area were selected because they were believed to have adequate knowledge with regard to their roles and responsibilities as well as challenges which they face when they manage their respective schools.

3.2.5 Research Instruments

The technique used to achieve a research goal depends on how the information is generated. The approaches to collecting qualitative data are much less structured and formal than the techniques used for gathering quantitative data. The main aim is to allow respondents to talk, often at great length, about their feelings and about their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values (Moore, 2002). Research conducted in this form frequently uses a number of approaches in the collection of data, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations and written accounts by the subjects (Airasian et al., 2009) However, in this study, data were collected using an interview guide using open-ended questions on a one-to-one basis using eight School Board members of schools to allow probing (Kvale, 1996 & Weinberg, 2002). The technique was used whereby information was collected

from respondents through face-to-face seating focusing on a specific issue or topic (Freebody, 2003).

During the interview, the researcher took notes and tape recorded the conversation for the purpose of capturing data. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. In-depth interviews were conducted based on participants' knowledge, views, understanding, interpretations, experiences and interactions (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002) of how School Board members at two selected Combined Schools perform their roles and face challenges in their respective schools.

The researcher used an interview guide with open ended questions to examine those things she could not directly observe such as values, thoughts and intentions. Furthermore, she also deployed interviews to collect data on the respondents' behaviour and actions that took place sometime ago. The interview guide with open-ended questions which the researcher used for interviews needed prior preparation. An interview -guide comprising open-ended questions was prepared in advance. The aim of an interview guide was to make sure the researcher asked each interviewee similar questions in the same sequence. The guide was also utilised to allow in-depth probing, which enabled her to discover the views, perceptions, interpretations and meaning that School Board member, attached to their actions (Cantrell, 1993; Robson, 1993). The interview guide with open-ended questions ensured consistency across the interviewees,

reduced interviewer bias, and facilitated comparability during data analysis and, therefore, generalisability (Patton, 2002).

The use of an interview guide with open-ended questions afforded the researcher an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion with participants on their perceptions regarding School governance roles and challenges. The semi-structured interviews were appropriate in that they enabled participants to discuss their interpretations of the world they lived, and to express how they regarded situations from their own point of view. It as well enabled the researcher to ask probing questions that emerged from interviewees' responses and allowed the generation of new ideas that led to richer data.

Cohen et al. (2000) refer to advantages semi-matured interviews as:

The framing of questions for a semi-structured interview considers prompts and probes. Prompts enable the researcher to clarify topics or questions, whilst probes enable the researcher to ask respondents to extend, elaborate, add to, provide detail for, clarify or qualify their response, thereby addressing richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness and honesty that are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing (Cohen et al 2000, p. 278).

Furthermore, relevant documents such as minutes of School Board meetings and policies regarding School governance were requested to support data collected through interviews. Information obtained from documents enable researchers to structure research problems and pose relevant questions for their studies. In this case, documents

were also used to complement and strengthen data that were obtained through other methods such as interviews.

In a qualitative research, it is vital to be aware of the need to triangulate data through the use of multiple data sources. The purpose of using multiple methods during data collecting is to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information, (Airasian et al., 2009). Airasian et al. (2009) further assert that often two or more methods can be used in such a way that the strength of one compensates for the weakness of another. According to Patton (2001), one way to strengthen study design is through triangulation or combination of methodologies, in the study of the same phenomena or programme. Triangulation shows how different data agreed and disagreed by using more than one method for the purpose of measuring the same phenomena from more than one standpoint, and, in so doing achieve a measure of validity and reliability. It is in light of the above that the researcher used different methods to measure the same phenomena from different angles. In this study, data was collected using an interview guide using open-ended questions on a one-to-one basis to eight School Board members of selected schools. Relevant documents such as minutes of School Board meetings and school policies regarding School governance were requested to support data collected through interviews.

With regard to interviews, the offer was given to all participants to choose the language that they were able to express themselves very well. As a result, one parent opted to be interviewed in the local language whilst the rest of the participants were interviewed in English. All interviews were tape recorded and the researcher translated the one in local language (Silozi) to English as it is the language used for this study.

3.2.6 Data collection procedure

During this research process, permission was sought from the Ministry of Education through the Permanent Secretary to allow the researcher to conduct research in selected schools. Permission was granted to her and the letter that she received was taken to the Regional Director and School Principals of selected schools.

The researcher administered instruments to all respondents purposefully selected to participate in the study from two selected schools. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the characteristic that make humans the “instrument of choice.” For naturalistic inquiry Mbukusa (2009) supports Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) notion of humans used as instruments, emphasising that humans are responsive to environmental signals and are able to deal with that situation. They are able to collect information at different levels simultaneously; they are able to approach situations holistically; they are able to process

data immediately as they become available; they can provide feedback and request verification of data; and they can examine unusual or unexpected responses.

In this case, in-depth interviews were conducted with one principal, a Head of Department, two chairpersons (in this case they are parents), two teachers, one learner and one parent from selected schools serving on the School Board. A sample of an interview guide using open-ended questions attached in annexure 1 of this case study was used as a tool for collecting data. The interview time was 50 minutes per respondent. To ensure triangulation, information obtained from documents such as policies, minutes of School Board meetings were used to complement and strengthen data obtained through other methods such as interviews. In this regard, the results of both the interviews and relevant documents were later juxtaposed and triangulated to validate the findings.

3.2.7 Data analysis

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative or qualitative research or enquiry is a complex undertaking because it involves reading extensively of the field texts. A qualitative researcher spends a lot of time reading and reading field texts. Airasian et al. (2009) concur with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as stated here that, qualitative research by nature and scope tends to produce large amounts of data, especially when the researcher uses the triangulation of methods. Similarly, with data collected through

interviews from respondents and documentary sources, the researcher ended up with a lot of information to analyse.

As De Vos et al. (2009) put it; data analysis in qualitative inquiry necessitates a twofold approach. The first is concurrently done at the research site during data collection. In other words, the researcher is compelled in some situations to analyse data on the spot. The second aspect involves data analysis away from the site, soon after data collection. Likewise, the researcher employed both approaches in her study. The data from the interviews in audiotapes format were transcribed verbatim. These consisted of direct quotations from people about their views, experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge about school governance. Recorded data and hand written notes from respondents were analysed using categories and checking for regular patterns of events and themes (De Vos et al 2009) that addressed the research goal.

Furthermore, transcripts were examined in order to identify appropriate categories for sorting the data regarding School Board's roles, experiences and challenges faced in the management of schools. The coded data was then broken into units of broad themes and sub-themes that emerged from the questions asked and participants' responses. Extracts from raw data were selected and either paraphrased or quoted to illustrate the patterns. The researcher also analysed data from documents such as policies and minutes of School Board meetings. Patton (2002) underpins the importance of document analysis as stated hereunder:

Document... analysis provide a behind-the-scene look at the program that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents (Patton 2002 p.302).

In this study data from relevant documents were used to strengthen the interview data. The data from relevant documents such as school policies and School Board minutes were presented under relevant themes. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software to analyse the data. The researcher presented interview and document data by interpreting and analysing in a descriptive form, as well as the usage of tables which were made in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Graphs on some sub-topics in the study were also created in SPSS to help analyse some data.

3.2.8 Strategies used for ensuring the validity and reliability of the study

To ensure validity and reliability of the study, the following steps were taken into consideration. First, the interview guide with open-ended questions was first discussed with the supervisor to ensure their appropriateness (Polit et al., 2001). Second, the practice of triangulation or multiple uses of data collecting strategies and data sources were used by the researcher so as to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information. In addition, more methods were used in such a way that the strength of one could compensate for the weakness of another (Airasian et al., 2009). Finally, the researcher had to ensure that ethical measures were taken into

consideration to consideration to School Board members at the two Combined Schools which was sensible to contextualise the study.

3.2.8 Research ethics

After permission was granted by the Ministry of Education through the Permanent Secretary, Regional Director and the Principals whose schools were selected, ethical measures had to be considered. The main ethical concerns in research are informed consent, confidentiality and potential harm to the participants.

Anderson (1998) and Christians (2000) concur with each other by affirming that proper respect for human freedom generally includes those three mentioned conditions. This means that participants in this case, school governors voluntarily participated in research without physical or psychological coercion or harm. In other words, participant's agreement to be involved in the research was based on full information conveyed to them about the purpose of the study. Airasian et al. (2000) assert that codes of ethical conduct are of paramount importance in a study because they safeguard the protection of participants' identities and those of the research locations.

In support of this viewpoint, Christians (2000) affirms that privacy and confidentiality need to be considered as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure and that personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only if anonymity is deployed. In addition, Lemmer (2002) concurs with Christians (2000) regarding ethical issues as stated hereunder:

...This is not only a very intimate kind of research, but may also involve gathering sensitive or controversial information. For this reason, it is important that researchers treat what they observe and here with the greatest confidentiality. Thus, moral and ethical issues are involved. (Lemmer, 2002, p.98-99).

In ensuring safety of the participants and preventing violation of human rights, informed consent was obtained from each respondent from selected case study combined Schools in question. After that a thorough explanation of the aim of the study, the procedures which were to be followed, and as well as the potential benefits of participating and how results would be used was made. This was done so that they could make decisive decisions on whether they would participate in the study or not.

The participants were ascertained verbally, for the sake of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, that their names would not appear anywhere in the research findings. Furthermore, respondents were also ensured of confidentiality and that data collected would not to be used for any other purpose except for research and that no information would lead to their identification.

In addition, all participating School Board members had access to transcriptions and to their transcribed interviews. Due to ethical reasons, the names of the research respondents were kept anonymous; (Lemmer, 2002; Anderson, 1998 & Christians 2000) I used pseudonyms.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the research paradigm which formed the basis of the study. The approaches used for sampling, data collection, data analysis and data processing were discussed. Sampling methods used during the research were explained and ethical issues were considered. The next chapter provides the presentation of data obtained through data collection procedures used in this study.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data gathered from interviews with parents, teachers and learners (School Board members) in two selected state schools regarding their views on their roles and how they respond to challenges as they manage schools in Caprivi Region of Namibia. As stated in Chapter 3, two combined schools in the Katima Circuit participated in the study. Out of the sample, eight representatives from the School Boards of the two combined schools participated in semi-structured and open-ended interviews. The composition of the sample was one principal, a Head of Department, two chairpersons (in this case they are parents), two teachers, one learner and one parent. Both schools are currently categorised as state schools.

The data were collected using two qualitative design techniques, namely a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions and official documents such as journal entries, government acts and policies and minutes of the School Board meetings. The techniques were used to explore and discover the richness of the participants' experiences on the topic (De Vos, et al. 2005). The researcher analysed data using an inductive strategy which is recommended by Aisarian et al. (2009). This strategy

enabled the researcher to analyse data from respondents using themes and categories which emerged from the data in order to construct meaning.

In order to construct meaning from the collected data, the study focused on three themes which emerged from both interviews and relevant official documents. The themes formed the basis of the findings. These are:

1. The roles/ functions of the School Board.
2. Challenges faced by School Board members in school governance.
3. Suggested improvements/ mitigations of school governors in response to challenges.

The researcher grouped subthemes under the main themes with the purpose of portraying data from a bigger picture. With regard to ethical considerations, the names of participants and schools were replaced by pseudonyms such as school A OR B; participants were referred to using numbers, for example Participant 1.

4.2 Description of the research area

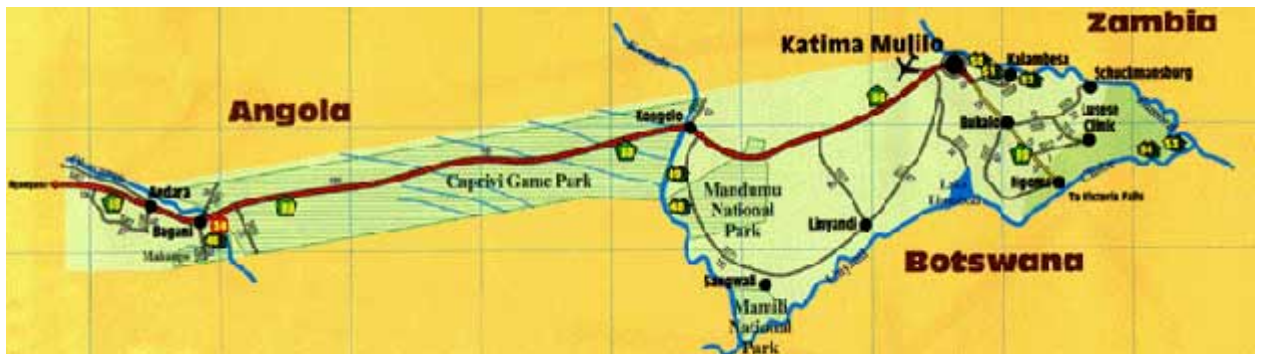


Figure 1: Caprivi map

Source: <http://www.google.com/search?q=caprivi+map&hl=en&client>

Caprivi region lies about half way between the equator and the southern tip of Africa and midway between the Atlantic and Indian oceans. The size of the Caprivi region is about 20009 square kilometres and its population is estimated to be 150,000 people. Most people in that region depend heavily of subsistence farming on a small scale. They catch fish, plant crops and raise cattle for a living. The region is also predominantly rural and is characterised by poverty and a high unemployment rate; its people have limited means to sustain themselves.

4.3 Biographical Characteristics of the Participants

Table 1: 4.3.1*The ages of participants*

	Frequency	Percent
15-20 years	1	12.5
25-30 years	1	12.5
40-45 years	1	12.5
45-50 years	4	50.0
60 years and above	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

The above results make it evident that half (4) of the participants were between the age range of 45-50 years of age. Only one participant was in the age range of 60 years and above, and this participant was the oldest.

Table 2:4.3.2 The education level of participants

	Frequency	Percent
-Grade 12 and H.E.D	1	12.5
-Diploma in electronic engineering and Degree in business management	1	12.5
-Grade 12	2	25.0
-Grade 12 and diploma in education	2	25.0
-Grade 4	1	12.5
-Grade 10	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Table 2 shows that only two out of 8 participants managed to finish their Grade 12. The findings continue to show that one out of the 8 School Board members (a parent) reached Grade four and never continued with school beyond that level. One out of the 8

participants (a parent) also stopped going to school after reaching Grade ten. It can be concluded that half of the participants in this study had low levels of education because they did not have any tertiary education. The other half (4) of the participants (those were teachers) in the study shows high levels of education as their academic achievements look better. They obtained degrees and diplomas.

4.4 *The main themes and sub-themes that formed the basis of the study*

Table 3: *The main themes and sub-themes*

Themes	Sub themes
1. Knowledge and understanding of School Board roles	1.1 policy formulation 1.2 appointment of staff 1.3 financial management 1.4 community involvement
2. Challenges faced by School Board members in school governance	2.1 power relations between principal and School Board 2.2 School Board meetings 2.3 learners' participation in decision-making processes 2.4 the impact of regulations and policies on School Boards 2.5 School Board meetings
3. Suggested improvements/mitigations of school governors in response to challenges	3.1 achievements perceived by Board members 3.2 how School Boards could be improved

Table 3 indicates three themes which emerged from both interviews and relevant official documents. The themes formed the basis of the findings. These are:

1. The roles/ functions of the School Board.
2. Challenges faced by School Board members in school governance.
3. Suggested improvements/ mitigations of school governors in response to challenges

4.4 .1 Knowledge and understanding of School Board roles

4.4.1.1 The school board operates in a democratic way according to the Education Act no.16 of 2001

The tables below show whether or not the School Board members in the schools studied agree with the concept of democracy and how they come to decisions.

Table 4: *Whether or not the School Board agrees with the concept of democracy*

	Frequency
-Yes	7
-Not sure	1
Total	8

Table 4 reveals that a large number, that is, 7 of the participants in the study said that the School Boards agree with the concept of democracy. Despite the fact that the majority of the participants agreed with the concept of democracy, one of the participants was not sure whether or not the School Boards agree with the concept of democracy at their schools.

According to the results presented above, many School Board members in the two selected schools agree with the concept of democracy. This shows that the School

Boards have the knowledge that they are 'vehicles' required for the effecting the decentralisation of power and enhancement of participation in schools. Most of them know that their role is to enhance participation of the school management and also to encourage democracy in schools.

It is important for School Boards to function in a democratic way because this will help them to take responsibility and also have a say in the running of schools (Rembe, 2005). This gives the School Boards more responsibilities as governing bodies of schools than in the past where schools were governed by principals only; this meant that the principals carried out all the responsibilities and which were too many for them to function effectively (Rembe, 2005). According to Joubert (2005), it is important to keep sight of the fact that school governors (School Board Members) are volunteers and they do not get paid for whatever they do for the schools, but the trend of government to devolve original responsibilities and decision-making to School Board members leads to disillusionment. The disenchantment comes when school management becomes disappointed in the School Board after initially thinking it would assist well enough in the effective management of the school.

According to Joubert (2005), the model of the school governance is structured for representative democracy through tri-annual electoral processes and inclusion of relevant stakeholders (learners, teachers and principals and the School Board Members

and parents). The School Board's participation in the school matters should be far reaching even though sometimes it falls short in terms of the full participation in the allocated functions (Joubert, 2005). According to Gutmann's democratic theory, the School Board members should be free in setting up their own standards based on the national and state standards, and they can also use their discretion in deciding how to implement state standards.

According to Kasokonya (2007), the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) requires that schools allow active role-players, including learner participation in school governance, discussions of school management and administration, and evaluation of the quality of instruction and learning (p 42). The Education Act of 2001 provides for learners to elect their own representatives in all public secondary schools to serve on School Boards. Kasokonya (2007) adds that all members are allowed to speak freely and participate in decision-making regarding issues at hand. When Board members are unable to reach agreement on an issue, a vote, including that of the learners' representatives, is taken (Kasokonya, 2007). However, when learners are excused from matters involving teachers, such as their recruitment, selection and transfers, policy formulation and cases of misconduct regarding teachers, these issues are treated as confidential (Kasokonya, 2007).

4.4.1.2 School Boards decision making and accountability in schools

Table 5: *How the school boards come to decisions and how they exercise their accountability in schools*

	Frequency	Percent
-Policies must be implemented and the ministry of education should have a department which deals with the school board and so that they can work together.	4	50.0
-All the concerns that are brought by the parents are taken to the School Board to be discussed.	1	12.5
-Everybody is allowed to raise their views when a topic is raised.	3	37.5
Total	8	100.0

According to the research findings, half (4) of the participants suggested that the Ministry of Education must implement policies which will govern schools and it should have a department that deals with School Boards so that these two bodies can work together. Only one participant suggested that the School Board makes decisions democratically by allowing everybody to raise their views when topics are raised.

As the results have been presented, many participants in the study suggested that the Ministry of Education needs to work closely with the Board members of schools so that they can work on implementing policies together. Many added that the above mentioned Ministry needs to have a department that will work with the School Boards. Based on the findings presented, parents are involved in decisions being made at these schools as they are allowed to air their views when a topic is raised and the way out is figured based on the majority.

It is therefore evident that there is some high degree of parents/school board involvement in decision-making processes in these schools in meetings and many of them understand that the Ministry of Education can play a big role together with the school board, particularly in decision-making and policy formulation. Gutmann's (Fisher, 2004) theory is important at explaining the accountability of the School Board members and how they come to make decisions. This theory supports the findings in the study in the sense that it can be used to explain the need to empower the School Board members to make educational policies and decisions which are not discriminatory and which will also preserve the intellectual and social foundations of democratic deliberations.

4.4.1.3. Participation in policy formulation

This means that the School Board members should have a clear direction of what the school should be like and the reason for the school's existence. In support of this view point, Marishane (1999) in Van Wyk (2003) explains that School Board members should develop policies that are clear, consistent, reasonable and implementable by stakeholders. However, this can only be done by people with a sound knowledge of schooling, good writing skills and the ability to articulate the content in an effective way. According to Gallagher (1992) in Van Wyk (2007), most school governors lack these skills.

4.4.1.3 .1 Discussion on School Board participation in policy formulation

School Board members were asked how they formulated school policies, Participant 6 indicated that:

The parents played a minimal role. He further revealed that: most school policies are adopted from those of the Ministry of Education and few were first developed by us (Educators) and thereafter, parent governors were then called to endorse the decision.(November 2011).

On School Boards' knowledge about their roles, the study found out that the School Boards in question had no idea of what the Education Act (No.16 of 2001) entails; they acknowledged the fact that they had not read it. The participants' responses further revealed that the education level of some community members was low. As a result, the

community members do not understand their roles thoroughly as stipulated by the Education Act (No.16 of 2001). Participant 4 affirms:

I feel also that our school is not working too much especially teaching the community about the importance of their roles and their involvement in school matters. For instance, the chairperson always wanting to keep the school cheque book, wanting their thoughts to be endorsed even when they are contrary to policy and when rectified chairperson feels his decisions are undermined. (November 2011)

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With regard to the School Boards' participation in policy formulation, the study revealed that participants were aware of the fact that policy formulation was a responsibility of School Boards, but parent governors lacked sufficient knowledge and capacity to perform this task and therefore played minimal roles. This task was rather done by educators.

This seems to imply that the parent component of the School Boards delegated the policy formulation task to principals and teachers because they are experts in this regard. Rembe (2005) affirms the notion that a certain group of parents are unable to equally participate in School Boards; some of them are either illiterate or lack capacity and need extensive training. Ellis (1984) in Lilemba (2011) underpinned this notion by asserting that the majority of Namibian citizens are either illiterate or semi-illiterate.

Based on this study, findings entail that not much was done by the parent component of the School Boards of schools in question with regard to policy formulation. The School Boards of the afore-mentioned schools rather reinforced the existing ministerial policies and of those which were formulated were developed by educators. Participants' responses implied that most parents had low education levels and their familiarity with educational activities was given as hindrance to their task.

Contrary to this, some policies which appeared to have been developed by the educator component of the School Boards under study were proved otherwise. The reason was that the descriptive results from the participants and policy documents revealed that there were discrepancies of accounts between some School Board members and policy documents examined which gives an indication that most policies cited as developed were rather adopted and re-enforced.

Concurring with this viewpoint, Participant 2 revealed that:

We have not really worked on policies but we have looked into the policy of discipline at school, we have not really formulated any policies, because those policies are already there, we are just trying to re-enforce the existing rules. This issue was also affirmed by Participant 8 saying that: We have not formulated any policy none that I know (November 2011).

The afore-mentioned viewpoint is supported by Vandeyars (2000) in Calitz, Fugslestad and Lillejord (2002) argued that many School Board members do not have capacity. As a result of the dearth of capacity, such School Board members cannot be fruitfully engaged in the writing policies for the school and this duty is simply delegated to the principals and teachers (2002). The findings of this study suggest that the area of policy formulation is not inclusive to all School Board members of selected schools as mandated by the Education Act of 2001. This is due to lack of expertise by Board members who ended up delegating this responsibility to principals and teachers.

In this regard, the Participant 1 stated that:

At our school we have developed a number of policies like a cell phone policy, starting policy, breakage policy and attendance policy. (November 2011)

The afore-mentioned statement is supported by policies which were sent to the researcher a week later after the interviews. Among the policy documents studied, two policies were still depicting the name of the neighbouring schools. When probed, the Respondent agreed to be a borrowed document

This action of excluding parents in policy formulation puts them out of place with regard to their roles and responsibilities in school governance. In agreement with these views, Rembe (2005) and Sayed (2001) stress that the challenge to policy implementation has been a lack of capacity among civil servants, in this case the School Board members. A controversy shown in this study is that, despite the accountability of School Boards and

opportunities for participation to address imbalances of past experiences in school governance, policy formulation in education has not been as inclusive as intended.

4.4.1.4 Selection and Appointment of Staff

Although teacher appointments and promotions are some of the education functions mandated to the School Boards by the Education Act of (2001), a significant number of participants interviewed indicated otherwise. Participant 2 felt that:

Ah... what would I say mmm... the power which is given to the board, which at times just looks like ee... just rubber stamps, at times they can bypass us in employing workers in top management, we cannot have a say: Head office officials do the short listing, we were just invited to observe the interview process. When probed why this happens, further responded saying you are not part of those in the short listing process, anywhere that is their specialization they know better. (November 2011)

Participant 1 voiced the same sentiment:

...we are not involved as far as staff recruitment is concerned we are just informed (November 2011)

According to the findings in this study, School Board members are not empowered to appoint and promote teachers. Some respondents indicate the fact that School Board members do not have expertise. The majority of the participants stated that School Board members sometimes just look like “rubber stamps” when some of the decisions are being taken. The study also revealed that School Boards are mostly bypassed by Head office on staff appointments. They do the short listing and School Board members

are just invited to observe and even just being asked to sign on candidate forms. Board members are not involved in the interview processes.

Commenting on the lack of empowerment, most participants voiced similar concerns and they felt to be side-lined in the process. School Board members from sampled schools felt marginalised by the regional office regarding the selection and appointment of staff in schools. Findings also revealed that the parents from School Boards were uncertain about this role citing lack of expertise in educational matters as a hindrance to them.

These results indicated that the Education Act (2001, NO.16) is not fully implemented in these sampled schools. The findings revealed that School Board members are mere observers when interviews are done in the recruiting of teachers. In this study, more participants argued that the selection and appointment of teachers cannot be single-handedly done by officials from the Ministry of education. They felt that in order to execute their mandated role of teacher recruitment, the School Board members should play a leading role. The roles of appointing teachers raise doubts in sampled schools. The case study further revealed that the government's dream of decentralisation, shared responsibility and democratic decision-making through the establishment of School Boards is not being realised. Moreover, from the copies of minutes given to the researcher, none of them reflected an incident of staff recruitment.

The findings of this study contradicted the mandate of recruitment of staff School Boards. Guidelines for the Namibian School Board members (MBESC, 2004) emphasise a major role that School Boards have to play in ensuring that recruitment and promotion of staff members are done in an open and fair manner.

On the contrary, this does not happen at the schools in question. The results further suggested that there are very few outcomes regarding the implementation of the Education Act by School Board members in selected schools, especially with regard to the teacher recruitment processes. This could be cited as a useful indicator that the appointment of teachers is not executed as intended. The participants were unable to relate accountability to their powers; most School Board members felt that they do not have power and therefore accountability. They concluded that, unfortunately, their responsibility is limited to that of observers. In relation to staff appointment, the World Bank Report of (2007) advises that School Boards in the developing countries should focus on involving communities and parents in the schools' decision-making process rather than putting them entirely in control.

4.5 The roles of the School Boards

4.5.1 The most important functions of the School Boards

Table 6: What are the most important functions of the School Board members?

	Frequency	Percent
-To manage school development fund	5	62.5
-To recommend appointment of teachers and cleaners	1	12.5
-Encourage teachers to give quality education to learners	1	12.5
-Encourage learners to work hard by organizing year-end functions where learners receive prizes for hard work	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

With regard to the most important functions of the School Boards, the results in Table 6 show that as many as 5 participants believe and suggest that the most important role of the School Board is to manage school development funds whereas only few (3) participants supported the other reason.

School Board members play important roles in effectively managing schools. Many School Board members in the study have shown that they do not understand their most important roles in school effectiveness. Many of them only see themselves as managers of school funds and they do not see themselves as motivators of both learners and teachers as partners in education. Participant 4 said:

The School Board is responsible to control all finances of the school. The finance committee is delegated to the responsibility of budgeting recommend the approval of purchasing school needs such as photocopy machine and books to the School Board (November 2011)

After examining minutes of all School Board meetings of School Board including the one dated 06-06-2011, it did not reveal any existence of the finance committee. The minutes dated 06-06-2011 showed an agenda item regarding a financial report which stated that "The financial report should be done every term ending for example, bank statement to be checked ".

Corroborating this viewpoint Participant 5 had this to say regarding control of school finances:

...school fund report needs to be done quarterly by the principal, but it is not done. How can we know whether there are funds or not? The School Management decides to purchase school materials without involving School Board members. We have records of tools used at school. We do not control the money we do not know anything ". (November 2011)

Participant 2 added:

aa... just as I have said, let the Board members play an active role, but it is like things can still go ahead as if there are no board members. Because of lack of respect from the high authority, they don't regard us as people with authority. (November 2011

Although financial management is one of the functions of the School Boards, a significant number of teachers interviewed were opposed to this function. Participant 6 asserted:

School Board members from rural communities lacked competence to handle financial matters; the School Board is not well trained that's why they seem not to know what is expected of them". ". Participant 4 added: "They only sign cheques, they do not work according to the budget, there is no financial committee, no auditing done. Finances are handled at an ad hoc basis. (November 2011)

Makori and Onderi (2012) support the above fact because they believe that some of the core functions of the School Boards are planning and development of physical facilities, and sourcing and management of school finances which includes receiving all fees, grants from public funds, donations and any other income sources of the school. Only a small percentage of School Board members saw themselves as motivators of teachers to deliver quality education to learners.

4.5.2. Does the involvement of School Boards in education contribute to the better performance by learners and quality education?

Table 7: A cross tabulation on whether or not the participants in the study agree to the fact that the School Boards involvement in education contributes to better performance and quality education and the reasons they gave to support their views

	Reasons given			Total
	Because they are assistants to teachers and help them on how to deliver quality education	They advise parents to check on their children's performance at school therefore learners' performance is checked	It can help learners to work hard	
Yes	4	3	1	8
Total	4	3	1	8

Table 7 reflect positive statements pertaining to the involvement of School Boards in education system. Data in this table show that all (8) the participants agreed that the

School Board's involvement in education can lead to better performance by learners and quality education. Half (4) of the participants regarded the School Board as a great motivator for teachers to deliver quality education to learners.

Only one participant affirmed that the School Board helps learners to work hard.

Participant 7 supported the above notion by stating:

Parents work hand in hand with teachers to see to it that learners learn.
(November2011)

The involvement of School Boards in the education system is important in the general improvement of learners' performance and also the deliverance of quality education to learners. Many School Board members understand that they are needed to ensure that learners perform well in school and that quality education is delivered to the learners. The majority of School Board members noted that they had a role to play in motivating teachers in the deliverance of quality education to the learners in schools. Participant 6 asserted:

In a meetings School Board members together with parents share ideas about how learner performance can improves and thereafter make decisions on discussed issues.
(November2011)

Participant 5 also added:

We normally discuss issues regarding the improvement of academic results, shortages of resources at school, behaviours of learners, teachers and parents, fundraising and teacher's staffing norms (November 2011)

There are benefits when a school works well together with the School Board members. Their involvement in education is important as it will help by organising school events like prize-giving ceremonies where learners will be given awards for working hard.

In support with the afore mentioned statement, Participant 8 had this to say:

In most cases, our parents are only involved in price giving ceremonies. (November 2011)

The involvement of the School Board in school management can play important roles especially in encouraging teachers to be committed to their work. The general quality of teaching/education is expected to improve when teachers are motivated supported by the School Boards.

4.5.3 Some functions of School Boards

Table 8: 4.5.3.1 Functions performed well by the School Board members according to the participants

	Frequency	Percent
-Recruitment of teachers has enabled our school to have more teachers and also school development.	2	25.0
-Disciplining of learners so that there is respect for everyone.	1	12.5
-Making sure that there is co-operation among teachers and learners and this has helped learners to get better results.	4	50.0
-Organizing school events like school tours.	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

According to the findings in Table 8, half (4) of the participants in the study indicated that making sure that there is co-operation among teachers and learners is one function the School Board performed well. Participant 3 asserted:

Parents participate through meetings called by School Boards. They discuss and share ideas. (November2011)

Only one participant believed that organising school events like school tours is one function the School Board performed well. Participant 6 had this to say:

The School Board is motivational to ensure quality education. And at times we organise tours so that our learners can see some of the natural phenomenon they learn at school. (November2011)

Table 8 indicates that roles that are well performed by School Boards under study seem to be limited. These findings give an impression that little is done. Therefore, the effectiveness of these School Boards in question is limited to those functions that are indicated in the table above.

Table 9:4.5.3.2 Functions the School Board has not performed well according to participants

	Frequency	Percent
-Teacher accommodation, there is no accommodation for teachers now.	2	25.0
-Meeting attendance was poor and a lot of matters Valid are not discussed on time.	4	50.0
-Discipline of learners is not functional.	1	12.5
-They do not take great care of school resources.	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

The results on functions the School Board has not performed well indicate that 4 of the participants pointed out the School Boards' meeting attendance were poor; many matters were not discussed on time. However, there are setbacks which affect Board members to hold meetings effectively and these are:

Participant 8 stated:

Some Board members come very late for meetings yet some don't even show up.

Some ideas from Board members especially parents are looked down upon by teachers citing they don't know what they are doing. Thus parents feel insecure and left out in complimentary decision making. Lack of transport for parent governors due to poverty, not fully knowing what to do, for instance, their roles and wanting to be paid for every board meeting sittings. (November 2011)

This was the function the School Board did not perform well. The results continue to show that one participant said that the School Board did not discipline learners and this is another function they did not perform well.

The functions which the School Board did not perform well are their weaknesses and/or failures in their operations. The meeting attendance of the School Board members was poor in the two selected schools as the results showed that this was the main function most school boards did not perform well. As a result, many issues or problems were not discussed and not solved on time. Participant 2 had this to say:

Ah...let me say our meeting attendance was poor. That means that a lot of issues that were supposed to be discussed had been delayed or not discussed at all. These are: indiscipline among learners, absenteeism among teachers, shortage of resources and we normally discuss issues regarding the improvement of academic results, shortages of resources at school, behaviour of learners, teachers and parents, fundraising and teacher's staffing norms

Although meetings are scheduled and communicated to all Board members, there are challenges with regard to attendance of meetings and lack of understanding of educational related issues. (November 2011)

Participant 1 concurred with the first one:

There are many problems, for instance, some board members stay very far from school. They have to walk 30-40km from home to school to attend meetings. It is very difficult for unemployed School Board members to attend meetings because they do not have money for transport. (November 2011)

The School Boards of the selected schools did not provide teachers with accommodation. This means that most teachers have problems attending to their classes on a regular basis as they do not have accommodation at school. Lack of accommodation in the school has adverse effects on the quality of education as teachers may end up coming to work late or even not coming at all in some cases. However, it was found that the School Board members performed well in encouraging co-operation between the teachers and learners as partners in education. This role of the School Board is not a crucial one.

According to Niitembu (2006), issues related to governance have been problematic especially in rural schools. There seems to be no problem with financial management as none of the participants voiced that issue out in the functions which were not performed well by the School Board members.

4.5.4. Table 10: Power relations between School Board members and the principal

	Frequency	Percent
- At our school everything is in order and we work together in unity	2	25.0
- We do not have any single problem	1	12.5
- The principal is not co-operative with us at all, he is always making excuses and sometimes he does not attend meetings	5	62.5
Total		
Missing System	0	0
Total	8	100.0

Pertaining to power relations between School Board members and the principal, Table 10 indicates that the majority (5 out of 8 participants) suggested that their principals are not co-operative with co-workers and at times they do not attend meetings and they make excuses for not attending. Participant 2 emphasised:

In general, the school principal is a Board member and his role is very crucial, because he needs to co-operate with the School Board. We (School Board) are there to help him with the smooth running of the School. We are an advisory body. So, if you find a principal who is not concerned, who is not co-operative you will find that your role as the chairperson is sort of blocked. He is the key person; he needs to open up to address school issues with the Board. He is an intercessor between the School and the School Board. But if he is not available, like in meetings, this link will be cut, and if it is cut, then we won't have access to enter the School premises for meetings or even getting a report on School expenditure which is assigned to him. We cannot do things without consulting the principal, since he is Board member we feel we are at the same level with him. He should not feel intimidated. I am just a co-worker, only that that other one is a chairperson. (November 2011)

Only one participant said that there are no problems regarding power relations between the school principal and the School Board.

The role of the school principal and the School Board members are both crucial and pivotal in the successful management of a school (Joubert, 2005). The principal is always responsible of professional management and administration and is democratically assisted by School Board members and teachers in the school management. Both the principal and the School Board members have complementary roles and should be in cooperative relationship (Joubert, 2005).

This contradicts with the results of the study as there are problems in schools regarding power and functions between the principal and the School Board members. Participant 8 remarked:

The principal hardly agrees with any new decisions made by the School Board. He hardly attends Board meetings.

She added: I remember one time, the principal was complaining that the...School Boards are given more power to mingle in school issues, that the School Board is given more authority than the principal. Sometimes the principal does not want aa...the chairperson to intervene in some issues for example, aa...appointing of teachers, something to do with School fund for instance, that the chairperson wanting to keep the school cheque book, wanting their thoughts to be endorsed even when they are contrary to policy and when rectified chairperson feels his decisions are undermined Because the School Board wants to know every cent of the School fund. It is like a fight for power or authority. (November 2011)

The principals have got problems in co-operating with the School Board members and they do not arrange meetings and most of them do not attend meetings organised by the School Boards. Thus there is no mutual co-operation between the School Boards and the principals. This paints a bad image of the principals because they lack co-operation in the school management when they are the ones who are supposed to encourage it. However, there are only few participants in the study who suggested that there are no problems at their schools regarding power relations and functions between the School Boards and principals. The poor relationships between principals and School Boards can lead to the removal of principals from the schools. The problems with these relationships can be attributed to the old centralised view when principals believed that schools were theirs and as such they could manage them without School Boards (Niitembu, 2006).

To add on that, tensions and conflicts between the principal and Board members occur when responsibilities and roles are either not clearly defined or overlapping or when certain groups have gone beyond their mandates (Makori & Onderi, 2012). Tensions and conflicts undermine School Board members and the principals' effectiveness.

4.5.5 Changes brought by the education act, No.16 of 2001

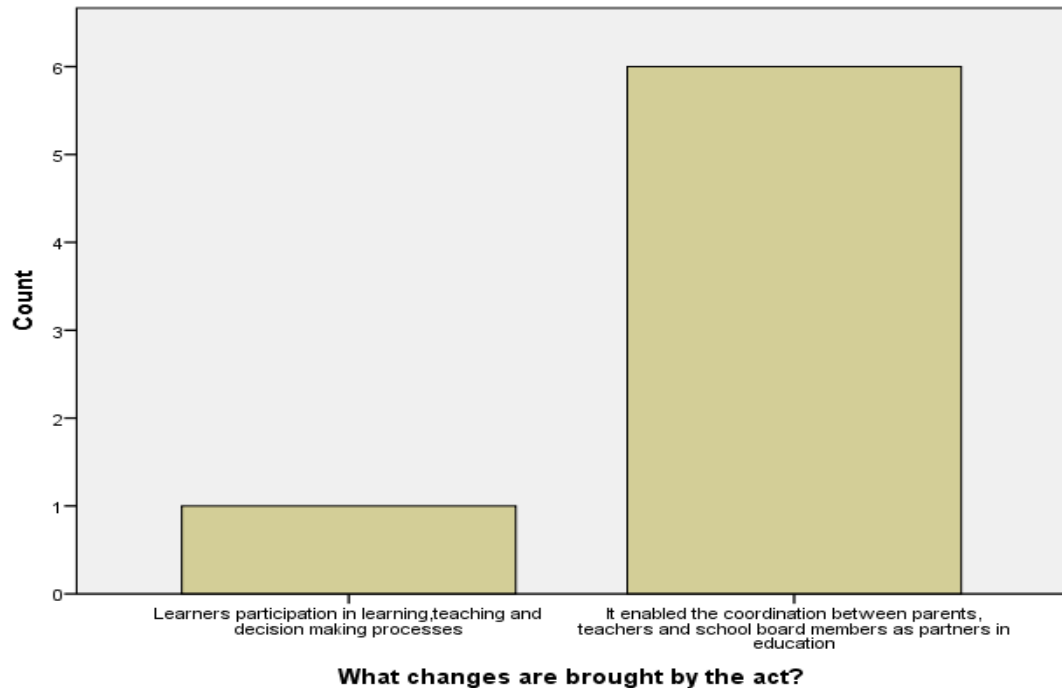


Figure 3: Changes brought by the Act according to participants' views

The data in Figure3 show that more respondents (7 out of 8 participants) agreed that the Act has enabled a co-ordination between parents, teachers and School Boards as partners in education.

To underpin the aforementioned statement, Participant 2 had this to say:

The Education Act and policies brought changes such as learners' participation in learning and teaching activities, active involvement of parents in school governance.(November 2011)

However, one participant suggested that the Act has enabled learners to participate in learning, teaching and decision-making processes in schools.

The Education Act Number 16 of 2001 makes provision for accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service through the establishment of School Boards in schools. It is therefore important to analyse the findings in the study regarding the changes brought by the Act according to School Board members' views. Many participants in the study pointed out that the Act has brought changes in terms of the coordination between parents, learners and teachers as partners in education.

Participants see this as being very crucial because if these three groups of people do not coordinate in education, there will be no understanding and the teacher-learner relationship will be disturbed and teachers will not deliver education well. This Act has also allowed learners to be so independent in classes especially in teaching, learning and decision-making processes of the schools.

4.5.6. Challenges experienced when implementing the Act

Table 11: Challenges faced when implementing the Act

	Frequency	Percent
-Misunderstanding of learners and some parents regarding school development funds	1	12.5
-Less power is just given to school board members and it looks like they are just rubber stamps because they are bypassed or not allowed to take decisions.	4	50.0
-No computers to help us implement the policy and to help learners learn well	1	12.5
-No challenges at all	1	12.5
Total	7	87.5
Missing System	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

The data in Table 11 reveal that half (4 out of 8) of the participants suggested the main challenge experienced in implementing the Act is that less power is given to the School Board members. It was found that School Board members were there just to endorse the decisions made by the school management.

One participant in the study suggested that there were no challenges at all in implementing the Act.

Many participants in the study concluded that there was a problem in schools regarding the implementation of the Act. Participant 1 had this to say:

The community is not educated, therefore do not understand their roles thoroughly and even the concept of democracy. Even our Board members do not understand the Act, they need to be trained or taught. Also, there is a shortage of things that are needed like, school laboratory, library, photocopier machine. We struggle with copies, everything has to be written on the chalkboard, be it a test or an activity. The school does not have a fence, so the control of learners is a problem; they hide in the nearby bush. (November 2011)

School Board members were not accorded the powers they deserve according to the provisions of the Act.

Teachers and principals wielded more powers in the school management system. This scenario reduced School Board members' decision-making and they see themselves as rubber stamps. Participant 8 emphasised:

With regard to participation some Board members were excluded because they were unable to voice out their views. These meetings were not successfully done. For instance, In Board meetings, parents were overruled by teachers' ideas. Teachers dominated the discussions. When parents aired their views in meetings, teachers rejected most of their contributions. (November 2011)

It becomes difficult to implement the Act when there is no coordination in the school management members because there no is proper power distribution among the members.

All the sentiments raised by participants gave an impression indicating that though the democratisation through the decentralisation process of School Board is in place, School Board members of the sampled schools felt disempowered by the regional office regarding the selection and appointment of staff in schools.

Participant 1 said:

Regional office seem a hindrance to policy implementation.-they do not empower us, we feel left out when it comes to staff recruitment. (November 2011)

Another reason given by participants was that they were left out due to the fact that no interviews were conducted. This action of interfering into the affairs of School Boards is contrary to the Education Act (No.16 2001). Although teacher appointment and promotions are some of the roles and functions of School Board members (Education Act No. 16 of 2001), on the contrary, this Education Act is not implemented accordingly by principals. Participant 8 confirmed:

Learners do not understand the purpose of the School Board. I cannot inform them about the importance of School Board because issues discussed are confidential. We learners have powers to recommend new recruitments for staff. In reality School Board only sign at application forms of teachers to be recruited, no interviews are done. (November 2011)

This means that School Board members were deprived of their roles and responsibilities with regard to selection and recruitment of educators. Also on the side of parent component, it seems there is an uncertainty of whether they should appoint teachers or they should relinquish powers to the professional staff (educators).

Participant 4 emphasised

I also want to emphasize the point that our School is in rural and should fully update the community somehow about the importance of the school. I feel also that our school is not working too much especially teaching the community about the importance of their roles and their involvement in school matters. They still feel that teachers should do everything in terms of learners' achievements or quality education. (November 2011)

Amukugo (1993) concurs with the above participant affirming that actions and regulations which were based on discrimination during apartheid era, made parents and other community members believe that their children's education was a responsibility of only principals and teachers.

According to the policy, there is no clear relationship between the policy and how it is practised. There is need to harmonise the policy and its practice. Therefore, there it is necessary to re-examine the relationship between policy and its practice.

4.6 Challenges faced by School Board members in school governance

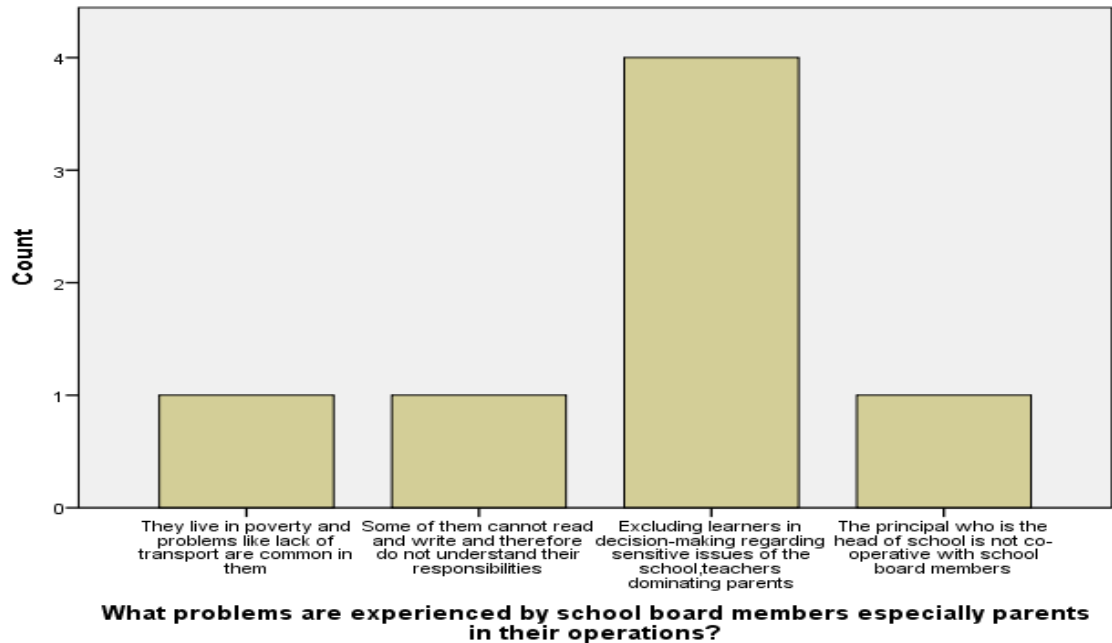


Figure 4: *Challenges faced by school board members in schools as mentioned by participants*

The data in Figure 4 shows that 4 out of 8 participants in the study pointed out the major challenge faced by the School Boards.

Participant 4 stated:

Learners are normally excluded when it comes to sensitive issues of the school, Staff recommendations, appointments and disciplinary matters are not well attended by student representative body, if they do, then they play a passive role on fear of victimization. (November 2011)

For example, with regard to the appointment of new staff members, only one participant suggested that the school principal was not co-operative in most cases and the rest of the participants pointed out the other challenges.

As the results have been presented, more participants felt deeply that the learners in the School Boards were not involved in some decisions taken by the school management.

This is really a problem because even the parents in the school management are

Dominated by the teachers in the School Board. Participant 8 asserted:

Some ideas from Board members especially parents are looked down upon by teachers citing they don't know what they are doing. Therefore parents feel insecure and left out in complimentary decision making.

Lack of transport due to poverty.

Not fully knowing what to do, for instance, their roles. Wanting to be paid for every board meeting sittings. (November 2011)

Participant 5 emphasised:

...the chairperson wanting to keep the school cheque book, also wanting their thoughts to be endorsed even when they are contrary to policy and when rectified chairperson feels his decisions are undermined. (November 2011)

This creates problems especially in the appointment of new staff members. Learners and parents in the School Boards may feel that the appointment of new staff members was done unfairly if they were not involved in the selection and recruitment process from the beginning.

Some meetings were well attended. We discussed about the infrastructure of the school, discipline and learning. However, with regard to participation some Board members were excluded because they were unable to voice out their views. (November 2011)

Participant 4 had this to say:

These meetings were not successfully done. For instance, In Board meetings, parents were overruled by teachers' ideas. Teachers dominated the discussions .When parents aired their views in meetings; teachers rejected most of their contributions. (November 2011)

When decisions are not taken collectively, there can be tensions in schools.

The results of the study show that age exclusion dominated school governance in both schools proving that there was no sign of democratic participation. According to Mabovula (2009), inclusion carries paramount importance in school governance. Contrary to this, it was evident in this study that democratic participation was lacking and there was no sign of it at all in all the selected schools because the exclusion of some members dominated the school governances under study.

4.6.2 Number of meetings held every year

Table 12: School Board meetings

	Frequency	Percent
-Three times per year	4	50.0
-Four meetings	3	37.5
-More than eight meetings	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Results in Table 2:4.3.2 show that half (4) of the participants agreed to the fact that the School Board holds three meetings in a year. Participant 4 had this to say:

We hold our School Board meetings once per term where we discuss issues which include appointment of teachers, learners' results, how to handle problems like School Development Fund are taken into account and utilized or implemented. (November 2011)

Participant 5 had this to say:

We normally discuss issues regarding the improvement of academic results, shortages of resources at school, behaviours of learners, teachers and parents, fundraising and teacher's staffing norms. (November 2011)

Only one of the participants pointed out that the School Board has more than eight meetings in a year.

Participant 4 had this to say:

So far we held eight meetings where we discussed about teachers who are less effective in their teaching; teachers and learners with bad behaviours requisition of additional classes from the Ministry of Education.
(November 2011)

School meetings are important and they help in the effective management of schools and should be held at least once a term. These meetings should be well organised in ways that will allow open discussions and free decision-making. This means there should be at least three meetings in a year. When more meetings are arranged for schools, there are more chances that more matters that affect the schools will be discussed. According to MBESC (2004), members attending a meeting should feel free to express their opinions openly and without fear of criticism or intimidation. The members should not remain silent when they have a concern in that meeting. If they remain silent, they are not fulfilling their duty of representing others.

In support of the aforementioned statement, the researcher was privileged to peruse some of minutes as evidence.

There seemed to be no problems with the number of meetings organised as the School Boards in both schools conducted a number of meetings. They held three or more meetings in one year.

4.6.3. Training of School Board members

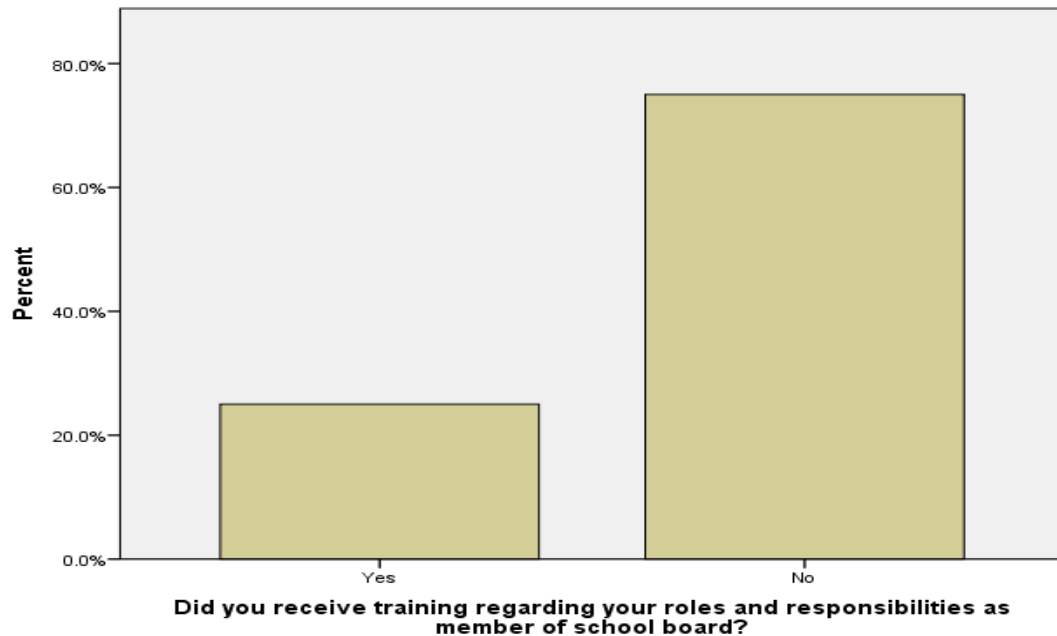


Figure 5: Training for School Board members

As far as training was concerned, data in Figure 5 show that a large number (6 out of 8) of the School Board members did not receive any training about their roles and responsibilities in the management of schools.

Participant 5 said:

School Boards can contribute to better performance of learners and quality education only if all stakeholders are fully involved and trained time to time, this could work and bring better changes. For example, there are misunderstandings to parents when it comes to School Development Fund and the low level of understanding when it comes to education matters. They seem not fully knowing what to do, for instance, their roles. There is a delayed training of Board operation in terms of service in areas such as

chairing board meetings, staff appointments, financial issues and the like. There is no improvement of Board members it is trial and error. (November 2011)

Participant 6 remarked:

No! no! since I started working as a board member. I was not trained. We just consulted outgoing board members who briefed us on what they were doing. This training will help us know our roles very well and will also weaknesses and where we are doing well. It will help me to change and do the right thing. (November 2011)

Another participant (2) also supported saying:

I did not receive any training I am even wondering where we are supposed to report to. Training is important which induction is. Any job needs orientation, because that is where you are going to be told your mandate. You will be effective with your assignments as a trained person, because we come from different institutions and backgrounds (November 2011)

Only 20% of the participants in this study received training about their roles and responsibilities in school management. Participant 1 added:

I was trained by officials from Regional office. The training was good because it gave me a lot concerning matters regarding the school affairs. (November 2011)

4.6.4 Who conducted the training of School Board members?

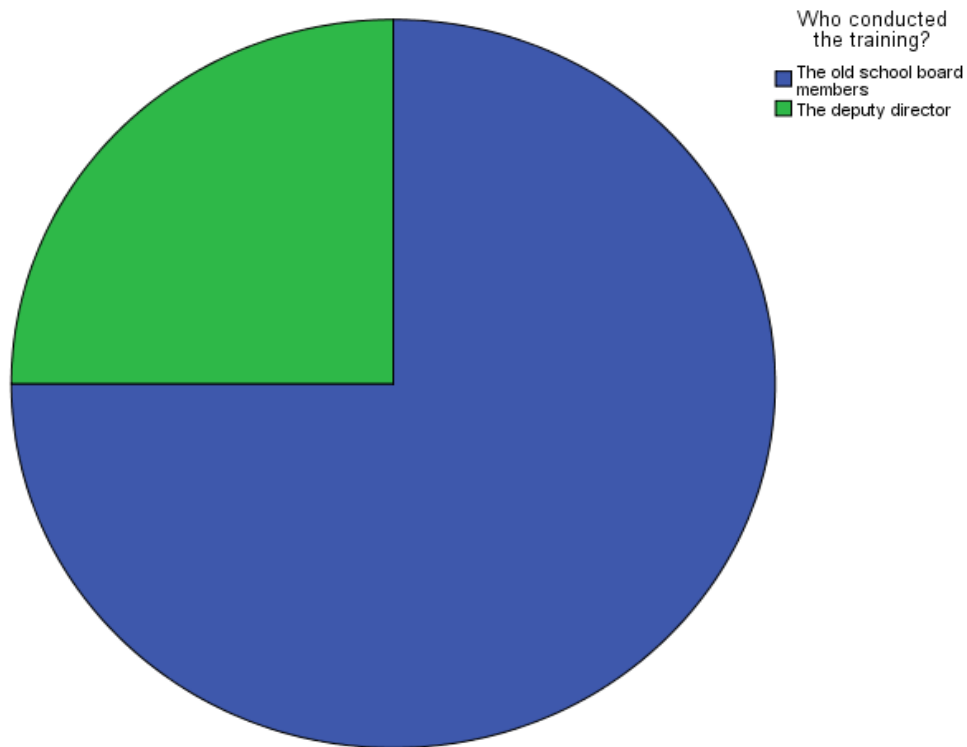


Figure 6: People who conducted the training of School Board members

The data in Figure 6 show that three out of the four participants who received training regarding their roles and responsibilities were trained by the old School Board members.

Participant 6 commented:

No! No! Since I started working as a board member. I was not trained. We just consulted outgoing board members who briefed us on what they were doing. (November 2011).

The other 1 Board member was trained by the old Deputy Director. Participant 8 explained that:

Yes, the Deputy Director conducted it. It was about roles and responsibilities of the School Board. The training has not improved the performance of School Board members very much (not really). (November 2011)

According to the findings, many participants in the study were not trained about their roles and responsibilities of the management of schools. Even the few who received training about their roles were not trained by the right people; this affects them when it comes to their tasks. Many participants in the study showed that they were not professionally trained about their roles and responsibilities as assistants in the school management.

According to researchers' observation, none of the Board meeting minutes showed any reflection about Board members' training; many of them were just briefed by the outgoing or old School Board members about what they should do as School Board members. This means most of them do not know their roles and responsibilities in schools and they are likely not to be functional in their work.

This could also be the reason why most of them did not seem to know their roles and responsibilities in the study. When a school is led by School Board members who are not trained well about their duties, there is going to be a lot of problems at that school.

This is because many of their important functions will not be carried out properly or may not be carried out at all because they were not trained well in their roles and responsibilities. School Board members need training to gain skills about their roles and responsibilities. According to Van Wyk (1973), the shift to decentralised school governance and management requires School Board members to develop a wide range of skills and capacity to deal with the complex issues and tasks they are expected to fulfil. They all need to undergo training on the whole content of their work even in their own language

This training is needed to develop skills which are needed to deal with complete issues and tasks (Van Wyk, 1973). According to Joubert (2005), the key characteristics and skills given to the School Board members are required for effective participation and exercising the powers and functions given to them. Such skills are needed in debate, argument, compromise, decision-making and accountability. Finally, such skills are not automatically acquired when parents are elected to serve in the School Board, but can only be acquired through training (Joubert, 2005). To add on that, lack of in-service training as reflected in the above graph has also been a setback to adult educators' response to new challenges.

4.7. Ways to mitigate the challenges faced by the School Board members in their operations

The study solicited views and additional comments from School Board members on how the situation regarding their roles could be improved. In this study, Participant 1 suggested important ways in which the challenges faced by School Boards could be mitigated. This participant asserted that:

Collective decision making is important as well as Ministerial policies to be fully implemented. The Ministry of Education should have a department dealing with School Board matters. Also, all stakeholders should be fully involved and be trained from time to time. Learners should be advised about the importance of education and life in general. These could yield better results (Participant 1, November, 2011).

Other suggestions to mitigate the challenges faced by School Boards were mentioned by Participant 2 who said:

Effective implementation of Ministerial policies spearheaded by the principal or management is a must on each school. The rights of all stakeholders should be protected. Board members play an active role and they should be respected by the highest authority. They should also be fully involved in the process of recruitment of staff. The School Board team needs to be trained so that certain problems like lacking knowledge of roles and responsibility in school can be avoided. Training will also enable Board members to know the existing policies in the Education Ministry and they will also know how to implement new policies through new skills they will get from the training. (November, 2011).

Similarly, Participant 1 emphasised:

More efforts are needed to have effective teaching and learning. These are resource acquisition such as machinery, stationary, textbooks, human resource, and structure maintenance. (November, 2011).

Participant 4 said:

More training, induction, workshops are needed for one to be properly equipped with tasks one is given. Because, if you attend a workshop, you are like energized. (November, 2011).

School Boards from the parent component are voiceless in most Board meetings; they need to exercise their democratic right. The educator component should allow parents to participate fully in every discussion. Likewise, learners should also be allowed to be involved in collective discussions otherwise they will be regarded as voiceless. The Education Act should be explained to all Board members because only a few people, if any, are aware of it.

4.8 Limitations of the study

First, the study was conducted in two selected schools in the Caprivi region; therefore the results would be limited to these schools. Second, the lack of detailed research on School Board matters in Namibia in general and in Caprivi region in particular which might have limited the review of local literature. Third, the researcher was a full-time

worker; it was not feasible to have a broader sample. Moreover, the participants were also busy with their own work such that at times it was difficult for them to honour the set appointments. Furthermore, people were cautious when a tape recorder was used, especially if the shared information portrayed bad images about their schools. There could be a possibility of bias in some responses.

However, in order to minimise these limitations, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to participants before the actual interviews were carried out. Finally, the findings may contribute to the existing literature on the roles and responsibilities of the School Boards in Namibia in general and Caprivi region in particular.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented descriptive data obtained from respondents during interviews which examined their views, experiences and feelings regarding their roles and their response to challenges in school governance. Document analysis of relevant policies and minutes of School Board meetings enriched the data obtained from School Board members through an interview guide with open-ended questions. The next chapter presents the discussion and implications of the research results.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings drawn from the participants' views and a discussion on each of the important themes of the study was provided. The researcher discussed the data through the lens of related literature in order to help provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the School Board members' roles and responsibilities.

This chapter provides an overview of the main findings drawn from the themes which were discussed in the previous chapter. It will also provide several recommendations on how to help School Board members to work effectively in order to have a democratic education system in the country. Furthermore, the researcher highlights the areas that still need a further research to be done on them.

5.2 Summary of the main findings

This research has discovered important issues that weakened the operations of School Boards at those selected schools. Some of the discoveries found in the research are stipulated hereunder.

Firstly, by looking closely at the data collected, it is evident that most School Board members were not aware of their main roles as assistants in the school management. This is because most of them only mentioned one role which they all considered to be crucial. They said their most important role in schools was the management of school funds.

Secondly, the data collected also showed that parents in the School Boards did not participate democratically in decision-making processes in the selected schools. As a result, there was lack of co-operation between School Board members and school management often leading to serious disagreements on some of the decisions taken by school management. The major problem is that parents and learners were not aware of some of the decisions taken by school management. Parent and learner representatives serving on boards under study may have participated while their voices were seldom heard. They often participate without having the opportunity to influence decisions meaning that they are actually excluded from the process. It emerged that the most significant source of conflict between parent governors and school management roles is lack of understanding of their roles.

Thirdly, the data collected also showed that learners in the School Board were not involved in resolving sensitive issues relating to teachers' behaviour. Learners did also not participate in many issues, for example, setting of rules in schools.

Fourthly, School Board members lack of participation in policy formulation and recruitment of staff in the two selected schools. The data collected made it evident that most School Board members, particularly parents and learners, are not involved in the recruitment of staff members. This shows that the parent component of the School Board is voiceless and dominated by the teacher component.

Moreover, the data collected also showed that there was no mutual co-operation between the principal (head of the school) and the School Board members especially when it comes to the functions of the Board members. The data showed that the principals were frequently absent from Board meetings when they were the ones supposed to lead these meetings. Principals also did not encourage School Board members to arrange meetings and this left many school matters unresolved.

However, the study also revealed that a number of meetings were organised in these schools. The only problem is that principals were not coordinating with School Boards and as a result, they did not attend these meetings. Therefore it is right to say that these meetings were not fruitful.

The research also revealed that most participants in the study agreed on a number of facts such as the need for sufficient training. The majority of the participants in this study agreed that board members of the selected schools were not provided with sufficient training about their roles and responsibilities which they are supposed to carry out following their appointment as assistants to the school management.

The study also found out that many School Board members lived in poverty and at times most of them did not attend meetings. Their absence from meetings made it difficult for other members to deliberate on some issues affecting the running of the school. This all happened because they could not afford transport to the schools. This is also supported by the fact that most of them live very far from schools and therefore they have to struggle to get transport to the schools.

Another key finding was that it is also evident from the data that the School Board members were aware of the fact that there was no collective decision-making among all the stakeholders. The School Board members viewed this as one of the major challenges they faced in their operations.

The last finding was that, despite the fact that the Education Act has mandated board members to be involved in school governance, there was a need to look at how this

regulation informed the practice. In terms of practice many board members especially parent governors lacked sufficient skills to democratically engage in school governance.

The participants in the study suggested that collective decision-making would enable them to mitigate these challenges in the School Boards' operations. Many participants in the study also suggested that principals should lead in the effective implementation of Ministerial policies in schools.

5.3 Recommendations

There are four areas that arise from this research. The recommendations below are based on the findings of the study. Firstly, the Ministry of Education needs to provide School Board members, especially parents, with effective and sufficient training that will empower them to carry out their legal responsibilities effectively. Training should be done in the participants' home language although the policy on which the training will be made should be in English. The training will be important for the effectiveness of the School Board members. The researcher suggests this because by looking at the findings presented, board governors have not been exposed to adequate managerial training and that training of new board members is brief and uneven. The researcher strongly recommends that for board members to be effective they have to be screened, trained and acquainted with school policies.

Secondly, there should be a strong partnership between parents, teachers, and learners because these are partners in education.

There has to be a very strong interconnectedness, interdependence and respect among these partners. The researcher also recommends that the School stakeholders should devise means of listening to one another. Working together will help these partners to achieve their goals. The researcher suggests deliberative democratic school governance as a strategy for improving the democratic participation of all stakeholders in school governance. The researcher suggests this because by looking at the findings presented, there was little evidence of democratic participation in the structure of school governance. There was also lack of communication among school governance members especially between the principals and Board members. It is also evident that most school governors lacked quality management capabilities. Therefore training is a key to successful school governance.

Thirdly, parents in the School Board also need to strive towards upgrading their education levels as a way of mitigating/overcoming the individual challenges they face especially in understanding their roles and responsibilities. School governors with low level of education are not only unqualified but also ignorant and limited in knowledge on professional matters related to education or school governance. Those governors lack commitment and dedication and the result is weak management of schools.

Lastly, principals, teachers, parents and learners in the School Board must be involved in policy formulation and selection and appointment of staff members for transparency as articulated in the Education Act. Every school governance structure should involve parents and should encourage and motivate their involvement.

5.4. Suggestion for further research

The researcher has identified the following areas for potential further research.

5.4.1 Stakeholders' perceptions of School Boards involvement in school governance which includes inspectors of Education as this research excluded them.

5.4.2 The researcher investigated how Board members of two selected schools view their roles and challenges. A similar case study or a large scale national survey representative of all state combined schools should be carried out.

5.4.3 The training of school governors is inadequate and has been suggested in the research. It is important that future research examines the methodologies, the content and their effectiveness to education institutions.

5.4.4 The graphical representation of the two Theories of Democratic Education and Participative has not been developed in this study. However, the researcher believes that once developed, can be a contribution to new knowledge.

5.5. Conclusion

This qualitative case study sought to find out whether School Board members in the two selected state schools were aware of their roles and responsibilities and how they responded to challenges they faced in their operations. The findings of this study indicate that there are many factors that interfere with the School Board members' ability to know and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively in schools.

These factors include lack of sufficient and effective training for School Board members. Factors such as lack of coordination from teachers and principals made School Board members not to work effectively in schools because in many cases they were not involved in decision-making. It is therefore evident that most School Board members, particularly parents and learners, are not involved in the recruitment of staff members. This shows that the parent and learner component of the School Board is voiceless and dominated by the teacher component.

This study provides some explanation regarding the reasons why School Boards are not effective in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in the education system. This can provide a platform for finding ways to make the School Boards effective in the education system

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ANNEXURE A

Interview Schedule for members of School Boards; such as Teachers, parents and learners.

Section A: Personal Information

In this section, I would like to know a little about you to evaluate different opinions.

1. In which educational circuit do you fall?

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2. What is your highest qualification?

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3. Age

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4. Gender

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5. Years of Experience

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6. What is the level of your education?

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7. In which areas is your school situated? (rural/semi-urban/urban)

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Section B: Operations of School Boards

1. Does the community in which the school is established participate in school activities? Please explain.

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2. In which ways does the community use to participate in decision making process of the school?

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3. What are perceptions of parents, teachers and learners about the School Board at your school? Explain in few words.

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4. How were you elected or recruited to become a member of the School Board?
Explain in few words.

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5. What is the importance of a School Board in your community? Explain in your
own words.

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6. Do formerly colonized communities find School Boards more useful? Give
reasons for your answer.

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7. What are the most important functions of School Board members? Why are they important?

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8. What have you accomplished in each function?

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9. Which functions do you feel that the School Board has performed well? In which ways has it done well?

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10. Which functions do you feel that the School Board has not performed well? Why has it not performed well?

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Section C: School Boards and their Incorporation in Education System

1. Can the operations of School Board contribute to a conducive learning environment? Give reasons for your answer.

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2. Does your school teach democracy? What aspects of democracy does it teach?

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Section D: School Board and Learning.

1. How do learners learn about the operations of School Boards? List the methods you think can be used by learners.

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2. If learners were to be taught about the operations of School Boards, what exactly should they be taught? What subject contents should be covered? List the contents which should be taught.

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3. Compare how learners express themselves at school and how they do likewise at home.

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4. Do you think the operations of School Boards can influence learning capability of learners? Give reasons for your answer.

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5. Do School Boards have an impact on your school environment, like maintaining discipline? Please explain.

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6. What problems do School Boards members especially parents experience in their operations?

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Section E: Teachers and Democracy in School.

1. Do you have any idea what democracy means, especially at school level? Give examples.

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2. Democracy for learners seems to be a direct threat to teachers. What should schools do to ensure its continuity?

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3. Some people say rightly or wrongly that we don't need to teach democratic principles in schools because it is one of the causes of indiscipline in schools. What are your comments on this?

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- 4. Some learners are not interested in learning democratic principles these days because they feel they are only relevant to politicians? What should be done to stimulate their interest?

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- 5. How much learner centred approach do you use in your teaching? Is it a good method of teaching? Give reasons for your answer.

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Section F: Act and Policy Implementation.

- 1. According to the Namibian Act, No.16 of 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001) School Board operate in a democratic way. Does the School Board agree with the concept of democracy? Explain how you come to decisions and how you exercise your accountability?

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3. What changes has this Act brought?

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4. What challenges have you experienced when implementing the policy?

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5. What changes/improvements would you like to make on the Act?

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6. Name any other policy that the School Board have formulated at the School level so far?

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7. What changes has the School Board brought at the school? (Please cite examples).

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8. What challenges/problems are encountered by the Board in trying to manage change at school?

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9. Explain whether there have been any problem regarding the power and functions between the School Board and the principal?

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10. How many meetings of School Boards were held this year? What issues are discussed in these meetings? (Please explain).

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11. How do you maintain the relationship between stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, learners, other staff at school, the local community and education authorities? In terms of effective communication, fund raising, and education control over funds generated by the school?

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12. Did you receive any training regarding your roles and responsibilities as member of the School Board? Who conducted it? What was the training all about? Has the training improved the performance of the School Board? (Please explain).

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13. What are the major sources of funding for your school? How much does each learner pay for school fees? What criteria did the School Board use to come to this figure? What do you do to those learners who are unable to pay School fees?

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14. What is your opinion about learner-centred Education?

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15. Which problems has appeared in terms of implementation of the curriculum, for example, learner-cantered education in order to address the concept of democracy? How can these problems be resolved?

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16. Do you think the involvement of School Boards in education can contribute to better performance by learners and quality education? Give reasons for your answer.

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ANEXURE B

University of Namibia

Private Bag 13301

Windhoek

14 November 2011

The Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Education

Windhoek

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ACCESS THE CAPRIVI REGION TO CONDUCT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, OF LISELO AND KATIMA COMBINED SCHOOLS.

I am a permanent employee in the Ministry of Education under the Directorate of Adult Education, sub- division for Material Development. I am currently pursuing a Master of Education degree (MED) specializing in Educational Management.

This study is based on views of School Board members regarding their roles and challenges in the management of schools which is a case study of two combined schools in the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia. The study is of significant importance as the findings may inform the Ministry of Education on the effectiveness of the implementation of the provision of the Education Act (no. 16 of 2001). It will also expose challenges School Board members are facing in executing their roles and responsibilities in schools and how those challenges could be mitigated. The study may also contribute to the existing literature on the roles and responsibilities of School Boards in Namibia.

The study is scheduled to start at the end of November 2011. Interviews will be administered at conveniently suitable times that will not disrupt official duties. Data collected will not be used for any other purpose except for research.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Faithfully



Mrs N. R. Khama

Education Officer

ANNEXURE C

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Private Bag 13301, 340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pionierspark, Windhoek, Namibia



18 November 2011

To Whom it may Concern

This is to certify that the bearer of this note Ms. Njahi Rejoice Khama is enrolled at the University of Namibia for a Masters Degree programme. As part of her programme she is expected to conduct research in schools.

She is conducting research on the roles and challenges of School Boards. Her topic is: **'Views of School Board Members regarding their roles and challenges in the management of schools: A case study of Katima and Liselo Combined Schools in the Caprivi Educational Region of Namibia.'**

You are kindly requested to accord her opportunity to visit Liselo and Katima Combined Schools in the Caprivi Region.

Yours faithfully

Dr. J.M. Lilemba

Lecturer : Department of Educational Foundations and Management

ANNEXURE D



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tel: 264 61 2933200 /
Fax: 264 61 2933922
E-mail: mshimho@mec.gov.na
Enquiries: MN Shimpileni

Private Bag 13186
 Windhoek
 NAMIBIA
 22 November 2011

File: 11/1/1

Mrs. N. R. Khama
 P. O. Box 3943
 PIONIERSPARK
 WINDHOEK

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT SOME SCHOOLS
 IN CAPRIVI REGION**

Your letter dated 14 November 2011, seeking permission to conduct a research at some schools in Caprivi Region, has reference.

Kindly be informed that the Ministry does not have any objection, in principle, to your request to conduct a research at the schools concerned.

Nevertheless you are advised to contact the Regional Council Office, Directorate of Education, for authorization and permission to go into the schools.

Should you be permitted, kindly take note that your research activities should not interfere with the normal school programmes. Participation in the interviews should be on a voluntary basis.

By copy of this letter the Regional Director is made aware of your request.

Yours faithfully

A. Ilukena (Acting PS)

A. Ilukena
 PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc: Director: Caprivi Education Directorate

