



CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL BOARDS IN EXECUTING THEIR
ROLES: A CASE STUDY OF FOUR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE
OMUSATI REGION IN NAMIBIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles in the rural primary schools of the Omusati Region. The Namibian Education Act, promulgated in 2001, was committed in ensuring democracy through active involvement of all stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents, other stakeholders and learners in secondary schools) in the decision-making processes in schools through school board members. However, the evolution of school governance has gone through many challenges in its effort to create democratic and equitable education in Namibia.

A qualitative case study design was used for this study. The population comprised of school board members of four rural primary schools in Okahao Circuit of the Omusati Region. Stratified purposeful sampling was used to select the sample. Interview guides, observation sheets and document analysis were used as data collection instruments.

The findings revealed that school board members in rural primary schools in Okahao Circuit faced various challenges that inhibit execution of their roles. Such challenges included: inadequate capacity building for school board members, language barrier, poor educational background and lack of understanding. These facts made it difficult for parent members to govern schools. The study further revealed that lack of support from parents and community, poor attendance and absenteeism of school board

members at board meetings and parents at parents meetings inhibited school board effectiveness.

Finally, the study made a number of recommendations regarding to the research findings for stakeholders in the Namibian education system to consider.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Declarations	xv
Dedication	xvi
CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Orientation to the Study.....	1
1.1.1 What is School Governance?.....	2
1.1.2 The Role of the School Boards.....	3
1.1.3 The Role of the Principal.....	3
1.1.4 The difference between the Roles of the School Board and the Roles of the School Principal.....	4
1.2 Statement of the Problem	13
1.3 Research Questions.....	14
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	14
1.5 Limitation of the Study.....	15
1.6 Definition of Terms	16
1.7 Chapter Summary	18
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	19
2.3 Literature Review.....	24
2.3.1. Legal Obligation of School Boards.....	24
2.3.2. Roles of the school boards	27
2.3.3. Democratic School Governance in Namibia.....	32
2.3.4. Barriers to School Boards' Performance.....	36
2.3.5. Challenges with Regard to Representation	40

2.4.	Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness.....	56
2.4.1.	Teamwork	56
2.4.2.	Good Relationship with the Principal	60
2.4.3.	Effective Meetings	62
2.4.4.	Training and Development.....	64
2.4.5.	The Profile of the School Board Members	68
2.5.	Chapter Summary.....	69
	CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	71
3.1	Introduction.....	71
3.2	Research Design.....	71
3.3	Population.....	73
3.4	Sampling.....	73
3.5	Research Instruments	75
3.5.1	Observation.....	75
3.5.2	Interviews	77
3.5.3	Documents Analysis	79
3.6	Pilot Study	79
3.7	Data Collection Procedure.....	80
3.8	Data Analysis.....	82
3.9	Research Ethics.....	84
3.9.1	Informed Consent	84
3.9.2	Confidentiality and Anonymity	85
3.9.3	Trustworthiness and Credibility	85
3.9.4	Validity and Reliability	86

3.10	Chapter Summary	87
	CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION	88
4.1	Introduction	88
4.2	Profile of the Participants	88
4.3	The Roles of the School Board.....	90
4.3.1	Principals’ Perceptions on the Role of the School Board.....	90
4.3.1.1	Need for the School Board.....	90
4.3.1.2	Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members	91
4.3.1.3	Instilling Discipline among Teachers and Staff Members.....	92
4.3.1.4	Addressing Problems Affecting the School	93
4.3.1.5	Decision Making	94
4.3.1.6	Conducting Classroom Visits.....	96
4.3.1.7	Supporting the Principals and the Teachers	97
4.3.1.8	School Boards’ Greatest Strengths	100
4.3.2	Teachers’ Perceptions on the Roles of the School Board.....	101
4.3.2.1	Need for the School Board.....	101
4.3.2.2	Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members	102
4.3.2.3	Instilling Discipline among the Learners and Teachers.....	103
4.3.2.4	Conducting Classroom Visits.....	104
4.3.2.5	Addressing Problems Affecting the Schools.....	104
4.3.2.6	Decision Making	106

4.3.2.7	Supporting for the Principal and the Teachers	107
4.3.2.8	School Boards' Greatest Strength	109
4.3.3.2	Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members	111
4.3.3.3	Instilling Discipline among the Teachers and the Learners	112
4.3.3.4	Maintaining School Facilities	113
4.3.3.5	Supporting for the Principal and the Teachers	114
4.3.3.6	Addressing Problems affecting the School	115
4.3.3.7	Decision Making	116
4.3.3.8	Conducting Classroom Visits.....	117
4.3.3.9	School Boards' Greatest Strengths	118
4.3.4	Parent members' Perceptions on the Roles of the School Board	121
4.3.4.1	Need for the School Board.....	121
4.3.4.2	Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members	122
4.3.4.3	Instilling Discipline among the Learners and the Teachers	123
4.3.4.4	Maintaining School Facilities	124
4.3.4.5	Addressing Problems affecting the School	125
4.3.4.6	Decision Making	126
4.3.4.7	Exercising Control over School Finance.....	128
4.3.4.8	Supporting the Principals and the Teachers	129
4.3.4.9	School Boards Greatest strength	132

4.4	Barriers to School Board Effectiveness.....	133
4.4.1	Principals’ Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness.....	133
4.4.1.1	Language Barrier.....	134
4.4.1.2	Lack of Support and Cooperation from the Parents and the Community.....	136
4.4.1.3	Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding.....	137
4.4.1.4	Late Coming and Absenteeism	138
4.4.1.5	Lack of Training.....	140
4.4.2	Teachers’ Perception on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness	142
4.4.2.1	Language Barriers	142
4.4.2.2	Lack of Support and Cooperation from the Parents and the Community.....	144
4.4.2.3	Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding.....	144
4.4.2.4	Late Coming and Absenteeism	145
4.4.2.5	Lack of Training.....	146
4.4.2.6	Appointment of Unqualified Teachers on a Temporary Basis	148
4.4.3	Chairpersons’ Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness	149
4.4.3.1	Indiscipline among the Teachers and the Learners.....	149
4.4.3.2	Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding.....	150
4.4.3.3	Late coming and Absenteeism	151
4.4.4	Parent members’ Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness	152

4.4.4.1	Indiscipline among the Teachers and the Learners	152
4.4.4.2	Language Barrier	154
4.4.4.3	Lack of Support and Cooperation from Parents and Community	155
4.4.4.4	Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding	157
4.4.4.5	Late Coming and Absenteeism	158
4.4.4.6	Lack of Training	159
4.4.4.7	Controlling and Paying of the School Guard	160
4.4.4.8	Decision Making	162
4.5	Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness	163
4.5.1	Principals' Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness	163
4.5.1.1	Training of School Board Members	163
4.5.1.2	Training by the Principal	166
4.5.1.3	Incentives for Parent Members	167
4.5.1.4	Evaluation and Monitoring the Performance of the School Board Members	169
4.5.1.5	Access to the policies on the roles of the School Board to all Members	170
4.5.1.6	Application of Democratic School Governance	172
4.5.1.7	Commitment of the Teachers towards their Roles	173
4.5.1.8	Commitment of the Parent Members	174

4.5.2 Teachers’ Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness.....	175
4.5.2.1 Training of School Board Members.....	175
4.5.2.2 Incentives for Parents Members.....	177
4.5.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Performance of the School Board.	179
4.5.2.4 Access to the Policy on the Roles of the School Board by School Board Members.....	180
4.5.2.5 Application of Democratic School Governance	181
4.5.2.6 Commitment of Teachers towards their Work.....	182
4.5.2.7 Commitments of the Parents toward their Roles	183
4.5.2.8 Young School Board Members to be elected.....	184
4.5.3 Chairpersons’ Perceptions on Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness.....	184
4.5.3.1 Training of School Board Members.....	184
4.5.3.2 Training by the Principal.....	185
4.5.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Performances of the School Boards	186
4.5.3.4 Incentive for Parent Members	187
4.5.3.5 Access to the Policies on the Roles of the School Board.....	187
4.5.3.6 Application of Democratic School Governance	188
4.5.4 Parents Members’ Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness.....	188

4.5.4.1	Training Provision.....	188
4.5.4.2	Incentive for Parent Members.....	192
4.5.4.3	School Board Monitoring and Evaluation of School Board Members	193
4.5.4.4	Access to policies on the roles of the School Board.....	194
4.5.4.5	Commitment of Teachers towards their Roles.....	196
4.5.4.6	Democratic School Governance.....	197
4.6	Chapter Summary.....	197
	CHAPTER 5: DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION.....	199
5.1	Introduction.....	199
5.2	Need for the School Board.....	200
5.3	Roles of the School Board Members.....	201
5.3.1	Recommendation for the Appointment of Staff Members.....	201
5.3.2	Discussing Problems Affecting the School.....	204
5.3.3	Instilling Discipline among Learners and Teachers.....	205
5.3.4	Decision Making.....	206
5.3.5	Supporting the Teachers and the Principals in carrying out their Roles	209
5.3.6	Exercising Control over School Finance.....	212
5.3.7	Paying the Security Guards.....	214
5.3.8	School Board Greatest Strength.....	215
5.4	Challenges faced by School Board Members in executing their Roles	216
5.4.1	Literacy and Lack of Understanding of Educational Matters.....	216
5.4.2	Lack of Knowledge in the Recommendation for Appointment of Staff Members.....	219

5.4.3	Lack of School Board Training	221
5.4.4	Lack of Commitment from the School Board Members and Support from Community	223
5.4.5	Poor Attendance and Absenteeism	224
5.4.6	Lack of Discipline among the Learners and the teachers	225
5.5	Strategies to Improve School Board Effectiveness	227
5.5.1	School Board Incentives	227
5.5.3	Provision of Training	231
5.5.4	Democratic School Governance	232
5.6	Chapter Summary	234
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS..		236
6.1	Introduction	236
6.2	Summary of the Main Findings	236
6.2.1	Roles of the School Board Members	237
6.2.2	Challenges faced by School Board Members	241
6.2.3	Strategies to improve School Board Members' Effectiveness	243
6.2.4	Conclusions of the Study	245
6.3	Recommendations for Improvements	246
6.4	Recommendations for Further Research	248
6.5	Chapter Summary	249
REFERENCES		251
APPENDICES		266
Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of Namibia		266
Appendix B: Research Permission Letter from the University of Namibia		267
Appendix D: Letter of Permission from the Ministry of Education Omusati Region		269

Appendix F: Letter of Permission to Collect Data at Individual Schools.....	271
Appendix G: Interview Guide for Principals	272
Appendix H: Observation Sheets	278
Appendixes I: Documents Review Guide	282
Appendix J: Informed Consent	284

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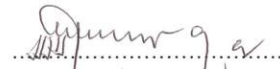
Declarations

Declarations

I, Hilma Namupaasita Iilonga, declare hereby 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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Hilma Namupaasita Iilonga

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Dedication

To the woman I owe greatly, my late mother Christophine Nelago Iiyambo, for her supports, sacrifices and the contributions she made during my early childhood education. She is the reason I am who I am today. She was my mentor, my hero, my friend, my confidante, my advisor – my mom. She was the pillar of my strength and it is from her I gained my strength to climb the mountains- to her I am grateful.

Acronyms and Abbreviations used in this thesis

HoD	Head of Department
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture
SBMs	School Board Members
SBEI	School Board Evaluation Instrument
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education

CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation to the Study

According to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) (2003) the Namibian education system has made considerable progress since independence in 1990 which led to, among others, the promulgation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001. The Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 stipulates that every state school must have elected school board comprising of representatives from parents, teachers and in case of secondary schools, learners must also be involved to ensure good representation of both parties.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) (2001) states that a school board may co-opt a member or members of the community to assist in discharging its roles in some activities, where they lack knowledge and expertise but such co-opted members has no right to vote at any meeting of a school board. The idea of co-opting some members of the community to assist the school board members (SBMs) sounds laudably because it helps the school board members to carry out their roles with understanding, which in turn, leads to the success of the school board.

The Ministry of Education (2001) further stipulates that a school board member may be re-elected after her/ his term expires. In this case, those who serve the school well stand the chance of being re-elected.

Sub-section 2 of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 states that parents should be in the majority and that, the chairperson of the school board should be one of the parents. This shows that the Ministry of Education aims to empower and encourage parents to be fully involved in the educational activities at all levels.

The Education Act, Section 16, prescribes that every state school shall have the school board to function as a body through which the community (parents, teachers and learners) is able to participate in the administration of the school MBESC (2004). This, according to MoE (2005), means that the overall aim of the school board is to participate in the governance of the school.

1.1.1 What is School Governance?

According to Baruth (2013) school governance is about creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules, which guide and govern the actions of the school and its members. In other words, school governance is concerned with the creation of policies for the school and making sure that the school is run according to the set policies. School governance is also about raising money for the school (Mestry, 2004; Mncube, 2010; Mofimele, n.d). Parents or caregivers must form a majority of members of a school governing body because according to the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 they are the ones who have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the school is run well (MoE, 2001).

1.1.2 The Role of the School Boards

Concurrently, school boards need to outline clear goals and objectives for the organisation at the annual parent meetings. Particularly, school boards are also required to support staff members with staff development programmes and in-service training. Baruth, (2013) Overall, school boards have the power over the finances, school policies, staff appointments, curriculum studies, religious rights, social justice and discipline within the schools (Adam and Waghid, 2005).

1.1.3 The Role of the Principal

The principals participate actively in school boards and are required to establish a school management team to help and assist them in carrying out their responsibilities and to follow through the implementation of policies (Baruth, 2013)

In essence, principals are required to manage the day-to-day running of school such as instructional and operational matters. Unlike the status of the other school board members, the principal holds an *ex officio* status on the school board (Baruth, 2013; Mestry 2007). Furthermore, the principal advises the school board regarding critical educational matters. The principal adheres to working co-operatively with the school board in the development, formulation and implementation of school policies. The principal thereby applies these policies in the day-to-day running of the school. In other words the principal and the school board work closely and co-operatively to ensure that the school is run effectively and efficiently (Mofimele, n.d).The principals within the school management team are responsible for the professional

management functions of the school such as: timetabling, admission of learners, making the best use of the school funds for the benefit of the learners, monitoring the work performance of staff members, mentoring staff members, making critical decisions regarding the teachers' workloads and ensuring that the workloads are equally distributed, organising staff development workshops to help staff develop professionally; promote co-curricular and extra curricula activities, provide the necessary assistance to the school boards to ensure they fulfil their role functions and responsibilities (Baruth 2013).

1.1.4 The difference between the Roles of the School Board and the Roles of the School Principal

MBSEC (2005) differentiates the role of the school board and the roles of the principals. The principal functions within the jurisdiction of the school management and provides oversight in the professional management of the school. According to Baruth (2013) the management functions include the implementation and administration of school policies in the day-to-day running of the school.

In regard to governance, the school board stands a position of trust and it sets out direction for the school through the formulation of the policies and monitoring its implementation. In other words, governance entails the managing and controlling of the school for its success and effectiveness (Beckmann and Prinsloo, 2009).

While school governance and school management are not the same, it is important to understand that some of the responsibilities of school board overlap with those of school management. School governors and school managers are equally responsible for protecting the rights of all learners to education, for maintaining discipline and for financial management Mofimele (n.d.). It is therefore important that school governors and school managers work together and respect each other's areas of responsibility. This will not only make their work easier, but it will also reduce conflict between the school governors and the school managers and will benefit the school.

Having school board members involved in all these roles, helps to improve the quality of education in Namibia and thus it was considered as of high importance. However, these roles have not been performed without challenges. Quan-Baffour (2006) observes that some schools appeared to underestimate parents in school board because they develop policies without consulting them. Niitembu (2006) conducted a study at a rural school in Namibia and shares the same view that in some schools, parents' members were seen as uneducated people who cannot make any meaningful contribution to the development or implementation of school policies. Another study done by Heystek (2004) at rural schools in South Africa reveals that due to the lack of knowledge and understanding among some parent members many school principals tend to exclude them from school policy development. This then implies that in some schools, school board members were not always made a part and parcel of school policy development.

In addition, teachers and school principals tend to defend the status quo and argue that they understand education issues better than the parents. Thus parent members, including the chairperson, often rely on teachers and school principals especially when it comes to developing educational policies. Mncube, Harber, and du Plessis (2010) argue that the school board chairperson is only there for the sake of formality since the school principal acts as the one who is indirectly running the school board. Although the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 and its accompanying regulations call for active involvement of school board members in school policy development, some studies such as Niitembu, (2006) and Sinalumbu, (2013) have shown that some school principals in rural schools allow little or no participation of school board members in the development of school policies. This is due to the perception that such involvement is unproductive, since school board members, especially parents, cannot make significant contribution to policy development.

Amunyela (2012) in his report on school board training in Namibia states that school principals and teachers develop policies in the absence of the parents and they read them to parents during school board meetings. In a study conducted in South Africa, Mestry (2006) also found that school board members at a certain school in South Africa were not involved in the development of the financial policy. Instead, they were asked to sign the agreement to endorse the policy because the school principal got a copy from another school. The school principal uses this copy as the school financial policy without considering that school circumstances differ. The policy borrowed from other schools may not address the needs of that school. This practice

may also be happening elsewhere in Namibia and is not in line with the regulations of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001, which stipulates that school board members should be involved in school decision-making process. In this case, developing of school policy is one of the decisions where school board members have to be involved. Thus, as Van Wyk (2004) states, all stakeholders through school board members have been given power to influence fundamental issues such as school policies.

The researcher was a member of the school board representing teachers for six years in one of the rural primary schools in the Omusati Region. During these years the researcher sat in school board discussions and observed power plays on the side of the teacher members. The parent members in the school board made minimal contributions and the meetings of school boards were often dominated by the teachers' representatives. In addition, sometimes parents and teacher members tend to differ in perceiving issues related to school governance. For instance, parent members tend to be conservative in terms of disciplining children; hence they insist that corporal punishment should be reintroduced in schools. Teachers, on the other hand, tend to be more progressive and understand the legal implications; hence they would not agree with the parents on the re-introduction of corporal punishment. This leads to lack of cooperation between teacher members and parent members.

In case of the recommendation for the appointments of staff members, the Ministry of Education (2005) emphasises that particular care should be taken to make sure that correct procedures are followed and reasonable decisions are made when school board members deal with appointments or promotions of staff members. In practice, this role may be abused by teacher members due to lack of knowledge and understanding of education policies among some parent members. In many interviews the researcher experienced how parent members were passive and waited for the teacher members to tell them the interview outcomes. In addition, parent members often find it difficult to comment even when they are asked to give their views regarding the candidates after the interviews.

Adams and Waghid (2005) reveal that school board members in rural primary schools regard the school principal as the person who knows the best and they try to always do what the school principal wanted them to do. This has a negative effect in decision-making with regard to the recommendation for appointments of candidates for the vacant posts because parent members do not question what the school principal decides.

In the case of school finance, schools are run with funds and this makes financial position of a school important. Prior to the democratic era the situation in Namibia was such that principals controlled the school finances with little or no participation from teachers and parents (Mestry, 2004; Niitembu, 2006; Ndou, 2012). After

independence the Ministry of Education (2001; 2005) provided guidelines to school boards and school principals on their roles and responsibilities in managing school finances. One of the Ministry of Education (2005) guidelines is that school boards should participate in decision-making when dealing with all aspects of the school finance such as approving the school annual budget, determining the annual contribution from parents, considering the applications for exemption and approving expenditures.

Although the guidelines were provided, it seems as if there is a misconception amongst various stakeholders regarding the roles of the school principals and the school board members with regard to controlling school finance. As Mestry (2006, p. 31) puts it, “the roles of the principals and parent members in school finance is still a problematic issue with the question of who is responsible for school finance.” Similarly, a study conducted in Namibia by Niitembu (2006) indicated that school board members only approve the money needed, but the principal and the teacher (a non- school board member) had the authority to withdraw money from the school account. This is not in accordance with what is stipulated in the Ministry of Education (2005) that the overall governance of the school including, the school finance, is vested in the school board with the principal’s role to provide guidance and assistance to the school board. This implies that when it comes to school finance, there are no decision-making roles entrusted to or vested in the principal alone.

A study by Niitembu (2006) in one of the Namibian rural school also found that decisions on the school finance are not made in school board meetings. Niitembu (2006) further emphasises that discussions on school finance also appear to be limited in school board meetings and often dominated by the school principal and teachers. (Mestry (2006), Niitembu (2006) and Ndou (2012) found that because of limited discussion on school finance parents know little about what these money was for and how it was used. Furthermore, school board members do not know who decides on the amount to be paid by learners and no financial report was given to them on annual basis (Amunyela, 2012).

This is in contrary to the ideas of the Ministry of Education (2005), which encourages principals and school boards to collaborate in managing the school finances. In a case like this, parents will not be willing to contribute and involve themselves in school activities, if they are not aware of what the money they have contributed was used for. It is imperative that when the parents contribute money to the school, they must be informed about how the money was used.

Studies by Everret, Johnson and Madden (2007) in the UK and Ndou (2012) in South Africa found that parent members lack knowledge on financial matters, in most cases; they delegate various financial tasks to the school principal and thus hold the principal accountable. Everret et al. (2007) argue that there is a problem with delegation of duties from parent members to the school principals because the school principal is better informed with regard to the delegated tasks than the school board members. Furthermore, Everret et al. (2007) and Ndou (2012) discourage the

practice by arguing that the danger of delegating is that the school principals may misuse this chance to do his/ her own objectives at the expenses of the school.

The Ministry of Education in Namibia is aware that school board members may experience difficulties in working with money, therefore it has suggested that the school board members may appoint one or more committees with expertise for the purpose of advising the school board members on any matter which the school boards may refer to the committee for advice (MoE, 2001). In this case, the school board members may appoint a school finance committee to whom they can refer issues related to school finance.

With regard to school welfare, MBESC (2004) states that school board members have the role to promote the interests of all learners in the school. Ngubane (2005) argues that despite the emphasis on parents roles in school governance, many parents, especial in the rural areas, are not involved in any school activities.

A study by Hutsell (2009) at the rural school in United States criticised the role of school boards by revealing that school board members are usually unaware of their school performance and this could be due to the fact that the school boards may find education practices difficult to understand and may not have confidence to get involved in educational matters. Although their roles are clearly spelt out, Kumalo (2009) found that in some rural primary schools some parent members lack

knowledge and understanding, and this makes it difficult for them to be clear about their roles. For that reason, they may not have confidence to involve themselves in education matters.

Hutsell (2009) argues that although the school board members may have teaching background or worked in education it must be remembered that the majority of the school board members have limited knowledge of recent education practices. They may be, therefore, not in the position to make informed judgements about teaching methods. On the other hand, Grant and Ray (2013) states that school board members themselves are very conscious of not wanting to be involved on the job of the professionals because they feel that teachers are paid for that.

MBESC (2004) states that, if there are any problems relating to teachers or school principals not performing their duties, school board members' roles is to discuss the situation with the Regional Education Office. Ngubane (2005) conducted a study in rural schools in South Africa and found that for those school board members who acted on the teachers' and principals' misbehaviour, they have disadvantaged their children attending the same school. As soon as the staff members become aware of a board member action they develop hatred against the board member's child. As a result, the school board members may decide to keep quiet in order to safeguard their children from being victimized. This is really a challenge to parent members because

teachers who are supposed to encourage parents' involvement discourage them from involvement in school matters

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education (2001) makes provision for the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making through school board members. This responsibility requires commitment and knowledge of the provision of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 on the side of the school board members. However, some literature have revealed that school board members in rural primary schools in Namibia are not fully involved in school governance and even those who are involved are not able to carry out their roles as required (Amunyela, 2012; MoE, 2007, 2008; Niitembu, 2006). Amunyela (2012) in his report on school board training reveals lack of participation of school board members in Okahao Circuit at rural primary schools in the Omusati Region. Currently, it is uncertain what challenges the school board members face because no attention has been paid to research the challenges faced by school boards in rural primary schools especially in Okahao Circuit. It is against this background that this study therefore attempts to explore the challenges faced by school boards in the Okahao Circuit's rural primary schools in carrying out their roles.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed:

- 1) What roles do school board members play in the governance of schools?
- 2) What challenges do school board members in Okahao Circuit face in carrying out their roles and responsibilities?
- 3) How can the challenges faced by school boards be addressed?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study was significant in many ways:

Firstly, it was hoped that the understanding obtained in this study may enlighten teachers, parents, policy makers in Okahao circuit and other stakeholders in education about the challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles. Secondly, this study was hoped to help policy makers to plan interventions to address challenges identified regarding the performance of the school board members and thereby improving the quality of education. Thirdly, this study was also important because it was hoped to point out the roles and highlights the potential challenges that need to be addressed in order to help school board members to carry out their roles effectively. Fourthly, insights gained in this study may be utilised by school board members in creating the boundary of operation to guide in the decision-making process within the schools in Okahao Circuit. By developing the boundary with specific roles and responsibilities, the school boards could operate more effectively. Lastly, although it is a case study of four rural primary schools only, the

study is hoped to provide potential useful information to other school board members and principals in similar situations with similar challenges.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

Omusati is a vast region with 10 circuits, 45 clusters and 172 rural primary schools, and that ideally the study would have considered more participants from the region through which useful information would have been obtained. There were a lot of challenges that limited the researcher in gathering data from a larger number of participants. The limiting factors included, amongst others, limited time and funds to cover more schools. Because only few rural primary schools were involved in the study, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other schools in Namibia.

In addition, since schools that participated in the study were all primary schools where learners are not represented in school boards, learners' views were not included. The contribution of learners' representative clearly would have added some views to the study. Nevertheless, it is assumed that their views were expressed by their parents. It was anticipated that the participants might provide unreliable information, since they may not want to implicate themselves by associating with lack of knowledge of their roles. Therefore, the researcher triangulated data obtained through different data collection instruments, namely interviews, observations and document reviews.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms should be understood as follows:

School Board

A statutory body of parents, teachers and in case of secondary school, learners, established to work together to promote the well-being and effectiveness of the school community and thereby enhance the learning and teaching. This body is established in terms of section 16 of the Namibian Education Act of 2001 (MoE, 2004).

Democracy

It is a system that allows people to participate actively in social and political life. However, democracy should not only be limited to the participation of people in the institutions, it also should focus on how that participation takes place, for example whether all stakeholders do fully participate in debates or not. In the case of the school boards, the concern was whether all members actively participate in the decision-making process or whether some were excluded during deliberations (Sinalumbu, 2013).

School governance

The process of governing the local education system by the school boards through policy implementation. School governance is underpinned by factors such as decentralisation, stakeholders' participation in school governance, participation of school board members in determining school budgets and fees and development of various school policies by the school board member (Kumalo, 2009).

Democratic school governance

In this study, democratic school governance is defined as school governance in which there is sharing of power by the school principal and all the relevant stakeholders to ensure that school policies are developed democratically, through rational discourse and deliberations, by principal and all the democratically elected representative of the school boards (Botha, 2012).

ex officio

ex officio is a Latin phrase that can be used as an adjective or adverb. Its literary meaning is “out of duty,” from *officium*, “duty,” and *ex*, “out of,” and it’s been used since ancient Roman times, often to describe someone who holds a membership on a board or committee by virtue of being official or holding some office or position (Acquiescence, 2011).

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to this study. It commenced by looking at the orientation of the study which served also as background to the core research issues of the study. Under orientation the roles of the school boards were discussed and an introduction to the school boards' challenges was made. The key problem was that school boards were perceived and described as ineffective. There could be several challenges that school boards in rural areas face in not participating in school governance. Therefore, it was imperative to investigate school boards' perceptions about their roles and responsibilities. The statement of the problem was also discussed followed by the research questions that guided the study. This chapter further addressed the reasons for conducting the study and why the study was significant to school board members, the Namibian education policy makers and other stakeholders. Lastly, the limitations that the study faced were also discussed

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles in primary schools in the Okahao Circuit. It was necessary to conduct a review of the relevant literature to make the problem clearer. The literature reviewed for this study yielded two major sections. The first section was the theoretical framework that informed the theoretical assumptions and perspectives of this study. The second section was the scholarly review on challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles elsewhere in order to put this study in the proper context. Lastly, the researcher discussed the strategies to be employed in order to enhance school boards effectiveness.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by participative management theory, also known as democratic management theory. According to Boje, Burnes and Hassard (2012), participative management theory was developed by Kurt Lewin. Kurt Lewin realised that Fredrick Taylor's authoritarian management whereby only the manager plans, controls and leads was incomplete because it was very hard to apply it to today's management where participation by all stakeholders is emphasised. He, therefore, developed the participative theory which advocates participation of all stakeholders

in management. Lewin's major contribution to management was his way of thinking that every change in any organisation requires participation of all stakeholders.

Boje et al. (2012) describe Kurt Lewin's participative management theory as follows:

“It emphasises on the establishment of participative management in education in which members are actively participating in decision-making as opposed to traditional authoritarian management theory in which managers coordinate and control the work of others.”

Coutts (2011) describes participative management theory as a style of management whereby all members of the organization such as school boards become part of decision-making process and own the decisions taken. In addition, Bush (2007) states that participative management is the practice where the focus of power is more with the group as a whole rather than individuals and there is greater interaction within all members in an organisation. According to Ministry of Education and Culture (1993), schools should be organized in a participative manner to enable parents, teachers and learners to be active in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning.

In order to transform education into participative management as suggested by Lewin, shared governance and collaboration need to be introduced in schools. Thus, according to Masschelein and Qaugebeur (2005), there has been a growing call amongst politicians, academics and the wider public that all stakeholders must actively participate in education practices. In education, these ideas were aimed at

involving learners, parents and teachers in the activities and decisions that concern their lives. In Namibia, the idea of participative management is embedded in the principle of democracy which is one of the four major goals of the Ministry of Education as documented in the policy document '*Towards Education For All*' (MEC, 1993). According to this principle, education should be structured in such a way that it gives an opportunity for all stakeholders to play active roles in the teaching and learning, and they must accept responsibilities for the results.

According to Jensen (2011) participatory work environment promotes the sharing of opinions and more interaction among stakeholders. Branch (2009) emphasises that involving stakeholders in decision-making boosts their morale and commitment to the school which, in turn, results into good performance and benefits for everyone. According to Ngubane (2005, p.3) Kurt Lewin's principle on participative management is that "...we are likely to modify our own behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution and likely to carry out decisions we have helped make..." Nadeem (2012) shares the similar view and argues that stakeholder involvement in decision-making improves the understanding of the issues involved by those who must carry out the decision. This is based on the following assumptions:

- People are more committed to actions where they are involved in the relevant decision-making;
- People are less competitive and are more collaborative when they are working on common goals;

- When people make decisions together, the social commitment to one another is greater and thus their commitment to the decision is increased; and
- Several people deciding together make better decisions than individuals.

Basically, participative management does not only create a conducive environment for school principals to get the work done, but also facilitates the stakeholders to work for the betterment of schools.

In the context of managing schools through school boards, participative management as proposed by Lewin, includes planning by the group, while recognising the importance of leadership, but this leadership remains responsible to the group as a whole (Boje,et al., 2012). This implies that in participative management, the leader has the right to influence the group and at the same time he or she must be willing to accept majority decision. The leadership roles are shared with members of the group and the manager is part of the team.

In view of participative management the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) expects school principals to work in democratic and participative ways in order to build relationships between stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners and to ensure effective teaching and learning. The MEC (1993, p.168) emphasises that “...decentralising both responsibility and authority is the key to upgrade the quality of schools and maximise the local contribution to the whole education system.” The

move towards decentralisation and the establishment of school boards reflects participative management theory. Schools are expected to establish school boards with the aim of involving parents as well as learners' representatives to allow them active participation in school matters (MoE, 2001). The introduction of school boards for all schools offers a strong commitment to participative decision-making as envisioned by the Ministry of Education. For instance, school boards are the highest decision-making body at school level; they make decisions concerning the school and share them with all stakeholders.

According to this participative management theory the school principal should allow the school board members to share their ideas and opinions in the decision-making process of the school by participating in school activities such as developing school policies, determining school activities and making suggestions. Nadeem (2012) adds that participative management does not only give stakeholders an opportunity to take part in decision-making, but it also involves the treatment of the ideas and suggestions of all stakeholders with consideration and respect. Nadeem (2012) further states that it is very important for the decisions to be made by those who have access to the best local information, who are responsible for implementing policies and who have to bear the consequences of the decisions. Therefore, if school boards who have to implement the policies and have access to local information are encouraged to participate in school decision-making their performance and school performance will be enhanced. Employing participative management therefore gives school boards an

opportunity to contribute to the improvement of schools through their skills, knowledge and talent.

Participative management theory was appropriate for this study since its main components was participation by staff, parents and the community in school activities. In addition, this study was based on participative management because it attempted to explore challenges faced by school boards in following democratic methods of taking decisions, maintaining supportive relationship with teachers and in taking ownership of the school.

2.3 Literature Review

This section is divided into three parts. The first part reviews the legal rights of school boards with the focus on the roles of school board members. The second part focuses on the review of the democratic school governance in Namibia; and the third part focuses on the review of the literature on challenges facing school boards in executing their duties and the strategies to enhance school boards effectiveness.

2.3.1. Legal Obligation of School Boards

Since Namibia' independence in 1990, the country's education system has been in transformation to recognise the importance of parental involvement in education (Hamunyela, Bender and Fraser, 2008). The starting point for education

transformation process in Namibia, is Article 20 of the Namibia Constitution, which states that “all persons shall have the right to education” and includes the right to be involved in, contributes to and supports educational activities (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990, p.14). This gives parents, through school boards, the right and legal responsibility to be involved in the education of their children. Until 1990, these fundamental rights to education were for so long denied to most parents not only in Namibia, but also in many African countries (Niitembu, 2006; Sinalumbu, 2012). Hamunyela et al., (2008); Niitembu (2006) and Sinalumbu (2012) states that this was true for blacks and marginalised people because of the colonial and apartheid education system that was in place during those years.

In fact, the need and importance of parental involvement received a huge support which led to the introduction of Section 16 of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 (Niitembu, 2006). Through this Act, the Ministry of Education set up the school boards to serve in the governance of schools in Namibia. The Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 did not only make it compulsory for schools to have school boards, but also gave school boards the mandate to perform their roles as stipulated in the Work of the School Boards: Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members (MBESC, 2004). Besides that, the Act also introduces what Chindanya (2011) describes as giving parents new rights over their children’s education by give them the responsibility of governing schools their children attend and of legitimating parental participation in various school functions. Onderi and Makori (2012) in their study done in Kenya observed that school board members are expected to add value to the school life and take ownership of the schools they serve.

The Ministry Education (2001) gave parents the legal right by transferring powers and responsibilities from the central authorities to individual schools. Therefore, through legislative reform school boards received statutory responsibilities (MoE, 2001) and became part of the school management structure (MBESC, 2004). Similar changes have also been experienced elsewhere, for example, in South Africa, New Zealand and Kenya (Nelushi, 2006; World Bank, 2008). Nelushi (2006) reports that these changes were necessitated by the need for public accountability, arguing that school boards are accountable to all who have an interest in the school and its activities. Therefore, school boards are expected to add value to the life of the school.

The roles of school boards vary from one country to another. For instance in the Namibian context, school boards' roles and responsibilities according to Ministry of Education (2001, 2005); MBESC (2004) and Niitembu (2006) include developing the mission statement of the school, adopting a code of conduct for learners; determining the admission policy; suspending learners from attending school as a correction measure but not exceeding a week; recommending the appointment and promotion of teaching and other staff at the school; dealing with disciplinary hearings of teachers and other staff at the school; supporting teachers and school principal and other staff members in their performance of their professional roles and supplementing resources supplied by the state, to improve the quality of education; promoting school welfare; mobilising and controlling school finance; overseeing the maintenance of school property and communicate with parents or guardians and the community.

2.3.2. Roles of the school boards

2.3.2.1. Developing the school vision, mission and policies

The school vision statement is a dynamic image of what the school could and should be like, while the mission captures the characters and identity of the school as well as the parameters within which the school acts (Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009). A key responsibility of any school board is to develop and adopt policies that are based on the board's vision and that provide a framework for implementation of the vision. The Namibia Education Act, (2001) requires school boards to develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the board's goals and encourage learners to pursue their educational. Indeed, for the school to operate in the best interest of learners it needs policies to guide its members (school boards, principals, teachers, learners and supporting staff) on how to operate in order to achieve educational goals (Baffour, 2006).

According Baffour (2006) school board should discuss the behaviour policy which can be used in maintaining discipline at school. This is in line with the (MoE 2004) obligates school board to develop documents to guide the behaviour of teachers and learners at their schools. Principal, teachers and support staff are expected to implement the policies once developed. It is the responsibility of board members to monitor and evaluate how efficiently the board's policies are implemented and how effective they are in achieving the board's goals.

2.3.2.2. Recommending the appointment of teachers

Ministry of Education (2005) “The Education Act, Section 16, prescribes that every school shall have a school board to function as a body through which community (parents, teachers and learners of secondary school) is able to participate in the administration of the school and its activities.” The Namibia Education Act 16 of 2001, section 17 further stipulates that the school board identifies suitable candidates for the vacancies at the school and recommends them to the permanent secretary for appointment. The school board has a major role to play ensuring that recruitment of staff members are done in an open and fair manner. According to MBSEC, (2004) “In case of disciplinary problem concerning a teacher, the school board members must write to the Regional Education Director giving reasons why a particular person should be expelled. The school board can only recommend, not enforced an expulsion.” To recommend for the appointment of teachers and other staff members, school board should participate in short-listing and interviewing short-listed candidates (MBESC, 2004).

Niitembu (2006) argues that although parents are seen to have significant roles to play in the recommendation for the appointment of staff, there is a doubt whether they really have competence to play effective role. The interviews are done in English, which is an official language and since most of the parents members do not understand English, only teachers ask questions during the interviews while parents observe (Quan-Baffour, 2006).

2.3.2.3. Mobilizing and controlling of finance

Ministry of Education (2005) provided the guidelines for the school boards and the principals on their roles and responsibilities in managing the finances of the schools. According to (Black n. d) “it is the job of school boards to provide clear direction about priorities and to insist that the allocation of resources is aligned with the goals and the strategic plan of the school. According to Niitembu (2007) teachers are of the opinion that although parent members read, some needed teachers, especially in financial matters because they cannot calculate the incomes and expenditures without teachers’ assistance. However, Mestry (2007) suggested that the school board may appoint expertise in a particular field, such as appointing an expert on financial matters who are not members of the school board to serve on these financial committees.

It is thus clear that where members of the school boards have no or little financial knowledge, then the school board should solicit the service of an expert with sound financial knowledge from the parent community. On the other hand, school boards who have the signatory power must be carefully selected. Principal must explain to the parents during the election that for school boards to carry out their roles successful they should elect people who are literate. This does not necessary mean to eliminate some parents from being elected, but for the success of the school. If they are literate they can pick up easily any irregularities taking place at their school.

2.3.2.4. Promoting school welfare

MBESC (2004) states that school boards have the role to promote the interest of all stakeholders in the school. School board should never allow a situation to arise where children who are attending school are being satisfactorily taught there. MBESC (2004) further recommended that board members should set monitoring systems to measure progress towards achieving results. They should equally visit school regularly to monitor the school performance and discuss their findings with the principal. They must also find out from the principals if clarity is needed. Many teachers feel that parents, whom they consider as lay persons, should not be involved in issues which are part of the teacher's professional duties (Van Wyk, 2009). Echoing this notion Niitembu (2006) argues that although the school board members have teaching background or work in education it must be remembered that the majority of the board members are lay people with limited knowledge of recent education practice. They may be therefore not in position to make informed judgment about teaching methods.

In essence, MBEC (1993) points out that in schools that are responsive to their communities, parents and neighbours are not generally unwelcome outsiders. Instead, schools are organized to enable them to be active in school governance, active contributors to discussion of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning. As evidence of the above statement Niitembu, (2006) in her study conducted in Ohangwena Region found out

that after the school evaluation by the school board, they plan to send some teachers and learners to well-performing schools (academically) in the region just to observe what other teachers are doing.

Some of the findings from studies on the roles of school boards seem to contradict each other. For example, while the governments may consider parental involvement through school boards in schools an excellent idea, some literature reviewed herein reveal a certain degree of resentment among the teachers who consider themselves professionals and felt that lay persons such as parents are not welcome (Onderi and Makori, 2012). For instance, teachers claim that school board members lack skills, knowledge and understanding of educational matters. Teachers with this view feel school board members are not well equipped for their roles and cannot be involved in the running of schools. These teachers argued that the roles expected from school boards are unrealistic given the school board level of skills, knowledge and understanding (Ngubane, 2005; Nelushi, 2006; Makori and Onderi, 2012).

Ngubane (2005) further comments that the roles and responsibilities transferred to school boards are burdensome and impossible to achieve. The general concern according to Makori and Onderi (2012) is that people who are unpaid, lay, non-professional, without skills and expertise, relevant knowledge and understanding and without interest and time are given such a responsibility in education. In the same vein, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) reveal that parental participation depends entirely on their educational level which plays a major role in their contributions,

together with their personal abilities; otherwise, they end up serving as mere passive listeners.

On the other hand, Sinalumbu (2013), in his study on teachers' perceptions of democratic school governance, supports the notion of parental involvement and argues that school boards know and understand their environment better than anyone else; and that active support from key stakeholders is critical to sustaining educational quality. Sinalumbu (2013) further argues that the relationship between school boards and teachers enhances school performance. For instance, school boards mobilise local resources, improve management and strength local ownership (World Bank, 2008).

Both positive and negative views are expressed by different researches regarding their involvement in school governance, their roles and responsibilities, as well, but there are more negatives than positives. These contradictions triggered the researcher's concern to ask the question: If school board members consider the education of their children important, then why is it difficult for them to carry out their roles?

2.3.3. Democratic School Governance in Namibia

The concept of decentralisation originates from the belief that the state alone cannot do everything for schools, hence the concept democratic school governance. Mncube (2005, p.19) defines democratic school governance as a "form of school based

management and can be regarded as the most radical form of educational decentralisation, which involves the transfer of power or decision-making.” It is a way of improving the management of schools whereby the state redistributes the decision-making authority to schools. In a similar manner, Adams and Waghid (2005) state that democratic governance is similar to other major movements towards participatory management in which all stakeholders have input and participate in decision-making.

After independence in 1990, the Namibian government set democracy as one of the four goals or principles of education in Namibia (MEC, 1993), and introduced democratic school governance in order to redress the imbalances created by the apartheid regime that excluded the participation of parents and learners in the decision-making process (MBSEC, 2004). As mentioned, in the Ministry of Education (2001) every public school must have a school board, which consists of representatives from parents, teachers and learners. The aim of this structure is to foster democratic school governance, thereby introducing a school governance structure involving all stakeholders in the school activities, in order to promote democracy and collective decision-making (MBESC, 2004). To date, all public schools across the country have school boards that govern these schools. This policy direct education management to enable the school boards to fully participate in the school decision-making through democratic school governance.

The view on the democratic governance of schools were echoed by the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1993) which announced that the decision-making authority of a school would be shared among parents, teachers, the community and learners, in ways that support democracy. Based on this idea, stakeholders' participation serves as the best possibility for democratic school governance (Kumalo, 2009). Mncube (2005) agrees that shared decision-making and the encouragement of participation by all stakeholders in the schools' context lead to more effective schools and consequently to the democratisation of schools.

Botha (2012) states that the move in support of decentralisation is motivated by the belief that the performance of a school can improve if those closer to it have power and freedom to decide how to use the resources geared towards its improvement. According to Aipinge (2007) the decentralisation of power allows and encourages subordinates to participate in decisions that affect them, including the person who has to execute those decisions. A similar idea is expressed by Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) which stresses that management should not be seen as the task of a few; but it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) further states that principals should ensure that the views of all members are accommodated when decisions are taken. The fact that decisions are made at school level raises within the school boards a great sense of ownership and responsibility among the stakeholders, and thus allows them to take responsibility for what is happening at the school (Mncube, 2009).

Tyala (2004) highlights that often some school principals resist to involve school boards because they are used to the traditional method of taking decisions on their own without any input from relevant stakeholders. According to Adams and Waghid (2005), school principals felt they alone are responsible for the school and they are accountable for the school's performance, which is against the idea of participative management. This is an indication that in South Africa participative management had not taken place. Little has been done so far to involve other stakeholders in decision-making.

While addressing the school principals, teachers and educational officials in Zambezi Region, the then Namibian Minister of Education (Honourable Dr David Namwandi) emphasized that “school management should include parents at all times, because education is a shared responsibility. The improvement of education is not for teachers alone” (Menges, 2014, p.2). This implies that for a school to be successful in attaining good examination results, important stakeholders particularly the school boards and parents in general must contribute. Notwithstanding the fact that school board members are not engaged in actual teaching they have a major contribution to make in improving school performance. In supporting the school staff, the school boards can advise, guide and direct the principal on issues relating to conflict resolution, improvement of staff, learner motivation and hiring of relevant and qualified teachers (Quan-Quan-Baffour, 2006). It is only when parents are participating in school governance that they can influence policies and effectively govern the school (Nadeem, 2012). Parents from rural schools need to be empowered if they are to make a meaningful contribution to the education of their children.

2.3.4. Barriers to School Boards' Performance

The roles of the school board members seem simple; however, they could be much more challenging than they seem (Carpenter, 2011). As people entrusted with difficult roles of governing the school, school board members face some difficulties in performing their roles. Numerous researchers have indicated numerous barriers that school boards face in carrying out their roles. According to Mabasa and Themane (as cited in Kumalo, 2009), problems related to school boards' participation in school governance are by no means unique to developing countries, but are common in developed countries too.

Quan-Baffour (2006); Carpenter (2007; 2011); Grant and Ray (2013); Heystek (2004); Kumalo (2009); Mncube et al. (2010); Mokoena (2011); Ngubane (2005); Niitembu (2006); Ndou (2012); Mestry (2007); Sinalumbu (2011) all emphasized that there are issues leading to exclusion of parent members from participation, namely lack of clear demarcation between the roles of the teaching staff and those of the school board members, power relations, lack of confidence from some parents, lack of education and competence in decision-making, transport problems which results in non-attendance of school board meetings by some parents, poor communication of information, lack of training which results in lack of knowledge of the roles and responsibilities, the language barrier, and the high turnover rate of school board members as parents have to leave the school boards as soon as his/her child leaves the school.

In the context of this study, challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles were discussed under the following topics, namely lack of knowledge and understanding, representation, cultural aspects, lack of collaboration among school board members, power relations, lack of clarity in terms of roles and responsibility and lack of training of school board members.

2.3.4.1. Lack of Knowledge and Understanding of School Board Members

According to Kumalo (2009) the transformation of the education system includes, inter alia, the principles that stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, learners and the community must participate in the governance of the school, however, doing so requires skills, knowledge and expertise, which seem to be a major problem the school boards experience. Most researchers found that low competency and literacy levels of school board members in rural schools place restrictions on the functioning of these bodies, including the power that they are able to exert in general (Heystek, 2004; Niitembu, 2006; Mestry, 2006; Siririka, 2007). Quan-Baffour (2006), Ngubane (2005), Niitembu (2006) and Siririka (2007) point out that part of the reasons why rural parents are often less involved in decision-making is because of lack of skills and basic education; and this causes many rural parents to undervalue themselves. This is confirmed by Ngubane (2005) Williams as cited in Siririka (2007) and Zoppi (2006) who outlines that parents readily accept that only teachers have a professional understanding of the problems of children at school and assign to them great deal of power. Because of this, add Niitembu (2006) and

Phendla (2004) that parent members in schools in rural areas leave everything up to the teachers with the attitude that teachers are the professional experts and they can best do the job because they know it all.

In many cases the parents who form the majority of the school boards, lack educational background and therefore cannot read and interpret policies (Ngubane, 2005). Carpenter (2011) argues that young parents from the rural areas are working far from home; therefore, school boards in rural schools are mostly composed of elders and less educated people with little understanding and knowledge of education. The elders are the ones who are taking care of grandchildren and are responsible for attending the parents' meetings where election of school boards are conducted, since elections are based on candidates' qualities and role in the community. Therefore, elders who display these characters are likely to be elected to serve as a school board member. The only requirement for the person to become a school board member is that he or she must be a parent of a child who is attending at that particular school. Elders and less educated school boards may experience difficulties in taking decisions or may take decisions which may be against the Acts and regulations since they have limited knowledge of the educational policies. In other words, if they lack understanding they may not be in a position of power to influence decision during their meetings.

According to Quan-Baffour (2006) the election of school board members on the basis of the candidate roles and whoever parents present in the meeting sometime lead to the schools having majority of the parent members who lack knowledge and

understanding of educational policies. This is in line with Carpenter (2011); Duma, Kapueya and Khanyile (2011) and Ngubane (2005) as they argue that due to lack of educational background school boards in rural schools are faced with the challenges of translating the national policies into effective implementation. Mokoena (2011) and Zoppi (2004) state that due to the fact that parent members have limited knowledge of the Acts and regulations, they may be influenced to agree on a certain issue where they may be in disagreement with the teacher members. Parent members may sometimes find themselves in a compromising position as they feel compelled to agree along most of the issues.

Cowell (2011) argues that although school boards have the legal power to promote the school effectiveness, parent members find it difficult to translate the national policies into school policies. This is contrary to the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 which states that school boards should develop and implement school policies. To help parents in rural primary schools to understand educational matters so that they can make informed decisions and perform their duties as per the Namibian Education Act, Act 16 of 2001. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004) made it clear that it is the sole responsibility of the school principals to make sure that school boards are well guided and advised on their roles and responsibilities.

2.3.5. Challenges with Regard to Representation

Sub-section 2 of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 stipulates that “School parents must constitute the majority of members of a school board. According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) teachers in rural schools often feel that they are not well represented and want more power to manage the school because they are accountable to parents. Dumaet al. (2011) explains that it is for this division that school board members in rural schools are unable to execute their duties as per the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001, as every individual is concerned about his/her interest group and not about the entire delivery and school progress.

Members of the school boards are elected as representatives of a certain interest group connected to the school (Adam and Waghid, 2005). For example teachers represent teachers’ interests, parents represent parents’ interests and learners represent learners’ interests (Kumalo, 2009). However, according to Mncube (2009) this in many instance, results in tension among the board members, between parent members and principals as well as between parent members and staff. Ndou (2012) reports from his study that a teacher member stated empathetically that he was not afraid to oppose the principal if he thinks it is in the interest of the teachers. This indicates clearly that the interests of the group replaced those of the learners and the school. Moreover, Adam and Waghid (2005) added that teacher members regard themselves as watchdogs for their colleagues and perceived their roles as mainly to protect their colleagues’ interest.

On the other hand, Kumalo (2009) and Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) point out that while some parents see themselves as representing all parents, they may represent particular parents' interest. School boards who come from good socio-economic background may not understand the needs of parents of learners who come from more disadvantaged areas and may not present their needs on the school board discussions or those who live close to the school may not understand the needs of parents who live far from the school. A good example, when decisions regarding starting and closing time of school's daily activities, because members of the school boards who are closer to the school may suggest the school to start earlier forgetting that some learners may be living a far distance from the school.

Adams and Waghid (2005) reveal that there often a breakdown in communication between elected members (of the school boards) and the group they represent because there is no proper consultation between the school boards and the groups they represent. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) further state that some parent members do not usually attend meetings because they are not interested in school governance or they are working at far places away from the schools they represent. As a result, a school may take decisions on important issues even if parent members do not respond to notices of meetings. In this case, school board members do not seem answerable to their constituencies because they are always absent when decisions are taken and this may lead to lack of communication between the school and the community.

Some authors feel that members should represent groups of people but must serve the interest of the school. Mncube (2009) emphasises that a democratic school should practice representation by mandating elected representative to take their views to their group and bring back their groups' views when decisions are taken. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) add that parents and learners who are representing others on the school boards are part of all decision pertaining to the school development. This is supported by Kumalo (2009) who states that school board members representing others on school boards in order to voice their concern on matters that affect their lives and that of the school.

2.3.5.1. Lack of collaboration among School Board Members

Lack of collaboration among school board members has been viewed as another barrier that prevents school board members from effectively carrying out their roles. According to Niitembu (2006) despite the power that parents in school board members are given with regard to governance of schools, they are not yet given sufficient room to take part in crucial decisions affecting education of their children. Mokoena (2011) share the similar views and argues that some teachers have a tendency to look down on parent members, treating them as inferiors and this has a negative impact on their participation. This is confirmed by Niitembu (2006) that parent members are often complaining that teachers do not accept their views; they do not cooperate and they just treat them badly as they feel that there is nothing they

can contribute to their children' education. For that reason, parent members tend to keep quiet because they know their contributions are not valued (Ngubane, 2005).

According to Barber (2005) some teachers oppose school board members' involvement in academic planning or school policy development, implementation and reviews, fearing they will be too interfering or critical of their children's teachers. They also believed that parents have no understanding of how schools operate, and regard parents' involvement as interference. Drawing from this discussion, one concludes that school principals and teachers can easily be tempted to manipulate relationships in such a way that the school boards lose their power in performing their roles as stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001.

Heystek (2004) argues that though many school principals have long years of experience, the participative and democratic management may be new for most of them and it is possible that they may resist sharing power with parents. Such resistance may result in disagreements between principals and parent members, thus throwing the school into chaos. However, adds Heystek (2004), when principals are willing to share power with other role players, effective teaching and learning takes place.

According to Bush (2007) and Botha (2012), another challenge faced by school boards is that they experience difficulties in working with school management teams (SMTs) because they do not always implement the decisions taken at school board meetings. The findings of research studies conducted by Mokoena (2011) and Adams and Waghid (2005) indicate that parent members in rural schools often complain that

decisions are made in school board meetings, but implementation takes time or some decisions may never be implemented. In this case the ideas and opinions of the parent members were not part of the decisions because decisions were changed to best fit the interest of the teachers. This is against the idea of participative management where the opinions of all stakeholders are regarded as important and are a part of the decision.

Mokoena (2011) admits that on some occasions decisions have already been taken by the school and the school board members were only being provided with information, without having their opinions sought. Kumalo (2009, p.96) shares the same sentiments against this tendency among school boards. He shared this remarks from one of the parent members interviewed,

The principal and the chairperson of school board finalise issues without involving other school board members and that other members of the school boards are not satisfied by that as they feel marginalised, threatened and not wanted in the school boards.

Echoing this notion, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) observe that some school board members are faced with challenges when they are asked to consider a proposal about which they have no previous knowledge or asked to approve decisions already taken by the principal and staff or by the chairperson in collaboration with the school principal. In these cases school board members often feel used and highly demoralised. This discrepancy between the school principals, teachers and parent

members shows that there are some challenges in the process of decision-making. This is against the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 which calls for the replacement of unilateral decision-making in favour of joint decision-making. In these cases school board members often feel used and very demotivated.

Niitembu (2006) confirms that it is true that school board members still find themselves either unconsciously or deliberately excluded from decision-making. Mestry (2007) found that principals withhold information regarding school matters with the reason that parents who are school board members have no understanding of school affairs, and they only interfere in the school affairs. This strong view held by principals has led to lack of collaboration between school boards and principals (Mestry, 2007). For instance as Ndou (2012) put it that parents may not be willing to contribute if they are not aware of what the money they have contributed was used for. However, the Ministry of Education (2005) encourages collaboration between parents and the school by introducing the idea of parental involvement in education through school board members. In the same way, the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) makes it clear that schools must exercise democracy by involving parents in the education of their children. The Ministry of Education (2005) further requests that school principals support and assist the parent members in executing their roles in managing schools.

2.3.5.2. Power Relations in School Management Matters

Power relations in school management matters have been viewed as one of the barriers to school board effectiveness. A study conducted by Botha (2012) on the roles of the principals as a member of the school board found that in some schools the principal dictated other school board members and in the process controlled the school boards in an authoritative manner. Onderi and Makori (2013) add that in some situations school principals tend to overplay their roles, and this causes problems and eventually create tension and conflict among school board members.

Moreover, Heystek (2004, p.309) reveals that power problems and disagreements often erupt in school boards especially when there is a “principal trying to dominate the rest of the school board members or the chairperson of the school boards [is] trying to dominate the principal on behalf of the parents.” Furthermore, the situation is even worse in rural schools where “parents lack participation, knowledge and understanding” (Adams & Waghid 2005, p. 30) leaving the door open for principals to abuse their power and authority and manipulate school boards. This is against the Education Act 16 of 2001 and the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004), which clearly states that principal should establish harmonious relationships with the school board members. The chairperson of the school board should be in charge and set the tone of the school board meetings.

A study by Onderi and Makori (2013) in Kenya reports frequent interferences from parent members in the professional management of school while on the other hand the parents claimed that principals deny them access to teaching and learning process. Similar situation was also found in UK, by James, Brammer and Fertig (2011) who established that school boards were excluded from the professional management of the school.

In South Africa, a study conducted by Van Wyk (2007) also found that some teachers interviewed felt strongly that the parents' roles on school board should be reduced so that professional people were not placed in positions where they could be outvoted by parents. Besides, a number of teachers felt that parents did not fully understand their roles and responsibilities as most of them lack knowledge and understanding and therefore are unable to carry the task delegated to them. In this regard, Bagarrete (2011) and Hystek (2006) report that this lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities may also create tension between the school board members and the principal.

Onderi and Makori (2013) stated that each member of the school board has his or her own view of the school and how it should be managed. However, according to Mncube et al. (2010) these views tend to produce conflict rather than clarity. Botha (2012 p.264) agrees and adds that "power relations are central to any understanding of the practice and process of school governance...." This is especially true in

relation to decision-making. As Adams and Waghid (2005) put it that in democracy “we agree to disagree”.

Onderi and Makori (2013) found that often there is power struggle among different stakeholders at some schools. Such struggles are often noted between chairperson of the school board and school management and the school principals. As evidence of the power relation between the school and school board members, the findings of Msila (2004) show that parent members have limited participation and play little or no role in decision-making. For this reason parent members become unhappy with the school management team. This implies that unequal power relations are prevalent in the roles of the school board members.

Heystek (2004) argues that poor relationships between principals and school boards ranges from minor problems at schools to major cases reported in the media, such as accusing each other, misconduct, principals being chased out of school premises by angry parents and principals so angry with parent members that they want to make all decisions concerning school governance alone. As evidence of this notion, Shivute (2014) reported that the Okakondo Primary School in the Oshikoto Region in Namibia was closed by parents because of lack of co-operation between parents and the school principal. Shivute (2014) further reported that parents of this school accused the school principal of having a poor relationship with other teachers and parents, not upgrading the school to high grades, running the school as his own house

and poor communication between the principal and the parents. This led to the principal's suspension for the regional directorate to investigate the matter (Shivute, 2014).

2.3.5.3. Lack of Clarity in Terms of Roles and Responsibilities

According to Carpenter (2011) one of the challenges faced by school boards is usually that they do not understand the difference between governance and management. Christie (2010, p.704) identifies the distinction between two concepts as follows:

The role of the school board is governance, by which it meant policy determination, in which the democratic participation of the schools' stakeholders is essential. The primary role of the school leadership is management, by which is meant the day-to-day organization of teaching and learning, and the activities which support teaching and learning, for which teachers and the school principal are responsible.

Mncube et al. (2010) explains that the governance is the responsibility of the school boards, while the principal is responsible for the professional management of the school. The school board defines policy and ensures its implementation. Mncube et al. (2010) further state that the school principal and his management staff administer any policies that are determined by the school board and organise teaching and learning activities in accordance with the mission statement developed by the governing body.

In practice, boundaries are not always clear-cut (Christie, 2011). For instance, regulations state that the principal and school management team are responsible for organizing all activities to support teaching and learning, while the school board is responsible for ensuring that high quality education is offered at the school. Whereas management is responsible for personnel at the school, the school board is responsible for recommending their appointment. Whereas management is responsible for the timetable, the school board is responsible for the choice of subjects and the school time.

It is not surprising that there are many instances of confusions over these roles (Heystek, 2006; Mncube 2009). While school governance and school management are not the same, it is important to understand that some of the responsibilities of school governance overlap with those of school management. School governors and school managers are equally responsible for protecting the rights of all learners to education, for maintaining discipline and for financial management (Mofimele, n.d.). It is therefore important that school governors and school managers work together and respect each other's areas of responsibility. This will not only make their work easier, but it will also reduce conflict between the school governors and the school managers and will benefit the school.

Carpenter (2011) share the view that sometimes parent members misunderstand their roles and forget that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the school. If this happens, it may lead to the conflict between teachers and parent members. In addition, Onderi and Makori (2013) describes how lack of clear

boundaries in terms of roles and responsibilities as well as varying interpretations of what governance and management of schools mean may lead to conflict between the school principal and the school board members. One good example as cited in a study by Heystek (2004) is the instance where some parent members in South Africa felt they had the right to pay class visits as a form of professional assessment for the purpose of assisting the principal without knowing that they were intruding in the forbidden professional management field. Class visits are the management roles of the school principals who are the professional managers. Since principals are qualified teachers who were trained on teaching methodology, they have the capacity to observe a lesson and give constructive feedback that can be used to improve teaching. In addition, some parent members may not have the teaching experience and may not be in a position to advise the teacher on how to improve.

Carpenter (2011) emphasises that until a school board recognizes these distinctions and carry out their roles accordingly, it hinders a school's performance. The literature is quiet about parent members who are teachers by profession. These parents have the capacity to observe lessons because they were trained in teaching approaches; they are teachers in their own classroom and can advise teachers on the improvement needed.

According to Mestry (2004) it needs to be pointed out that there may be areas where management and governance overlap. Mestry (2004) further indicates an example of where management and school governance overlap is in the budgeting process. For example, if the school management and school board members did not plan the

budget together, they may each allocate a certain amount to the same activities. Hence in this case it is very important that the school board members and school management clearly indicate their needs to ensure accurate and meaningful budgeting. Heystek (2004) further warns that this overlap may lead to the tension between the school principal and parent members.

To avoid this, Mestry (2004) suggests that it is extremely important that school boards and the management work as partners to ensure effective and efficient schools. The absence of such relationship might shut out the parents' voices and exclude them from meaningful participation in school activities. This idea is related to this study because the researcher was interested in establishing the barriers faced by school board members in Okahao Circuit.

2.3.5.4. Lack of Training of School Board Members

According to Kumalo (2009), government expects school board members in rural primary schools to take on more responsibility without ensuring that they have the capacity to do so. He further states that school board members are expected to act as strategic leaders of their schools and to represent their local communities. These roles required by school boards are determined, among other things, by educational background, especially literacy level, of governors (Bush and Heystek as cited in Tsotetsi, Van Wyk and Lemmer, 2008). Heystek (2006) and Kumalo (2009) reveal that the skills deficit in this regard is most acutely observed in schools in

disadvantaged and rural areas (Nelushi, 2006). The need for capacity among school boards is further accepted by Kumalo (2009) in his study at a rural school in South Africa.

Kumalo (2009, p.3) point out that school board members in rural schools were not trained before they start with their work and this gives expression to some of the following problems:

- being unfamiliar with meeting procedures;
- experiencing problems with the language used in meetings;
- finding it difficult to manage large volumes of papers;
- lack of knowledge of appropriate legislation;
- lack of clarity about their roles;
- feeling intimidated by the presence of other members who seem more knowledgeable; and perceiving their roles as simply rubber “stamping” what others have already decided upon.

Adams and Waghid (2005); Mncube (2013); Tsoetsi, et al (2008) confirm that due to lack of training or induction into the roles school board members play, most school board members in rural primary schools lack the necessary skills to participate in democratic and professional settings and they are unable to function effectively. Lack of capacity building workshops in the rural areas gave rise to further problematic situations boards did not understand what was actually expected of them as stipulated by the Education Policy (Baruth, 2001).

In addition, Owes (as cited in Niitembu 2006), noted that one of the persistently under-recognized problems of implementing participative decision- making methods is the need to provide school boards with training in the group process skills that are needed to make collaboration work well. Ndou (2012) expresses similar concerns that members of school boards who do not have required skills to perform their roles will not be able to complete their work effectively. Therefore, training of school board members remains a priority for the successful functioning of school boards.

In a study conducted in Namibia by Niitembu (2006) school board members indicated that training given was ineffective and only some school board members were trained. Niitembu (2006) further stated that the Namibian Ministry of Education has identified one alternative in the document titled “*The work of the School Board Members’ Handbook*” (MBESC, 2004) with the aim to empower and assist school board members in facing the everyday challenges in education in Namibia. Although the handbook was introduced, many school board members were not aware of the handbook (S. Nangolo personal communication, July 24, 2014). As far as training is concerned, there are some differences by officials of who should provide training, content of training, length and whether training is required. Consequently, there is little or lack of training among the school boards (Amunyela, 2012).

On the other hand, where training was provided school boards did not avail themselves at the training venues. This is confirmed by James et al. (2011) who report that uptake of school boards training is very low in some cases. Echoing this notion, Bush (2007) observes that school board parents are reluctant to undergo training; perhaps they do not need it. This may lead to what Tsoetsi et al. (2008)

describe as lack of ownership of training. School board members may not own the training if the training needs was identified for them by the school principal or school board chairperson alone. School principals and school board chairpersons may not be aware of all the challenges that other school board members experience. Therefore, it is imperative that all school board members who experienced challenges identify their training needs and attends training. This helps in creating ownership of the training among the school boards.

In summary, while the notion of stakeholders' participation in school governance is important, it is not without challenges. Some of these challenges described above are familiar to school boards. To a certain degree most school boards encounter them and all are preventable. The next topic explores the basic techniques that have proven to be helpful to school board members in addressing the various barriers discussed above.

2.4. Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

Effective school board is essential for effective school governance. Yet, as highlighted in the previous discussion, it is evident that in many schools, school board members are not effective or confident enough to execute their roles as per education policy. The key role of school boards is to support the principals in order to ensure learners receive the best possible education. School board members also need support from the school principal. It is therefore imperative that school board members support each other for the purpose of achieving the school objectives they set for themselves. Indeed, there are a lot of strategies to enhance the school boards effectiveness. Some of the strategies are discussed below.

2.4.1. Teamwork

Teamwork is one of the strategies to enhance school board effectiveness. According to Aipinge (2007) the concept of teamwork is associated with a sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility among team members. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009, p. 130) state that teamwork is characterized by the principle of “common purpose and talks about it often.” This means that for the school board members to work effectively, they need to share an understanding of what the school means for them and the direction they wish to take in its future. It is very significant that school board members as a team should work on the rules and everybody should know them because they safeguard every member’s equal status (Jensen, 2011). Teamwork prevents the principal from taking control of school boards and ignoring the inputs of

parent members on the school board members because members share information, reach consensus and decide together as a team.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009, p. 130) recommend the following as important characteristics of teamwork:

- A good team value every member and should share information, praise and blame;
- takes training and development seriously and expects every member to improve his or her skills and knowledge;
- knows the working rules and tries to keep to them; and
- shares their work fairly.

Similarly, Aipinge (2007, p.22) states that “shared understanding and close interaction towards a shared commitment are thus qualities which characterized team as distinct from groups of people.” In the process of interaction team members learn from each other and combine skills needed to accomplish the team task

In this case, school board members may establish an association of the school boards at circuit, regional and national level as essential for sharing and strengthening members of the school boards on the implementation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 and relevant legislation and policies. At school level, the school board structure has various members that support its operation and can be referred to as

teams, namely: parents, teachers and the school principal. For the school boards to execute their roles effectively, they have to be open to ideas and suggestions from other similar boards in the area, work co-operatively for the best interest of the learners. For this reason, the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 was promulgated to ensure teamwork among school board members in the execution of their duties in the school.

Coutts (2011) refers to the roles of the school boards as co-operative governance because it takes place at school. The school board chairperson belongs to the team and therefore is entrusted with the responsibility to give teams direction to ensure teamwork. Therefore as a team leader, he or she is expected to play an important role in team building and team management.

The school board chairperson as the leader of the group needs to encourage unity between team members. This may allow other school board members to identify with their team and feel proud of belonging to it. The other aspect of team building emphasized by Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) is the role of the team leaders to clarify personal and team goals, and harmonize them to share common vision, purpose and goals which will point out where the team is heading. Adapting the idea of Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009), school board's chairperson can mobilize the team to develop school policies, support principal and staff members and share their goals. The reward of teamwork is that group members have a greater feelings of group unity, higher commitment to carry out the decision because they know it is for the best interest of the team and a greater ownership in the outcome.

Lindlow and Bently (as cited in Ngubane (2005, p.60) state that “In terms of planning and others management aspects, teamwork allows people with different skills and knowledge to participate and share what they have with the whole school” Ngubane (2005) also states that much planning should be carried out in teams, at the management level, school boards level and among staff in their areas of interest and expertise. Once parent members are involved by principals and teachers in their areas of expertise, they feel comfortable to execute the roles and they know it works to the best interest of the team and the school as a whole. For instance, teachers and parent members plan together the school development plan (SDP) for their school where every member assigned an activity to carry out and reports back to the team upon completion of the task. According to Tyala (2004), when consensus is fully comprehended and well facilitated, group members will feel that they personally contribute to the decisions.

As mentioned above planning together as a team of school board members encourage good relationship between parent members and teachers and between school board members and the school principal.

2.4.2. Good Relationship with the Principal

It is very essential to establish a good relationship between the school boards and the principal for the school board members in order to execute their roles effectively. According to Mokoena (2011) to enhance good relationship principals must be willing to let go of the traditional roles where there were little or no communication between the school and the parents' community. Regular and open communication, in which school members share their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, is a must for school boards' successes. This is complemented by Barber (2005) who states that a positive relationship between board members rely on good communication, the ability of team members to express and honour individual points of views and the ability to arrive at a consensus on what is best for all learners. The Education Committee from England (2013-2014) suggests that when school board members experience disagreement it is best to clear up the points before they leave the discussion. It is very important that school board members respect each other, agree to disagree and focus their attention on school goals and objectives.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009, p.112) outline the following factors that are necessary to encourage good relationship between school principal and the parent members:

- School principal must support the school board members in all its efforts to govern the school;
- principals must create conducive environment where school boards are accepted as partners in education and in the same vein, parents must

support the principal to achieve the ultimate objective, namely, to educate the learners;

- school board members should respect the position of the principal as the professional leader of the school and as the person responsible for the day to day management and administration of the school;
- Both the school principals and other parent members should respect each other to the extent that all action and discussions should take place in an atmosphere of harmony; and
- there should be a willingness on the part of the school principal and other school boards members to invest time, personnel, materials and facilities to achieve the goals set.

According to Kumalo (2009, p. 25) “the school board and the school principal need to spend time learning together and agreeing on approaches to building leadership that will have an impact on achieving the goals and objectives.” Based on this learning process clear expectations on the part of both the school board members and the school principal can then be set. Moreover, Kumalo (2009) states that well-defined and clear role descriptions of both the school boards and the school principal are critical to a productive relationship. Each must have a clear understanding of their respective roles and be willing to share resources. In addition, Cowell (2011) states that school board members must understand their collective authority and responsibilities, working collaboratively with each other and with the principal to achieve school goals. Aipinge (2007) suggests that this can be done through

attending annual boards' retreat where they review their mission, their commitment, and behaviour as members of the board. In this retreat parents' representative, teachers and the school principals come together to evaluate their work together and encourage all parents to share responsibilities.

Moreover, Schofield (2009) states that school boards only work well when the principals and teachers want them to work well. Mncube (2007) suggests that if school board members are not performing their roles effectively, ample space should be created for parents to participate sufficiently in school board so that they engage fruitfully on discussions dealing with school governance. Such space would allow the school board members voice to be heard. Allowing school board members' voice to be heard creates a greater potential for parents to be part of school governance which, in turn, leads to the nature of cooperation advocated by Schofield (2009) which she termed "join up governance." This implies that allowing school board members to participate in school governance leads to cooperative governance in school matters.

2.4.3. Effective Meetings

Barber (2005) advises that for the school board members to make best use of time at meetings, they should carefully plan meeting agendas which focus on the most important items. The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004, p.12) suggests the following points to be considered when planning the school board the meeting's agenda:

- set up the rules for the meeting including the issues of confidentiality;
- think about important matters that need to be discussed;
- consult other for advice;
- participants should receive the agenda of the meeting well in advance to allow them to prepare and participate fully.

According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) scheduling regular meetings allows school board members to form a close team relationship, stay focused on important issue, and spend less time updating and recalling issues which have already been discussed. Meeting times and allocations should be flexible to meet school boards' needs. Barber (2005) further emphasizes that the chairperson of the school board should make sure that decisions are clearly and properly taken. Supporting this notion, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004) states that agreement must be re-affirmed before the meeting closes, in order to help the minute taker to record clear what was agreed. It is therefore the task of the school board chairperson to ensure that school boards receive timely and accurate information for all areas for which it is responsible.

According to the Ministry of Education (2005), school board members have a lot to do in a limited time. They should discuss and identify priority issues in which they need to be directly involved including decisions which in or by law must be taken by the full school boards and delegate the rest to committees, working groups or individuals. Similarly, van der Westhuizen (2005) states that the school board

members have to form structures that will assist them to perform their duties with ease. van der Westhuizen (2005, p. 132) further states that for the school board members to work smoothly within the structure that has been established, the structure should:

- be given specific activities and functions;
- be aware what the other structures are doing so as to avoid duplication and a confusion of roles;
- support each other and not fight over school board resources; and
- be aware of the priorities of the school at all times

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (2004) states that it is very important to set clear terms of reference for delegation, so that everyone knows what they are expected to do, how and when they should report back to the full school boards.

2.4.4. Training and Development

According to Barber (2005), most parent members are not specialised in the field of education which make it difficult for them to participate in educational matters. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2009) also add that the roles of the school boards are complex and one cannot expect these roles to be performed effectively without some training that go beyond the normal process of picking up the duties. Tsotetsi et al.

(2008) share similar opinions and stress that training based on the needs of the school boards is believed to be a prerequisite for effective cooperative school governance.

Various studies done by Quan-Baffour (2006); Niitembu (2006); Mncube et al. (2010) have indicated that training in school board roles is fundamental in preparing and equipping school board members with skills in their roles. Adams and Waghid (2005) view training as a way in which school board members can obtain relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively. Tsotetsi et al. (2008) also observe that without training school board members cannot exercise their school governing responsibilities successfully. Therefore, training of school governing bodies remains a priority.

According to Ngidi (2004), training can help school board members; particularly the newly appointed ones to understand how to interpret school and national policies and regulations on education and it improve their awareness and understanding of curriculum-related activities. Carpenter (2011) and Mncube et al., (2010) state that for the school board members to be competent and able make informed decision, they must be trained and attend more workshop.

In a study done in South Africa, Mncube (2012) found out that school boards received only once off training, which was perceived as being relatively unhelpful. School boards' performance may only improve if training is provided to all school boards members on a regular basis therefore, Mncube (2012), it is important that they undergo on-going training such as induction training (especially when they are new).

Van Rooyen and Rossouw (2007) observe that there are different types of training for different people, for experienced governors and for the newly appointed. It is for this purpose that the Education Committee from England (2013-2014) advises that all school board members, new and existing should attend on-going training to improve the effectiveness in the roles and to keep abreast of the development that may affect their school and role in school boards. Mestry (2007) and Sinalumbu (2013) state that school board members should also be encouraged to attend as many workshops, when possible, on issues such as educational law and financial management. Their attendance may help them to improve skills in carrying out their roles. Tsotetsi et al. (2008, p. 387) argue that “the ability of the parent members to govern the school depend on their skills, knowledge and experience of governance learned through training.” While taking cognisance of the effect of training, the researcher acknowledges that the amount and nature of training school board receive is not clear. The question of who should provide training is also not clear.

Adams and Waghid (2005) state that the regional office must establish a programme to provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and provide continuing training to school boards to promote the effective performance of their functions. After the election of school board members there must be training intervention (Onderi and Makori, (2012). Therefore the state’s responsibility, in partnership with the stakeholders, must be to develop on-going capacity of school boards, which ensure school board members perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Kindiki (2009) further observes that if the regional officers failed to deliver training, school administration should organize workshops

and in-service training courses for their school boards to enlighten them on the changing trends. It is clear that it is the regional officers' responsibility to facilitate the training of school boards in order to enable them to perform their duties.

The Education Committee from England (2013-2014) suggests that a key consideration in ensuring school board effectiveness is the quality and the availability of training venues. Although this requires extra time, commitment to travel to other venues, it is recommended that undertaking on-going training during the period of service is imperative for the enhancement of effective school boards. To avoid too much travelling and extra time for travelling training of this kind can be done through peer- support. One good example of this type of training is when less experienced school board members receive mentoring from those with more experience.

Ndou (2012, p.4) suggest that the training of school board members can take place at the following levels:

- school level: Principal should organise workshops for all school board members for a particular school;
- cluster level: The cluster head should organise school board members workshop at cluster level where representatives from each school participate and report back to the entire school board members in their school; and

- specific groups of school boards according to various portfolios:
Workshops may be organized for school principals, treasures, secretaries and chairpersons.

Barber (2005) states that school boards should carefully consider their training and support needed when drawing up their school budgets to ensure effective training. Mestry (2004) advises that the school board chairpersons have overall responsibility for the training of its members. This implies that it is imperative that school board chairpersons are made aware that the overall responsibilities for the training of their members are rest on their shoulder.

Mncube et al. (2010) conducted interviews with parent members in South Africa to get their views on how to enhance school board effectiveness one of the common suggestions was that the community could be sensitised by means of coverage in newspapers and on national radios and televisions, so that by the time the parents are elected to the body they already know what is expected of them as members of the school boards.

2.4.5. The Profile of the School Board Members

According to Barber (2005) there is a need to value the work that they do. Onderi and Makori (2012) state that by valuing school boards and making their roles

attractive and worthwhile, school can attract better school boards. Quan-Baffour (2006) suggests that since parents are serving the school for three years without any pay, the best that the school can give back to these parents is to empower them so that at the end of the three years, they are much better than what they were before they joined the school. These school board members could be ready to take up any other leadership positions in the community because of the learning they got from the school. Mncube et al. (2010) also proposes that awarding due recognition to parents who serve on school boards might help to correct matters of cultural injustice. Mncube et al. (2010) further state that most skilled parents may be co-opted onto the school to provide skills that are lacking in the operation of school boards. In addition, principals must know how to create conditions that foster empowerment and release their control over other stakeholders (Mncube, 2007).

2.5. Chapter Summary

Chapter two discussed the legal right of the school boards, the challenges faced by school boards in carrying out their roles and some strategies that can be employed to enhance the school boards effectiveness also discussed in this chapter. To narrow the study to the area of challenges faced by school boards and the strategies to enhance school board effectiveness, the researcher began reading widely cited articles and other resources on the related topic. Although literature presents a convincing evidence of the presence of school boards in most schools, it further indicates that school board members in different countries including Namibia are faced with various challenges in carrying out their roles.

The literature findings indicated that lack of educational background, the lack of clear demarcation between the roles of the teaching staff and those of the other school board members, lack of training and issues of power among stakeholders, were some of the barriers to school board effectiveness. Furthermore, the literature reviewed concluded that school board members' roles are seen as a burden to them and that the state of rural school board members is viewed as capacity deficit. In such a state, the school board members are, therefore, limited in terms of performing their roles.

The strategies to enhance school boards' effectiveness revealed in the literature include working as a team, training for school board members, good relationship among stakeholders' and effective meetings. Finally different studies were reviewed to identify gaps in knowledge (in this study) on how school boards perceive challenges that they face in executing their roles.

The next chapter (3) discuss the methodology that was employed to collect and analyse the data.

CHAPTER 3:RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an account on how the study was designed and conducted. It includes the research design, the forms of data collected, and the types of data collection strategies employed to help explain the challenges faced by school board members in carrying out their roles.

3.2 Research Design

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) define a research design as the plan which specifies when, from whom and under what conditions the data are to be obtained in order to answer the research questions. A research design also indicates how the research objectives will be attained and how exactly will they help to reach a conclusion or solution to the research problem (De Vos, 2002). The current study used a qualitative case study design. This was necessitated by the nature of the research objectives, the form of data that were required, the form of data collection strategies employed and the need for in-depth understanding of challenges facing school boards in rural primary schools. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings the participants make of their sense of their experience within the world (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, qualitative research is naturalistic in nature (Patton, 2002), meaning that participants' behaviour is studied in its natural environment together with its context and no manipulation and control is applied to the subjects of a study as is the case in experimental quantitative research (Patton, 2002). This means that qualitative researchers collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the phenomenon or problem under study. They do not bring individuals into a lab, nor do they send out instruments for individuals to complete, such as in survey research (Creswell, 2013). Instead, qualitative researchers gather up close information by actually talking directly to people and observing their behaviours and how they act within their context. The research on challenges faced by school boards in rural primary schools in Okahao Circuit required the researcher to reach out to the school board members at the schools. This enabled the researcher to investigate the cases in their natural settings and to help make sense of the situation.

According to Shank (2006), the basic tenet of qualitative inquiry is to seek deep understanding of the phenomenon and not building theories and generalizing knowledge. This study was, therefore, concerned with understanding of individual's perspectives of the world and sought for insight into the challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles in the Omusati Region rather than statistical analysis. To this end, the researcher gave participants the opportunity to express their views on challenges they face in executing their roles. Various approaches used in this qualitative case study are discussed in the sections that follow.

3.3 Population

In the definition used by Best and Kahn (2006), a population is any group of individuals with at least one characteristic in common which distinguishes it from other individuals. In this study, the target population was all the school board members at rural primary schools in Okahao Circuit, Omusati Region.

3.4 Sampling

According to Best and Kahn (2006), a sample is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis. Giving the reason behind sampling, Punch (2009) suggests that researchers select samples and collect data only from the sample because they (researchers) cannot study the whole population. Punch (2009, p.187) further contends that “no study can include everything because you cannot study everyone, everywhere doing everything.” As it was not possible to include everyone in the population to participate in this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling, to ensure that the sample comprised of information-rich participants. Creswell (2013) states that in purposive sampling, participants are chosen on purpose, because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating.

Though challenges facing school boards are experienced in other regions, the researcher investigated the phenomenon only in Okahao Circuit in Omusati region,

for the purpose of obtaining in-depth information. In addition, schools in one circuit are within an accessible distance from one another, which made it easier for the researcher to travel.

The study was conducted at four rural primary schools of the Okahao Circuit in Omusati Region, Namibia. Omusati region was purposefully chosen because the language spoken in that region is the researcher's mother tongue. Therefore, the researcher understands the language spoken in that region very well and would not have to use interpreters. This fluency and understanding of the language afforded the researcher the benefits of clear communication and understanding of the responses of the research participants. Moreover, clear communication ensures accurate understanding, analysis and interpretation of data.

Schools were purposively selected from one cluster because they have school boards that are perceived to be ineffective. In this study, the participant schools were randomly named A, B, C and D in no respective order, for the purpose of anonymity. Participants were also purposively selected. Twenty four participants were initially part of the sample, but only twenty three school board members from four rural primary schools in Okahao Circuit, were interviewed.

The following stratified purposeful sub-samples were selected: at each school, the principal, two teacher members who are highly experienced and three parent members (the chairperson 8/8012546789///and other two parents) that are regarded

as seniors amongst the parent members with experience in school governance, were selected. The researcher, in collaboration with school principals, identified the highly experienced and long serving parents and teachers in the school (all being school board members) who could provide reliable information. In total, six individuals were selected per school. The sample size was designed for a number of twenty four individual participants. This sampling was based on the idea of Strydom and Venter (2002), who state that in stratified sampling, only a few cases can be studied in-depth.

3.5 Research Instruments

The researcher used interview guides (Appendix G), observations sheet (Appendix H) and document review (Appendix I) as data collection instruments for this study. As documented by Patton (2002), by using a combination of observations, interviews and document analysis, the researcher was able to use different data sources to validate and cross check the findings, because each source of data has its strengths and weaknesses. The instruments used are discussed next.

3.5.1 Observation

Qualitative data was obtained through observations. Observation method was used because of its advantage as Cohen, Manion and Marrison (2007), state the distinctive feature of observation as a research data collection technique is that it offers the researcher the opportunities to gather “live” data from naturally occurring social

situations. Besides, the method is flexible (Leedy& Ormrod, 2009) as it allows the researcher to gain first hand insight into some of the challenges faced by school boards in carrying out their duties although not all of the challenges could be observed at first hand. Observation provides there searcher with ways to check for nonverbal expressions of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other and check how much time is spent on various activities (Lichtman, 2013).

In this study, the researcher observed the school board meetings with regard to who chaired the meetings, the roles of the chairperson, items discussed, and school board members' interactions in the meetings and the process of decision-making. How matters of discussion were raised? Were they already prepared or were they raised on the spot? Were they tabled by different members or did they all come from one person, e.g. principal. The researcher spent a week at each school to observe how often parent members visited the school, what brought them to the school, and the relationship between parent members and the teachers. Raymond (2006) stresses that observation should be coupled with interview to gain further insight into what is being observed or investigated, hence the interviews, as explained in the following section, were used to complement the observations.

3.5.2 Interviews

According to De Vos (2002 p.302) an interview is a “systematic method by which a person enters deeply into the life of even a stranger and can bring out needed information and data for the research purpose.” An interview is a product of what interviewee and interviewer talk about and how they talk with each other (Creswell 2013). Through interviews a researcher can obtain a detailed picture of a participant’s accounts of a particular topic (De Vos, 2002). Most of the data were collected through interviews because the researcher was interested in capturing peoples’ knowledge, experience and understanding of phenomenon under study. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data from the participants. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further Creswell (2013).

This instrument was used because it provided relevant questions and guided the researcher not to lose the main focus of the study. In addition, the semi- structured interviews offered the researcher an opportunity to ask probing questions on issues that emerged from the interviewees’ responses and allowed the generalisation of new ideas that would lead to richer data. The participants were also able to give a broader picture of the phenomenon. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Deport (2005) assert that the advantage of an in-depth interview is that reality can be reconstructed from the world of the interviewee, which enables the researcher to obtain information

emerging from the interview. Thus the rich data collected from the school board members through this method are important in understanding the challenges faced by the board members.

The other advantage of this research tool is that it caters for individuals who cannot express their feelings well in group settings (Patton 2002). De Vos et al. (2005) further states that individual face-to-face interviews help interviewers to understand the closed worlds of individuals, families, organisations, institutions and communities. It also helps the interviewers to understand the innermost feelings, attitudes, behaviour and experiences of interviewees, as they are free to speak (Thomas, 2012). Besides that the method is flexible and the researcher is able to follow up areas of interest.

Although interviews have a lot of advantages, it should be emphasised that they consume a lot of time and information may be distorted due to personal bias (Patton, 2002). To counteract the element of biasness from the participants, the researcher spent more time in the field and also established rapport with participants so that they could say what they meant and not what they think the researcher wants to hear as suggested by Mapani (2011).

Basically, the semi- structured interviews was chosen as the most appropriate techniques data collection from participants, because, as describe by Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p.146) interviews provide opportunity for the following:

- To gather data through direct verbal interaction between individuals;

- To gain in-depth understanding of participants and following up, where necessary, for purposes of clarity;
- To foster mutual respect and sharing information with the participants;
- To establish rapport with participants and therefore gaining cooperation;
and
- To conduct the interviews in natural and relaxed settings.

3.5.3 Documents Analysis

According to Patton (2002) document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Patton (2002) further states that “document analysis ... provides a behind-the-scenes look at the [phenomenon] ... about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents. In order to obtain information that cannot be observed, the researcher analysed numerous documents such as meeting agendas items and minutes of past board meetings, invitation letters of past school board meetings, learners’ disciplinary records and tools used to monitor and evaluate schools’ performance.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted at a different rural primary school in Okahao Circuit. No data for the main study was collected from this school to avoid contamination.

The pilot study helped the researcher to ensure that the interview guide was comprehensive and adequate to draw the expected responses that would address the purpose of the study. Questions that were not clear to the participants were identified and rectified beforehand. Furthermore, the pilot study helped the researcher to ensure that all items in the instruments would be understood by participants.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher had obtained a permission letter from the University of Namibia seeking permission from the Regional Education Director, Ministry of Education, to collect data at the four schools in the Okahao Circuit, Omusati Region. Permission to carry out the research at the schools was granted by the Omusati Regional Director (Appendix D).

As per the request of the Regional Director, the researcher ensured that research activities did not interfere with the normal school programmes. School board members' participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and that confidentiality of the school board members' participation in the study was to be strictly observed. The researcher wrote letters to the principals asking for further permission to conduct research at their respective schools. Before going to the schools, the interview guide (Appendixes G, H and I), observation sheets (Appendix J) and document review guide (Appendix K) were prepared and piloted.

The researcher made appointments with the principals for the purpose of introducing herself to the principal; explaining the purpose of the visit and the nature of the study. The researcher also made appointments with participants and briefed them on the nature of the study and its benefits and established rapport with them. Measures of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses were explained to participants. The study was explained both verbally and in writing so as to make participants comfortable and enough time to respond to the questions.

Face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected school board members at each selected school. The choice was given to all participants to choose the language they felt comfortable and able to express themselves very well. As a result all parent and two teachers chose to be interviewed in their vernacular language (Oshiwambo), and the data were translated into English. Principals and the rest of the teachers were interviewed in English.

During interviews, each participant was asked questions that allowed them to reflect on their personal experiences about the challenges they faced in carrying out their roles. The researcher listened attentively, repeated important information to confirm what the participants were saying and allowed them to formulate their thoughts into words without directing them. When necessary, the researcher probed to get clarifications and also encouraged participants to continue speaking. This enabled that the researcher to obtain the data required. Field notes were made during the interviews and all interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' permission.

At the end the semi-structured interviews rich information was obtained from participants.

The researcher observed how school board members participate in meetings, relationships among the school board members, the process of decision-making, meeting process, how meetings were conducted and chaired, and the roles of the chairperson. The researcher was at the school for the whole day for one week and observed how often parent members visited the school, what brought them to the school, and the relationship between parent members and the teachers.

Document analysis was done throughout the study. The initial analysis of documents was used to serve as a frame, which informed the interview guide and the observation checklist. The content of the school documents such as meeting agenda items and minutes of past school board meetings, letters to parents, tools used to monitor and evaluate schools' performance, disciplinary records were reviewed and analysed to access a lot of relevant information available in different records respectively. This process also helped to determine the relationship between what the documents say and what has been obtained from the interviews and observations.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the process of making sense out of data collected by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants said (De Vos, 2002). The researcher conducted content analysis, a method through which a qualitative

researcher may analyse data by interpreting information into categories to examine the relationship among concepts (Patton 2002). Erlendsdotti' (2010) states that after finishing the data collection, it is best to use open coding. Open coding is when the researcher goes over the data carefully and looks for themes and ideas. Therefore, for the purpose of analysis and in line with (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, De Vos 2002), the following process was followed:

As soon as one interview has been transcribed, the researcher would read it carefully over a few times. The data were studied to get a sense of what they contained. In order not to miss any information in the data, the researcher re-read them over carefully a few times.

Before starting with the coding process, the researcher had assigned a different colour to each category. For instance, the category "lack of literacy and understanding" was assigned a purple colour and the category "Decision-making" an orange colour, and so on. As the researcher read the interviews, certain words, phrases and patterns emerged and assigned each one of these themes the colour of the corresponding category. Data were then organised into smaller units, in the form of main concepts, sentences and words.

The researcher went over every line of each theme, and every sentence that was related to each theme was coded with the same colour. Data from observations and documents were presented under corresponding themes and linked to research appropriate questions. This way, the data made sense and gained meaning. Data were then summarised and integrated into the text for reporting.

This process was done after every interview session and involved verbatim transcription of tape recorded data. This included transcribing exactly what was said, noting the tone of the voice, emphasis used, pause and silences and unclear responses (Cohen,et al. 2007). Direct quotes were used extensively to capture what the participants themselves articulated. The whole process of interviewing was done with due consideration of ethical aspects in qualitative research, which are discussed next.

3.9 Research Ethics

Ethical issues refer to conducting research that benefits participants in a positive way. Punch (2009) explains an ethical act as doing no harm to research participants. It is also concerned with respecting the dignity of research participants and ensuring a certain level of voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality.

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that participants must agree voluntarily to participate without physical or psychological coercion, and their agreement must be based on full and open information, Maximum cooperation and goodwill of the participants were obtained as advised in Cohen et al.(2002). All participants were informed regarding the purpose of the study. The informed consent agreement form (AppendixJ) was explained to participants at the beginning of each interview. The consent form stated clearly that participation was voluntary. No participant was

forced and informed consent for all participants was sought, which ensured that participation was free and voluntary. Participants were also granted freedom to withdraw from the study without any pressure or penalties.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

All participants were assured that information obtained would be kept confidential and their identities would be protected. Names and contact details of participants were not recorded and to ensure anonymity, all participants in this study were referred to as members of the school board. The confidentiality and anonymity was ensured through a coding system where the real names of schools and school board members were replaced with pseudonyms. Participants were also assured that their responses were for research purposes only and would not be used for other purpose than this.

3.9.3 Trustworthiness and Credibility

Access to the documents and records were negotiated with the principal in advance. The researcher was granted approval and authorisation by the school principals to annotate and directly quote from the documents collected from the school files. Falsification of data was avoided by reporting exact findings that emerged from the study. Once analysed, the data were kept for 5 years in a safe place that only the

researcher have access to, then they will be discarded after the completion of the study.

The study reports were not shared with individuals who did not participate in the study.

3.9.4 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher employed a multiple data collection strategies namely, interviews, observations and documents analysis. Multiple sources of data increased the reliability of the findings. This combination enabled the researcher to write down verbal conversations and direct quotations from participants.

The data were triangulated by comparing the notes taken from observations and during the interviews with the answers provided by all participants. The researcher did this to strengthen the data from one technique to another, rule out their weakness and above all to provide rich and valid data. Furthermore, the researcher used triangulation to examine this phenomenon from different data sources in order to validate the data. This strategy has reduced the risks of validity threats such as bias from the research.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology. The designing of this qualitative case study was deemed necessary because of the nature of the research purpose and questions, the kind of data that were required, the forms of data collection strategies required and the need for in-depth discussion, and the understanding of the phenomenon of the difficulties. For example, the use of interviews and observations provided opportunity for interactions, listening and direct observations of actions and responses from the interviewees.

The population consisted of all school board members (teachers and parents) from the four rural primary schools in the Okahao circuit, Omusati Region. Purposeful sampling strategies were employed to draw the sample: stratified purposeful and convenience sampling. According to Patton (2002), in purposive sampling, subjects are selected because of some characteristic of interest to the researcher. The next chapter presents the data and discusses insight from the key findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in rural primary schools in executing their roles. The previous chapter described the design of the study and highlighted the various approaches taken in the collection and analysis of data. In this chapter, data generated are presented. Quotes are used extensively to provide a qualitative “feel” of the responses and the actual things said by the participants.

4.2 Profile of the Participants

This phenomenon was investigated at four primary schools, namely, schools A, B, C, and D in the Omusati Region. Altogether twenty three participants were involved in this research. At school D the chairperson of the school board was not available for the study.

Table 1 illustrates the profile of the participants:

PARTICIPANTS	GENDER		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
Principals	3	1	4
Teacher members	4	4	8
Parent members	4	7	11

Grand total	11	12	23
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The participants consisted of four principals, eight teacher members who are highly experienced and eleven parents (the chairpersons and other parent members) who were regarded as seniors amongst the parent members and have experience in school governance were selected. Out of the 8 teachers, four teachers were serving as school board secretaries, while four were additional members. Of the 11 parent members, one parent had a Grade10, military Academy and College Lithography; one had Grade 10 educational level while the majority (9) had below Grade six education levels. There were four principals, three chairpersons, four treasurers and twelve parent members.

This study did not intend to compare the four schools, but to collect the views on the challenges faced by school board members. Therefore, there was no need to scrutinise the views per school.

The data is presented under the themes that emerged from the data analysis as the main or repetitive themes and categories which the researcher used to facilitate the presentation of the findings. The emergent categories were:

- Roles of the school board members
- Challenges to school board effectiveness
- Strategies to overcome the challenges to school board effectiveness.

These major categories each revealed further subcategories and these are presented under relevant major categories.

4.3 The Roles of the School Board

4.3.1 Principals' Perceptions on the Role of the School Board

4.3.1.1 Need for the School Board

From the interviews with principals it emerged that it was very important for a school to have the school boards, because they are the highest decision-making body. The principal of school A stressed that the school board should be there for the smooth running and governance of the school. The principal of school D shared similar opinions that school board members govern the school and make sure everything happening at the school was done fairly.

The principal of schools C and D stated that school board members were there to promote the interest of the school and that of the learners. The principal of school C further explained that teachers represent their colleagues (teachers) who were not members of the school board while parents represent other parents. If any decisions have to be taken, they take decisions on their behalf either on the parents' or the teachers' side.

The following were mentioned to be the roles of the school board members from the principals in the study:

4.3.1.2 Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members

All principals responded that the school board members recommended the appointment of new staff members at their schools. In order to understand exactly how school board members performed their roles the principals interviewed answers were as follows.

For instance, the principal of school C indicated that during the interviews teachers asked questions while parent members observed and later gave their input as to whether the interviews were fairly done or not. He added that if parent members were not in agreement with an interview outcome they did not recommend the candidate. The principal of school D indicated that school board members set criteria to be used to get the suitable candidates and have the right to appoint or reject the candidate. She further stated that the appointment of staff members would not go through without the endorsement of the school board members.

Sharing his experience, the principal of school B expressed that the school board advertised the post and made sure a suitable candidate is selected. The principal of school B was concerned about the time spent by the regional office to appoint teachers. He said that the regional office delayed the appointment of new teachers and learners were without teachers for a long period of time.

4.3.1.3 Instilling Discipline among Teachers and Staff Members

Instilling discipline among teachers and learners were mentioned as one of the roles of the school board members. The importance of school board in disciplinary issues was stressed by most of the principals. For example, the principal of school A said, “The school board members were really performing their roles because they attended to both teachers and learners grievances.” The principal further stressed that one of the roles of school board was to listen to disciplinary issues among learners and teachers. The principal pointed out that it was the roles of the school board members to make sure teachers did not apply corporal punishment on learners, suspend them from lessons and that there were no teachers who absent themselves from work without the principal’s permission.

The principal of school C felt that school board members were there to monitor principals and teachers. He indicated that if there were no school board members, teachers and principals would behave the way they want to behave. He further stated that teachers knew that the school board members were watching whatever they were doing. Furthermore, the principal of school C added that school board members observed even each other’s behaviour. If a school board member misbehaved, school board members would discuss with him or her and take disciplinary measure against the member.

The disciplinary role was also stressed by the principal of school B when he said,

If learners came late to school, school board would request the parent to come with his or her child to the office. We met with parents to advise him or her to come to school on time. From there the parent made sure the child came early to school.

However, instilling discipline was not mentioned by the principal of school D and because of this the principal might not encouraged instilling discipline by school board members.

4.3.1.4 Addressing Problems Affecting the School

According to the principals interviewed, school board members address various problems affecting schools, especially issues that affect learners, teachers and the school as a whole.

The principal from school B indicated that school board members discussed school problems such as the photocopy machine, educational excursions and school finance. Principal of school D stated that in their meeting they discussed school building, maintenance and learners progress.

The principal of school C indicated that in their meeting, as school board members, they discussed how they could create a good relationship between the school and the community. According to this principal, a good working relationship between the

school and the community encouraged learners' performance. He explained that if there was no good working relation between the school and community it would negatively affected learners' performance; therefore they make sure they created good relationship to enhance performances. He further indicated that it was the roles of the school board members to resolve any disagreement between the school and parents' community.

Principals of schools A and C both indicated that they discussed teachers' behaviours. Principal of school A elaborated, with an example, that if a staff member misbehaved the school board members would invite him or her to a face-to-face meeting. In this meeting the school board members would hold a discussion with the concerned staff member and request the principal to report the case to the circuit office. The principal of school C stressed that school board members have the mandate to recommend to the principal the possible actions to be taken against the teachers who are not carrying out their duties as expected. The principal of school C further stated that, "The school board found out that some teachers' performance were not good and motivated them to work hard."

4.3.1.5 Decision Making

From the interviews with principals of schools A, B, C and D, it emerged that decisions were collectively taken by school board members with little guidance from the principals. The principal of school C indicated that, "the parent members have

more power than the principal and teacher members because it was their children who are taught; hence whenever decisions were made we listened at whatever they were saying [sic].”

The principal of school A echoed similar sentiments that during their meeting if a matter was complex, parent members through the chairperson took decisions on the issue. According to this principal teachers waited a bit for the parents to give their inputs on the matter before they gave their suggestions. The principal further stressed that the parent members had a greater influence in making decision than the teachers.

The principal of school B stated that, “I always leave parent members to decide first, if I know their decision was against the policies then I would give my opinions, that if we do A, B or C, it would be much better.” The principal of school D shared the same views that the teacher members had more influence in the decision-making because they have more understanding of educational matters. The principal of school C indicated that,

As a principal I gave them [school board members] necessary information. I think you would see this in our school board meeting minutes and agendas. My name appeared too much and sometimes I scratched my head and asked why always the principal. It was not that I dominated, but because I am the custodian, I ensured that I was at the fore front of the school. Anything happen at the school I would be held accountable. My influence was too

much, although I did not had the final answer of what must be done. My influence was too much because anything happened at school I had to answer.

He further added that,

I helped them to perform their roles. Our school board members were responsible for everything at school, but they were so quiet. I consistently helped and guided them to the extent that I end up doing most of their roles.”

From the document review of the school board meetings minutes and agendas items at school C, it became clear that all the topics discussed were from the principal’s side and the principal influenced almost every decision taken. The roles of the parents in these meetings were limited to opening prayers, votes of thanks and closing prayers.

4.3.1.6 Conducting Classroom Visits

The principal of school B explained that school board members at his school conducted classroom visits to observe the lessons. He further explained that sometimes school board members moved around the classes to observe whether effective teaching and learning was taking place.

The principal of school C indicated that school board members at his school visited teachers in classrooms. He was confident that through classroom observations school board members find out whether learners were taught or not. He added that less

learners' written work would show that learners were insufficiently taught. The principal of school C further confidently stressed that the school board analysed the previous performances of the school to determine whether the performance have been improving or not. He said,

I remembered giving them the examination statistics for the previous year. I gave them the subjects of concern and they found out that for the past four years learners had been poorly performing in that specific subject.

The principal of school D expressed similar sentiments. She said sometimes a parent member came in the classroom while teachers were busy teaching. She further explained that after classroom observations school board members give feedback to parent members and other parents about their observations.

However, conducting classroom observations was not identified as a school board role from the principal of school A and because of this he might not encouraged class visits by school board members.

4.3.1.7 Supporting the Principals and the Teachers

School board members' assistance to principals and teachers was expressed by all principals. The principal of school B revealed that parent members came early to observe how learners arrived at school. He stated that if learners came late to school

they miss the lesson and would not benefit from teaching. The principal further stated that parent members gave support to teachers and principals in successfully carrying out the activities of the school feeding program. He further explained that parent members sometimes volunteered their scarce time and energy to come and cook as well as to feed the learners. The principal of school B stated that this role of the school board members was very important because when learners were hungry it was difficult for them to fully participate in the lesson.

The principal of school C indicated that the chairperson of the school board members chaired meetings for both school board and parents meetings. He stated that parents attended and listened very well when the meeting was chaired by a person in high position (e.g. another parent) or a well-known person from the community. This was better than listening to the principal or a teacher. The principal of school C further said their former school board chairperson was a regional councillor and he was highly respected by parents. When they had meetings, parents fully attended and always listened attentively when he spoke. In addition, the principal said the school board members also assisted them in organising school bazaars.

Similarly, the principal of school D expressed the same appreciation on how the school board assisted the school. She indicated that they invited school board members to staff meetings and gave them a platform to address teachers regarding learners' performance. In this matter the principal of school C stated, "Sometimes the school board honestly mentioned the names of the teachers who failed to carry out

their duties. Another assistance mentioned by the principal of school C was that the school board created the relationship between the school and community. As the principal from school B strongly put it, parent members were the link between the school and the community. He said when school board member heard something that affected the school from the community they informed the principal. For instance, he said there were teachers and learners who were reportedly abusing alcohol in the surrounding area, parent members informed the school management.

The principal of school A also expressed that if parent members picked up something from the community that need to be discussed, they liaised with the principal. The principal of school A cited some example of how the school board assisted the school. He said,

I know some of the concerns and issues reached my table through the school board members. School board organised parents' days and parents' meetings. Also when problem arise, school broad call the parent of the specific child.

Another support identified by the principal of school B was that school board members mobilised parents to take part in school activities. For example school B had been recently renamed and the parent members went out to mobilise other parents to donate towards this functions. It also emerged that schools approached other parents or community members through parent member of their school boards. The principal of school D confirmed this by saying, "Sometimes when we needed other parents we sent school board members to approach them."

4.3.1.8 School Boards' Greatest Strengths

It emerged from the responses of the principals interviewed that among the roles that they are performing there were some roles that they were performing effectively.

The principal of school A said,

I can see the school board members of my schools as a committed body. They made several recommendations on issue affecting the school. They also respond positively and timely to any invitation send to them regarding the meeting to discuss various issues.

The principal of school B also expressed a similar opinion. He said the school board members at their school were motivated because they attended most of the parents meetings, and they took part in decision making.

The principal of school D also expressed that school board members were present at school to recommend the staff members for appointments”

The principal interviewed acknowledge that there were some roles they carried out successfully, for example, they recommended the appointment of staff members and discussed various matters affecting their schools.

4.3.2 Teachers' Perceptions on the Roles of the School Board

4.3.2.1 Need for the School Board

From the interview with the teacher members from schools A, B, C and D, it came out that the board members made school decisions. Expressing his opinion the teacher member from school C stated that the school board was needed to control the school and check the school's operations. The teacher members from school C further indicated that school boards were necessary to monitor how things were done at school. Furthermore, a teacher member from school A stated that the aim for the school to have a school board was to enable communication between teachers, learners and the community.

Another teacher member from school A indicated that the school board members are the actual heads of schools. He added,

“If a school did not have a school board it would be like a headless working body. The school board is needed to govern the school and to bring the school at the expected level.”

From the interview with teacher members it came out that, the school board, the highest decision making body of the school, had different roles to perform at school. The following were mentioned to be the roles of the school board from teachers of schools A, B, C and D:

4.3.2.2 Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members

A teacher member from school B explained the roles of the parent members during the interview. He said,

The roles of the parent members in the selection of new staff members have stages. The first stage was the short listing of the candidates. They have to be present in the interview and ask questions. They have the role to recommend the suitable candidate for appointment.

The researcher had attended an interview at school B and none of the parent members asked questions.

A teacher member from school A expressed his experience on the roles of the school board members during the selection of the candidate. He said, “Usually if candidates were not selected through the interview, school board members would go through the application forms to select the suitable candidate.”

A teacher member from school C indicated that due to language barrier the parent members do not take part in the interview process. They observe and give recommendations based on their observations.

The teacher members from school D did not cite recommendation for the appointment of staff members as the role of the school board

4.3.2.3 Instilling Discipline among the Learners and Teachers

During the interviews with teacher members from schools A and C, they indicated that disciplining learners and teachers was one of their roles. The teacher members from school C indicated that their school board conducted disciplinary hearing for learners and teachers when necessary. He further clarified that if there was an undisciplined learner or teacher in the school, the school board comes in to advise those with disciplinary problems and decide on the disciplinary actions to be taken. Sharing similar sentiments, a teacher member from school A, explained that the school principal usually calls the school board members to reprimand the learner after the teachers and management attempt failed.

A teacher member from school B explained that at their school it was the roles of the teachers, and not the school board, to discipline learners. A teacher member further stated that since they were at school it was more convenient for them to discipline learners.

A teacher member from school D did not cite instilling discipline among teachers and learners as one of the roles of the school board.

4.3.2.4 Conducting Classroom Visits

During the interview, the teacher members from schools A and C mentioned that their school board members conducted class visits to check whether teachers were teaching. A teacher member from school C explained that school board member conducted class visit to inspect learners' written work and observe learners' classroom behaviour.

Likewise, a teacher member from school A shared his experience that school board members conducted classroom observations in order to observe how teachers were teaching.

The teacher members from school B and D did not cite class visit as one of the roles of the school board.

4.3.2.5 Addressing Problems Affecting the Schools

During the interviews, the teacher members mentioned that school board members discussed different matters in their meetings. For example, both teacher members from school B and D indicated that they discussed learners' behaviours, how to improve learners' performance and learners' late coming. A teacher member from school D further indicated that if there is an indiscipline learner or a teacher in the school, the school board would discuss it and decide on the action to reprimand him or her.

A teacher member from school A indicated that they discussed the use of school finance by the school. He further explained that the school board controlled the use of money in the school, for instance, if the school wanted to buy books the request had to go through the school board. Similarly if the learners and the teachers were going out for school excursion, the school board members have to decide how much and how the money should be used during the school tour.

A teacher member from school C shared similar ideas that in their meeting they planned and organised meetings to motivate the learners. A teacher member from school C further explained that in these meetings they also decided on topics for discussion during parents meetings and divided topics for discussed among themselves.

The improvement of learners' performances was identified by another teacher member from school C as one of the topics discussed in the school board meeting. The teacher member added that the school board discussed how to improve learners' performance, problems they came across with as well as how to solve them. He further expressed that they also studied the examination results to determine the improvement needed. On a similar issue, the teacher member from school B confirmed that they discussed issues as they arose and tried to find solutions.

The document analysis of the minutes of the school board meeting at school C confirmed that school board members discussed how to improve learners' performance; however the topics to be discussed in the parents meeting were all suggested by the principal and the teacher members.

Strategies to improve learners discipline were absent from the minute of the school board meetings from schools A, B and D.

4.3.2.6 Decision Making

It emerged from all teacher members interviewed that collective decisions were taken during school board meeting. A teacher member from school B said, "The influence of the principal, teachers and parents in decision-making was of equal value because we are all board members." Similar sentiment was shared by teacher members from schools C and D who explained that they take collective decision during their meetings. Just like the principal from school C, a teacher member from school B identified parents' low level of education as a concern when decisions were taken. The teacher explained that,

The chairperson of our school was a parent and he always chaired the meeting and led the decisions, but to some extends the principal had [more] influence because he was in charge of the school and he better understood the policies. He interfered more often just to guide the member on the policies about the issues on the table so that we may not contravene the policies.

A teacher member from school B further explained that during meetings the principal gave them the advantages and disadvantages of the decision of what they were about to take, but at the end they agreed on one thing. Furthermore, a teacher member explained that a school board member, who seemed not to understand why a certain decision has to be taken, was assisted. He said, “If one board member did not understand we explained to him or her. We then continued with our decisions after this.”

Similarly, a teacher member from school C expressed that if one school board member could not agree with other members, he or she asked other board members to re-evaluate the decision before a final decision was taken. A teacher member also clarified his involvement in the decision making that it was not that high. He said, “I could only decide if the discussion was on sport, which I knew or may be on issues related to technology, because of the age group, or maybe my subject, but only to the extent that it benefited the learners”.

The teacher member from schools C and D explained that they took collective decision during their meetings.

4.3.2.7 Supporting for the Principal and the Teachers

Teacher members who were interviewed indicated that school board members supported principals and teachers in many ways. For example, a teacher member from school B stated that school board conducted class visits to observe the teachers

while teaching and give feedback to the concerned teachers and the principal about their findings. Just like with the principals, another support identified by the teacher members was attending and contribution to discussions during parents meeting. A teacher member also reported that when there were issues about teaching and learning at school, the board members tried to give their inputs on how to improve.

A teacher member from school A indicated that school board members gave advice to teachers. He explained that they had discussions with new teachers and informed them what was expected from them before they started with their work. Another teacher member from school A shared similar experience that the school board discussed and found solutions to the problem of teachers who come late and leave earlier from school.

A similar support was also experienced at school C where school board members motivated teachers whose work was not up to standard so that they could improve their work. A teacher member from school C said that school board members came in to motivate teachers who did not do most of their work and encouraged them to do better.

A teacher member from school C also mentioned another support from the parent members. He mentioned that they always talked to the village headmen requesting them to discourage learners from their villages not to abuse alcohol. A teacher member from school C further stated that parent members motivated teachers and the principal to work hard in order to improve the school's performance.

Networking between the school and the community was another support mentioned by teacher members interviewed. Specifically, a teacher member from school B, stated that their school community hears school activities through school board members. He said, “School board links the school with the community by taking any message from the school to the community and vice versa.

The teacher members from schools B and C stated that their school boards assisted the schools to organise parent meetings. Another form of support was expressed by from school A that during parents meeting school board encouraged parents to send their children to school.

4.3.2.8 School Boards’ Greatest Strength

Sharing her view on school boards’ greatest strength, a teacher member from school A, stated that parent members gave more advice to teachers and the principal, through meetings and sometimes motivate learners during assembly. A teacher member from school A indicated that all school board members attended meetings including urgent meetings. Financial management and recommendation of teachers was identified by a teacher member from school B, as the key roles that school boards performed very well. The teacher said, “School boards understand well the use of school finance. They decide how the money should be used.”

Sharing the similar sentiment, a teacher member from school C explained how well they performed their roles. He stated that the greatest strength of the school board was that they motivated learners especially during August and November

examinations and throughout the year. He further explained that they motivated learners to refrain from bad influences like alcohol and drug abuse. They also talked to them about teenage pregnancies. In addition he said,

“One thing again about our school board members is that they turned up to meetings. We meet four times a term but they are always present.”

4.3.3 Chairpersons’ Perceptions on the Roles of the School Board

4.3.3.1 Need for the School Board

From the interview with the chairpersons from schools A, B and C it became clear that it was necessary for the schools to have the school boards.

The school board chairperson from school B stated that the school board was the highest decision making body elected by the school, parents and community in order to oversee what was happening at the school. He further explained that whoever is at the school whether learners, teachers, non-teaching staff or the school board had to make sure that whatever is happening at the school was done as per the ministerial policies.

Sharing the same sentiments the chairperson from school A stated that the school boards were necessary to oversee their children’s education. The chairperson from school C added that it was necessary for every school to have a school board in order

to assist the teachers and the principal in carrying out their duties. All chairpersons stated that sometimes they chair meetings but in most cases the principal chaired meetings.

From these interviews, it also became evident that the chairpersons were aware that school boards, as the highest bodies of the school system, had different roles to perform. These are discussed in the sections that follow, as expressed by the chairpersons of the school boards of schools A, B and C.

4.3.3.2 Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members

From the interviews with the school board chairpersons from schools A, B and C the recommendation for the appointment of new staff members emerged as one of the key roles of the school boards. The chairperson from school A explained,

As soon as the school management, through the principal, informed the school board of any need for a teacher at school, the chairperson would convene a school board meeting to study the applications and recommend the applicants appropriate for the interview. The school management would short list the candidate but we must be given feedback with regard to who was shortlisted and who was not. We then conduct the interview and those who performed well at high institutions and awarded at previous schools were in better position for recommendation.

No ideas or opinions on the recommendation for appointment of staff members were forwarded on this matter by the chairperson from school B and C.

4.3.3.3 Instilling Discipline among the Teachers and the Learners

Following the interviews with the chairpersons from schools A, B and C it emerged that school board plays a big role in instilling discipline among the learners.

The chairperson from school B specifically indicated that they had undisciplined learners and therefore in many cases, they were called to discipline learners. She said parents of undisciplined learner were called to meetings with school board members, teachers and the concerned learners in order to advise learners on good behaviour expected of them.

The school board chairperson from school C expressed that some days they stood at the school gate to observe the arrival of teachers and learners. The chairperson further put it clear that if there were teachers or learners who arrived late they would be advised to change such an unwanted behaviour.

Instilling discipline among teachers and learners by school board members did not surface from the chairperson of school A.

4.3.3.4 Maintaining School Facilities

The chairperson from school C stated that it was the role of the school board to make sure that the school had enough buildings and furniture. He further explained that if the school was in need of a building or furniture, the school board would request assistance from the Region Office through the office of the Inspector of Education. To this end, he said, “In fact we had a chairpersons’ meeting last week at the circuit office, where I indicated to the Inspector of Education that our school buildings including the office of the principal were too old.”

The same experience of school board members being responsible for the school buildings were also shared by the chairperson from school B who expressed that, “We took care of our school property. ”She explained that they had noticed that the toilet facilities at their school were very risk for children because they were in dilapidated conditions. She further explained that children used bushes to release themselves and this had a negative impact on learners’ social behaviour because they laughed at each other.”

During the school visit, the researcher observation confirmed that the toilet at school B was truly falling apart and learners could fall in if they used it.

4.3.3.5 Supporting for the Principal and the Teachers

The chairpersons interviewed reported that they supported the principals and teachers in teaching and managing the schools.

The chairperson from school B pointed out that she motivated poor performing teachers to improve their performance or to be moved to other grade where their services deemed to be fitting. She further expressed that the school board placed the young and energetic teachers at Grade 1 because they wanted the children to receive good a foundation at an early age.

The chairperson from school C shared similar sentiments as he said “Well, the school board assisted the principal by motivating children to work hard and to see to it that they were well disciplined. The chairperson from school B confidently indicated that their school board supported teachers and principal by creating good cooperation between the school and the community. The chairperson narrated a story on how school board members assisted the parent of a child who was suspended from the class. She said,

Yesterday we met to discuss how to assist a learner who was suspended from classes. The teacher suspended a learner, but when his parent came to school he was told to wait for the principal who was on leave. When the school board learned about this, we decided to call the parent, the child and the teacher. We listened to both part (the child, the teacher and the parent) and

after a cross analysis of the case, we requested the teacher to allow a child to attend lessons. This was how we assisted the teacher and the principal.

The chairperson from school A pointed out that teachers invited school board members at the beginning of the school year to celebrate together with them, their achievements and to discuss how they could further improve on their weaknesses. He further stated that they offered counselling to teachers, learners and other parents.

At school A the chairperson indicated that school board discussed all difficulties and solved problems the school experienced. She gave an example of how the school board solved a problem of the noise from a nearby bar which disturbed teaching and learning. She said “we discussed with the bar owner and this problem was solved amicably because we explained the disadvantages of the noises from the bar.

4.3.3.6 Addressing Problems affecting the School

During the interviews with the chairpersons of the three school boards, it emerged that different issues affecting school were discussed in school board meetings. The chairpersons from school A and C indicated that their meetings discussed learners’ progress, learners’ behaviour, and improvement needed at the school.

The chairperson from school A also indicated that they discussed possible solutions of how to improve their learners' behaviour so that they would perform well in end of the year examination. Another topic discussed in this school board's meetings was improvement needed at the school, for instance, enough teachers, parental involvement school, access to photo copy machines, computers, etc.

The chairperson from school B remarked that in their meetings they gave suggestions to the principal on how to improve the school. The chairperson further indicated that teachers informed them of what was happening at school whether it was bad or good and they discussed it at school board meetings.

4.3.3.7 Decision Making

During the interviews with the chairpersons from schools A, B and C, it emerged that decisions were collectively taken during school board meetings. The chairperson from school B said,

I give my opinions on the matter, but this does not mean I force members to follow my idea. If a member has suggested for a decision to be taken I also agree with others members and if I think it is not a good suggestion I can also suggest, but at the end we agree on one decision.

The chairperson from school A indicated that their school board took decisions based on their school internal school policy. To this he said, “Every school had its own internal policy and we took decision based on that.” He further expressed that they decided together, whereby everyone gave his or her opinions but in the end they agreed together. Furthermore, he clarified that nobody influenced other members when decisions were taken.

The chairperson from school C shared his experience that their school board followed the policy when decisions were taken, based on the goals and purpose of school which was to help learners to learn. He stated, “As a chairperson I could not allow school board members to take decisions that are in conflict with the policies or to favour one another when decision is taken.”

At the school board meeting at school B the researcher observed that there were cooperation between parents and teachers and the issues discussed were all important for the improvement of the school. At the end the principal motivated all members to work hard towards school improvement.

4.3.3.8 Conducting Classroom Visits

In the interview with the school board chairpersons, the chairpersons from schools A and C both mentioned that they conducted class visits to observe whether teachers were doing their work as expected of them. In particular, the chairperson from school

A stated, “I visited school and conducted classroom observations to observe whether teachers were doing their work as expected by the policy”.

Expressing how he conducted class visits the chairperson from school C stated that he asked permission from the principal to go into classes and observe teachers teaching. The chairperson from school C further stated that he also checked learners’ exercise books to see whether they were given quality and sufficient activities to do at the appropriate levels of their performance. He further expressed that when there was something that he could not understand in the learners’ exercise books he asked the teacher to explain for him. Similarly, the chairperson from school A responded by saying that he did class visits to see whether learners were given written work and that they are assessed. He specifically indicated that during classroom observation they used the tool called School Based Evaluation Instrument (SBEI) to record their findings. Based on the finding they would take action if there were aspects that needed improvement.

The chairperson from school B did not make any comments on this matter.

4.3.3.9 School Boards’ Greatest Strengths

During the interviews with the chairpersons on their roles, it emerged that there were some roles that the chairpersons were performing very well.

For example, the chairperson from school C said that he observed punctuality among learners and encouraged teachers to work hard. Pointing to himself he related that,

“Myself, I used to encourage learners to work hard and to take care of the government properties. I also encouraged them to respect their parents and teachers too.”

The chairperson from school A went on explaining how well they performed this role. He gave an example of teachers who failed to carry out their duties and were brought to the school board for disciplinary hearing and for them to take action. The chairperson further explained that the school board did not have power to dismiss teachers. Instead, they only recommend to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture’s Permanent secretary who have the final decision to dismiss or transfer teachers.

The following roles were also identified by the chairperson from school A as among the well performed roles. These are such as:

- Attending all meetings
- Taking part in discussion and decision-making
- Attending to all problems and solving them because they were trained.

The chairperson from school B emphasised on how well they performed their roles as school board members. She stated that they divided the responsibilities among themselves to check children who play alongside the road. She further explained that the school board members also called each other to be informed of what was happening at the school.

Another role well performed by the school board, as identified by the chairperson from school B, was that of observing whether teachers suspended learners from the classes. The school board chairperson said, “We observed whether teachers suspended learners from the class. Our school environment was small that we could easily see if there were learners standing outside the classrooms.”

The chairperson from school C expressed that since they were well performing some of the roles, they expected teachers to teach all learners so that by the end of the term all learners performed very well. In the same vein the chairperson from school A stated that they expected cooperation from teachers as well as good behaviour and results from learners. He further indicated that the school board expected all problems to be brought to their attention in order to find solutions as soon as possible.

The chairperson from school A gave an example of one of the greatest strengths school boards’ role in disciplining teachers who failed to adhere to the agreed decisions. The chairperson said,

The school planned to go for a tour, we decided to collect money through cultivation, some teachers did not adhere to the agreement made and others complained to the school board about the non-compliant. These teachers were called in, and were asked to explain, in writing, to the school board why they behaved in this manner. Then their written explanations were kept in their personal files, where they still are.

Facilitating the planning of teacher training was another role well performed by the school board members, as the chairperson from school A further expressed that based on the teacher's need, they requested for teachers' training. He said, "Sometimes we focused on one area, if teachers needed assistance on the implementation of the curriculum we requested assistance (training) through the office of the Inspector of Education.

4.3.4 Parent members' Perceptions on the Roles of the School Board

4.3.4.1 Need for the School Board

As it emerging from the interviews conducted with them, all parent members believed that it is very important for schools to have school board members. Parent members from schools A, B, C and D cited that the school board members were there to oversee the progress of the school.

Expressing why schools needed to have school boards, in general, the parent members from schools A and B both stated that school board members were there to make sure that schools were governed in an orderly manner and those learners were receiving quality education. Sharing similar views, the parent member from school D added that school board members were there to advise and give ideas and opinions regarding education at the school

Parent members highlighted how they believed that as the highest decision making body at the school, a school board had different roles to perform. These will be discussed in the sections that follow.

4.3.4.2 Recommending the Appointment of Staff Members

The parent members from schools A and D stated that school board recommended the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff. The parent member from school A stated that they (school board) had the roles to recommend teachers for appointment and advise them upon their duty assumption. The parent member further explained why they were part of the recommendation process. To this he said, “We have to be present in order to observe the whole process of the interview. We do not allow corrupt practices during the recruitment of staff members, hence we recommend the suitable candidate for the post.”

Another parent member from school A expressed similar opinions and said,

If the school needed a teacher, the principal would advertise the post; we would select the suitable candidate and recommend him or her for the post. We motivated them to work hard, gave them our expectations and what we did not expect from them. This included the relief teachers.

The parent member from school D voiced similar points regarding the roles of the parent members. She said, “when there was a teaching post the school board

members participated in the recommendation of the staff member in order to ensure that there was no discrimination or favouritism from the side of the teaching staff”.

However, recommendation for the appointment of staff members did not come out as the roles of the school board from interview with parent members from schools B and C.

4.3.4.3 Instilling Discipline among the Learners and the Teachers

All parent members interviewed indicated that school boards had the role to play in improving the image of the schools. The parent member from school B specifically indicated that since the banning of corporal punishment to learners, schools found themselves powerless to instil discipline. Explaining of what they did to instil discipline the parent member from school B stated that they disciplined learners especially those who fought at school. The parent member from school Band C further explained that they divided responsibilities among themselves so that they could be sure learners were punctual to the lessons. The parent member from school B further explained that they stood at the gate to check who was coming late and reprimanded them.

The parent member from school A indicated that once a week, she followed learners in order to see if there were children playing on the road side. She went on emphasising that if any learner misbehaved the school board would invite the parent

and the child so that they could discuss how the child could be disciplined. She said that school board members motivated learners to refrain from bad behaviours.

Another parent member from school C revealed that if the principal or a teacher misbehaved it was the role of the school board members to discipline him or her. The parent member further stated that school board members also monitored the arrival of the principal and his performances. The parent member added that school board members disciplined any misbehaving individual among teachers and learners.

During the visit to school C, the researcher witnessed a case in which two parents were called to report to school because their children fought each other at school. The meeting was held between the concerned learners, their parents, the school board chairperson and the principal in order to discipline the learners.

4.3.4.4 Maintaining School Facilities

The parent members from school B, C and D expressed that one of their roles was to maintain the school properties. The parent member from school C indicated that they encouraged learners to take care of the school properties. She went on stating that when teachers were on holiday the parent members would protect the school properties from vandalism and theft. The parent member from school A explained that if a school building needed renovation, the school board would discuss when and how to renovate the school building and the amount to be allocated for such

renovation. She added that it was the roles of the school board members to maintain school properties and buildings in good condition.

The parent member from school B stated that school board members made sure that in any case of vandalism of school properties and building the responsible person for the damage would pay for the repair of damages.

Again, during the visit to school C and D the researcher observed that the school properties were in poor conditions. For example, the drawing on the buildings and many classroom windows in both schools were broken. This situation did not substantiate what the parent members have said.

The researcher also observed that in all schools visited learners did not have enough tables and chairs. This confirmed that the schools were in need of furniture for both the staff and the learners.

4.3.4.5 Addressing Problems affecting the School

In the interviews with parent members from schools A, B, C and D, it came out that it was the roles of parent members to discuss matters affecting the school and propose possible solutions. The parent member from school C indicated that in most cases they discussed what and how they improve their school. Giving examples of matters discussed in their meeting he said, “If there are lazy teachers, we discuss

what must be done so that they take their responsibility seriously” The parent member from school A expressed similar sentiments that school board members discussed how they could improve what was not going well at their school.

The parent member from school D expressed that she brought many complaints regarding teaching and management of the school observed by the community members into their meeting so that it can be discussed and resolved. In the same vein, the parent member from school A indicated that they discussed indiscipline among learners. She further singled out abusive languages among learners as the major problems discussed in the school board meetings.

The document analysis at school A substantiates the above statements. December 2014 examination results were analysed and discussed during the school board meeting.

4.3.4.6 Decision Making

The parent member from school C indicated that during their meeting everybody was free to bring his or her own suggestions of the items to be discussed and if there was something to be added or taken they all agreed together. The parent member from school B gave an example of how they reached an agreement on the use of school finance. She said, “Although learners’ travelling was covered by government we decided as school board members on the small amount to be given to learners for their lunch, but first we all agreed to a common decision.”

A similar idea was also expressed by another parent member from school D. She stated that if the school wanted to buy books or if learners and teachers were going for a tour it has to be discussed by the school board members and collective decisions on how the money should be used would be taken.

A parent member from school A expressed his satisfaction that they had a sense of ownership over the school; hence they had to be involved in all decision making. She said, “We took decisions because the school is ours. We agreed to each other when decisions were taken and we asked teachers to implement the decisions taken as they were. They should not change it.”

A parent member from school A further emphasised that during decision making everybody suggested and at the end they agreed to each other. Another parent member from school C gave an example on how they took decisions at their school. She said, “A parent member may suggest and the teacher member may agree with our suggestion, but if the suggestion was contravening the education policies, they would guide us in the right direction.”

The parent member from school B felt that they discussed matters only when they were invited. She said, “If school board invited us, we would come and agree on how we could solve the problems experienced at the school.” When asked whether their inputs influenced the decisions, the parent member from school B laughed. She said, “with regard to my influence I do not know.”

From the document analysis at school B, it became clear that there was a time when parent members were not invited to a school board meeting. The minute indicated that the parent members were not invited because the school needed a Grade 1 teacher to be appointed as a matter of urgency. The parent members were excluded from the decision-making of this meeting.

4.3.4.7 Exercising Control over School Finance

All parent members from schools A, B, C and D stated that they were responsible for the school finance as members of the school boards. The parent members from school B and D indicated that it was their responsibility to approve all purchases when the school needed to buy something. They further expressed that the principals requested the chairpersons' signatures when they needed some money from the school's bank account. The parent members from school B and D emphasised that the principal cannot take money without the school board approval.

In a similar vein, a parent member from school A stated that the school board controls the operations of school fees. The parent member from school A added that it was their responsibility to approve the school budget. She expressed that, "teachers planned a budget that they brought to us, we would scrutinise it, and if we were happy with how the money was going to be used we would approve the budget."

However, at school C parent member did not mention school finance as one of their roles.

4.3.4.8 Supporting the Principals and the Teachers

The general consensus among the parent members who were interviewed was that the school board assisted the principals and the teachers in various ways. They have mentioned different aspects like, classroom observations; creating good relationship between the schools and the community and ensuring regular and punctual attendance of lessons by both the learners and the teachers.

The parent members from schools C and D both indicated that school board assisted principal and teachers by conducting classroom observations. The parent member from school D specifically indicated that, “In my visits to the school I sat in the classrooms and observed, we discussed with the teachers and encouraged them to work hard and later on I then gave feedback to the principal.” She added that she was closer to the school even if she did not come to school she could easily see whether they were teaching or not. The parent member further emphasised that they motivated learners to study hard to improve their performance.

A similar view was shared by a parent member from school C who stated that they assisted the principal and the teachers by motivating, encouraging and giving them

suggestions to carry out their work effectively. He said that they encouraged teachers to work hard and have their school known to everybody. Furthermore, he cautioned “If they failed what they are going to say when meeting other teachers from the schools that performed well”?

A parent member from school C indicated that their school board assisted the principal and teachers by disciplining any misbehaviour observed among the teachers and the learners. He gave an example of teachers who were leaving school earlier and arriving late. He said: “We discussed this with the principal to find out why teachers or learners were coming late or leaving school earlier than expected; we also discussed it in the parents meetings”.

The parent member from school D indicated that school board members encouraged all parents to attend parents’ meetings. The parent member further stated that they also advised the principal and the teachers on what to do when they experienced problems. She gave an example of an instance in which they advised the principal to call in parents whose children were late to school in order to find out the root causes and find solutions to the problem and ensure children arrived on time to school.

The parent member from school D reported that the parents in their community complained that there was no education at their school. She indicated how she tried to motivate the parents in their community. She said “I encouraged the parents in our community to attend parents meetings so that they could discuss their concerns with teachers.” The parent further explained how the school board supported teachers and

principal in teaching and learning. She added that the school board motivated and encouraged the community member to create good cooperation between teachers and their children so that the teaching and learning could be improved.

The parent member from school C voiced a similar point with regard to assistance offered by the school board to the teachers and the principal. She said, “It was the school board members who initiated and invited parents’ meeting. He said the school board always had items in the agenda to be presented to parents.

The supporting role through meeting was also stressed by the parent member from school C who sensed that through parents’ meetings they encouraged parents to feel free to come to school and observe and motivate learners, teachers and principal.

Parent members also indicated that since they supported principals and teachers they expected hard work, good performance, cooperation and good result, for example, the parent members from schools B and D expected the principal and teachers to work hard and improve learners’ performance.

Parent member from school B further expressed her appreciation toward what the school was doing. She said, “We appreciated what this school was doing. We have employed people who were former learners at this school that is why we still expecting good products.”

The parent members from school D and C argued that there should be cooperation, commitment and teamwork among the staff members and between the school and the community in order to achieve parent members' expectations from teachers.

A remark from the parent member from school C, confirmed the importance of teamwork between the teachers and the parents when he said,

We have to cooperate with teachers and principal. Since teachers helped in moulding our children we should not relax and leave everything to the teachers. We must help supervise their homework and see to it that they read their books after school. Therefore it was very much important that school and community should come together and work as a team in order to realise good academic performance.

4.3.4.9 School Boards Greatest strength

It emerged from the responses of the parent members interviewed that there were some roles that they were performing effectively. Despite other challenges facing school board members, the teacher members interviewed acknowledge that there were some of the roles they carried out successfully.

The parent members from schools A and C indicated that their performance in visiting school was very good. For instance, the parent member from school A said, "Our greatest strength was that we visited teachers and learners in the classroom in order to motivate them to work hard." In addition, other parent members from

schools B and D pointed out that they attended the meetings when they were invited by the principal. They said that their strength was that they attended meetings when they were invited, except if a member was sick.”

The parent member from school B further expressed her satisfaction regarding the way the school board meeting was conducted. She said “Again when we came to meeting I did not experience any disagreement among ourselves. We all cooperated and we left the school happily”

Maintaining the school buildings was also mentioned as one of the roles carried out effectively by school board members. The parent member from school C stated that they maintained the school building and its environment.

4.4 Barriers to School Board Effectiveness

4.4.1 Principals’ Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness

The perceptions of numerous school board members from the rural primary schools interviewed were that the school board members were faced with many challenges in carrying out their roles.

The following sub-categories were emerged as the challenges faced school board members.

4.4.1.1 Language Barrier

From the interviews with principals, it emerged that school board members were faced with language barrier in carrying out their roles. The principal of school C stated that English language acted as a barrier to the performance of the school board members, more especially the parent members. He said,

We have a couple of documents written in English language, e.g. Guidelines on the Roles of the School Board and Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001, where the roles of the school boards were stipulated. These documents were written in English and you know the language of the law is very difficult. If you give these documents to parents the majority would not understand them. At the end of the day it would impacted their performances negatively.

Principal of schools A and D shared similar experience that interviews were conducted in English. Both principal added that parent members only spoke the local language, and as a result, only teacher members asked questions during the interviews; hence parent members could not influence most of the interview outcomes. The principal of school A further added that during the interview process parent member acted the role of the observer and later they were given opportunity to recommend the suitable candidate based on their observations. “As a result parent member could not influence the interview outcome due to language problem” remarked principal of school D.”

Sharing the similar sentiments the principal of school B indicated that because of language used during the interview, parent members experienced difficulties especially when it comes to the selections and recommendations of teachers. He revealed that parent members could not easily decide which candidate was suitable for the post, hence teachers had to explain to them or directed them; otherwise they could not make meaningful contributions and choose the suitable candidate for the post.

Principal of school C expressed how language barrier created disagreement between the teacher members and parent members during the interviews.

According to him,

We had an interview where we wanted to have a male candidate because we had many female teachers. In the interview the male candidate was over performed by the female candidate. They insisted on the male candidate because the school needed a male teacher. They did not know how the candidates performed because they were not able to follow as the interview was done in English. Only after a lengthy explanation they agreed with the interview outcomes.

The researcher attended an interview at school A, where the principal was the chairperson. The principal and teacher members were panel members and asked questions to candidates. Parent board members were observing the interview process, later after the interview they were given chance to select the best candidate based on

their observation. Because they could not follow during the process of the interview they opted to follow the recommendations made by other panel members.

4.4.1.2 Lack of Support and Cooperation from the Parents and the Community

The principal of school B raised a concern of uncooperative parents. He explained that there was lack of cooperation between the school board and the parent community. He further explained that school board in consultation with parents decided that parents should assist children with homework, but parents did not adhere to the decision made. He observed that this frustrated the school board members.

The principal of school D made the following comment,

“Parents in rural areas were not cooperative; basically because of lack of awareness...they were not interested in the education of their children and left everything in the hands of the teachers and the principals”.

The principal of school D further expressed disappointment on the way parent members absent themselves from school board meetings. She said, “several times we could not discuss matters affecting our school because the school board chairperson always absent from the meetings”.

In the same vein, the principal of school C explained that,

It became a fruitless activity to ask parents to attend meetings and only few would be present. Even though most of our parents lacked education, there was no excuse for their lack of involvement in their children's education. They cannot expect us to do everything for them. What about learners with disciplinary problems we needed parents to support us in disciplining them.

4.4.1.3 Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding

All four principals interviewed indicated that high level of illiterate among parent members was a serious challenge to the functioning of school boards.

The principal of school C indicated that parent members performed their roles fairly well because education was also playing a role and it affected their performance because they did not fully understand their roles. Sometimes they did not come when invited to conduct class visit. They were afraid that teachers might hate them and they were not even comfortable to enter the classrooms. He further stated that even if parent member sat in the class they did not understand, especially when the subject was taught in English.

Sharing the same experience, that principal of school A shared, he said parent members education was very low, as result they did not perform their roles effectively. He remarked that almost all parent members spoke and understood the local language only, therefore it was difficult for them to conduct classroom observations because English was used as the medium of instruction in most of the

grades. He revealed that although parent members were trained, they did not conduct class visits because it was difficult for them to observe a lesson taught in the language that they do not understand. The principal of school A further stated that if the parent members were qualified people and knew what they were required to do in the class, they could engage themselves in conducting the lesson to the fullest.

The principal of school D shared similar sentiment, she stated that most school board members lacked education, hence they cannot perform their roles effectively.

The principal of school C indicated that the parent members were relatively old, they were either guardians or grandparents and their education understanding was also very low which affected their children's performance. He further suggested that since most of the parent members were young and understood educational matters they could be very much helpful and carry out their roles effectively.

4.4.1.4 Late Coming and Absenteeism

From the interview with principals of schools A, B, C and D, they all came to the same conclusion that there were poor attendance and absenteeism from the parents' meetings among the parent members and other parents in the community. In

particular, the principal of school D complained about the lack of interest from the parent member especially when invited to school board meetings.

The principal of school D made the following remarks,

Parent members showed no interest in whatsoever in the lives of their children. They did not attend meetings and even when requested to come to school they did not come. The parent members from the rural area did not seem to care about the wellbeing of their children. They were always not present and many times we postponed the meetings because we did not reach the quorum. This tended to discourage other members too.

The principal added that some parent members who managed to attend meetings did not make any contribution toward the discussions. The principal further indicated that parent member were merely there as observers and one could easily see that they did not show any interest.

She said, “Parent members were only there because they were elected to represent other parents, but making no contribution”.

The principal of school C felt that some parent members were old and tired because they had educated their children already and now they have grandchildren to bring up that was a barrier on its own. He proposed the biological mothers and fathers of

learners to be elected as school board members because they may be serious with their children's education. He said: "You know if it was your own children you would have the morale and courage to attend meetings and to check what was really happening at school"

The principal of school A did nothing about this challenge.

At one of the school board meetings the researcher attended, it confirmed the above perceptions because only two of the parent members were present. The meeting was conducted by the principal, teacher members and two parent members only because according to the principal they have been postponed this meeting several time due to parents absenteeism.

4.4.1.5 Lack of Training

In the interviews with them, principals of all four schools, A, B, C and D, indicated that training was not provided to all school board members because only the principals and parent members invited and those who received training felt that it was not effective. The principal of school B specifically indicated that lack of knowledge and skills on the roles and responsibilities among school board members, made them ineffective in carrying out their roles.

The principal of school D with experience of one year in school board expressed her concern that she found it difficult to be part of the school board as she did not know much about school board's roles. She further said that she had to do her own reading to help herself. Furthermore she stated that she did not blame the rest of the parent members who seemed helpless in all decisions they had to make because the training given was not effective. She revealed that the regional office did not visit their school or organised workshops for new principals who did not attend any training or meeting. She further stated that they (school board members of that school) relied on their own knowledge to understand what was required from them.

Sharing his experience on the matter, the principal of school C expressed that lack of clear information on the roles of the school board may lead to school board members to be in conflict with educational policies. He gave an example of how parent members felt when the policy on teenage pregnancy was introduced. He related as follows,

When the teenage pregnancy policy was introduced some parent members felt it would contribute to high failure rate in schools as the girls' health condition might not allow her to attend every day. They asked how a pregnant learner or impregnating boy be allowed to stay in school. This was already an indication that school board members needed training to sensitise them about and enable them to understand educational policies.

The principal of school A indicated that the regional officers provide only a once off training in form of induction given at the beginning of term office of the school board members. The principal clearly stressed that the training received was not effective because little has been achieved. According to the principal there was nothing new because the trainer only introduced to the School Board Evaluation Instrument (SBEI) and touched a bit on management that members already knew. The principal of school A's expectations were for the school board members to be trained on their roles, but they were only given the tool to familiarise themselves with its content.

4.4.2 Teachers' Perception on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness

The teacher members from the four rural primary schools felt that the school board members were faced with many challenges in carrying out their roles.

These are discussed in the following sub categories.

4.4.2.1 Language Barriers

The teacher members from schools B, C and D indicated that parent members were faced with language barrier in carrying out their roles.

The teacher members from schools B and D specifically stated that English language acted as a barrier to the performance of the parent members. He stated that the ministerial documents including the policies were written in English and among the parent members at their school only one parent member had basic English knowledge.

The teacher member from school B indicated that parent members did not trust the fact that the teacher or principal were translating policies into the vernacular language during meetings. He added that in that way they might think teachers agreed to lie to the parent members. He further indicated that language was a bit a barrier and the parent members may lose trust in teachers.

Sharing similar experience, the teacher member from school C was concerned about the ministry documents written in English only. He indicated that only one parent member at their school who could read and understand English. He further indicated that even if they were given these documents to go and read, there might be no one who would understand English at home to read for them.

The teacher members from school A did not share their views on how language was one of the barriers to school board effectiveness at their school.

4.4.2.2 Lack of Support and Cooperation from the Parents and the Community

The teacher member from school B indicated that parents were not cooperative. He gave an example where a decision was taken for parents to make sure learners did their homework, but this did not happen because parents were not cooperative. The teacher member puts it clear that for a learner to do well parents should be involved so that they could make follow up at home. The teacher further indicated that if parents were not involved, teaching would stop at school and when learners were home they would forget about education.

However, teacher members from schools A, C and D did not indicate any challenges with getting support from parents to their schools.

4.4.2.3 Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding

A teacher member from school B stated that they had old parent members who did not understand the importance of education. He stated that they are in the world of technology and education requires learners to learn Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), but parent members could not understand its importance. He gave an example where their school needed to buy a computer and the parent members did not support the ideas due to lack of understanding of this particular need.

The other problem is the literacy level of parents. The teacher member from school B indicated that their school is in the rural area and some school board members at their school were illiterate. He indicated that teacher members spent a lot of time interpreting and explaining to parent members the policy or any other documents before its implementation.

Poor educational background and lack of understanding did not come out as barriers to school board effectiveness from teacher members from schools A, B and D.

4.4.2.4 Late Coming and Absenteeism

Following the interview with teacher members from school A, B, C and D, they agreed that there was poor attendance and absenteeism among the parent members to school boards.

The teacher members from school C stated that sometimes the parent members absented themselves from or come late to meetings. She added that it was not good for the parent member to be late because they would miss out a lot on what was already discussed. She further explained that in order to accommodate the late-coming parent members, meetings always had to start over. At the end of the day only a few things would be discussed and as a result very important and urgent items would be left unattended.

Sharing the similar experience, a teacher member from school A indicated that some school board members were coming late, as a result their opinions were not

communicated. A teacher member further stated that in most cases young and energetic parents who had children at the school were absent from the meetings when selection for school board members was held because they did not want to be selected. As a result the old parents were selected to serve as school board members.

A teacher member from school D remarked that parent members created barrier because many times they were invited to meetings and did not turn up. She added that principal also created a barrier because sometimes she invited other school board members on a very short notice which resulted into meeting being cancelled since some members were far and could not make it in a short time or some school board members already had other activities that they planned for that day.

Although children walk the same distance to school, teacher member from schools B and C explained that parent members complained about the distance between the school and their home when visiting school or coming to meetings. He further added that this was already a barrier on its own.

4.4.2.5 Lack of Training

Another commonly expressed challenge was that teacher members were not trained on their roles. All the teachers interviewed revealed that they regional office failed its duties to train them on their roles.

A teacher member from school A was very clear regarding lack of training as he said the training was conducted but due to the large number of participants only principals and parent members were invited to attend. He indicated that he served on the school board for three years and he never attended training or a workshop. He felt that training could have helped him to do more for his school. He said, “We fail because of lack of training and support from the regional officers.”

A teacher member from school B had the following to say,

I attended the training on the roles of the school board. This was only meant for principals and parent members. I was lucky because I was an acting principal and got this opportunity to attend on behalf of our principal. Other teacher members did not receive training.

Teacher members from schools C and D shared the same experience when they said they were not trained. They indicated that the regional officers who were supposed to train them before they started with their roles and duties did not do so. Likewise, another teacher member from school A stated that she was not invited to the training therefore she did not attend any. A teacher member from school D added that her principal, who was also not trained, assisted them by explaining to them what was expected from the school board members.

4.4.2.6 Appointment of Unqualified Teachers on a Temporary Basis

It emerged from the interview with a teacher member from school D that she experience a problem of unqualified teachers who were appointed to teach on contract. She stated that at the end of their contract such teacher would not be willing to leave the post. A teacher member added that teachers on contract always thought school board members did not want them to stay, while forgetting that their appointment was on a contract basis. A teacher member said, “They hated us and did not even talk to us when their contracts ended.”

The researcher observation confirmed that unqualified teachers were not willing to leave the posts. It was during the week of the data collection at school B when one teacher’s contract ended. The relief teacher was quarrelling with the school board when she was reminded that her contract ended that week and the owner of the post was going to start. The relief teacher was so furious stating that they wasted her time she could have been given a permanent post elsewhere. This problem was only solved when the principal called in the Inspector of Education to rescue them.

The teacher members from schools A, B and D did not indicate recommendation and for the appointment of staff as a barrier to school board effectiveness.

4.4.3 Chairpersons' Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness

The perceptions of teacher members from the rural primary schools interviewed were that the school board members were faced with many challenges in carrying out their roles. The views of school boards' chairperson on the barriers to school board effectiveness are discussed in the following sections.

4.4.3.1 Indiscipline among the Teachers and the Learners

During the interview with the three chairpersons from the rural primary schools, it came out from schools A and C that school board members were faced with disciplinary problems among teachers and learners. The chairperson from school C stated that learners were undisciplined as a result one of the learners at their school allegedly killed a security guard of neighbouring school. He further stated that this brought a big fear among teachers and other learners at the school. He revealed that several meetings with learners were held in order to motivate and encourage learners to improve their behaviour but there were no improvement observed.

Indiscipline among teachers were also identified as a barrier to school board effectiveness at school A. Sharing his experience the chairperson from school A

stated that some teachers at their school left before the time claiming that only their region forced them to stay at school till 16h00.

However, indiscipline was not identified as barrier by the chairperson from school B.

4.4.3.2 Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding

Following the interviews with the chairpersons from schools A, B and D, it came out that poor education background and lack of understanding among parent members were one of the barriers to school board effectiveness.

The chairperson from school A has this to say,

Some parent members lacked understanding. We have a School Board Evaluation Instrument (SBEI) to evaluate the school board members' performance. Parent members were expected to observe the lessons using the school board evaluation tool but due to lack of understanding and literacy problem the tool could not be used.

The chairperson from school B indicated that some parents in the community were not interested in the children education because they did not come when invited to school. He said it took months for a parent of an indiscipline learner to come to school.

He further said when parents behave this way it shows that they do not have interest in the child's education.

The school board chairpersons from school B, C and D did not say anything about poor education and lack of understanding as a barrier to school boards' effectiveness.

4.4.3.3 Late coming and Absenteeism

The chairperson from school B stated that parent members absented themselves from the meeting and they gave invalid reasons for their absence. She further stated that when they did not reach the quorum meetings would be postponed. Furthermore, she stated that this frustrated those who left their work to come to meetings, but at the end they were told the meeting was cancelled. The chairperson was concerned that since some school board members absent themselves from meeting, decisions were not collectively taken because the principal and teachers could not sit with the problem waiting for the next meeting.

The chairperson from school A indicated that since being a school board members was a voluntary activity, parent members had other responsibilities at their house. For example, most parent members absented themselves in order to cultivate their field or to look after their livestock; hence it would be difficult for them to attend meetings.

Lack of cooperation from the parents and the community, language barrier, decision making and controlling and paying of the school guard were not mentioned by the

school board chairperson from schools A, B and C. The chairperson from school C did not mention late coming and absenteeism as barrier to school board effectiveness.

4.4.4 Parent members' Perceptions on the Barriers to School Board Effectiveness

The perceptions of parent members from the rural primary schools interviewed were that the school board members were faced with many barriers in carrying out their roles.

Their views are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.4.4.1 Indiscipline among the Teachers and the Learners

Following the interview with parent members from the rural primary schools, it came out that indiscipline among the teachers and the learners, was one of the challenges faced by school board members.

The parent member from school B pointed out that they had undisciplined learners who were influenced by their parents. The parent member said that some parents talked bad about teachers in the presence of their children and this influenced learners not to respect their teachers.

The parent member from school C reported that learners at their school use abusive language. Another parent member from school C indicated that when they conducted classroom observation, some learners laughed at them. He further reported that because of this unbecoming behaviour among learners parents were not comfortable to do classroom observation and as a result they could not carry out their roles effectively. Likewise, the parent member from school A stated that they had difficult male learners who never followed the advice of the school board members.

Sharing the same experience, the parent member from school D indicated that indiscipline among learners was a serious concern because they could not beat or suspend a child because of misbehaving. The law does not allow it and speaking to learners did not serve any purpose.

Another parent member from school A indicated that not only learners were undisciplined, but teachers too were found to be undisciplined. The parent members of this school revealed that there were also teachers who failed to perform their work as expected. She said,

“We had teachers who did not perform their work effectively, especially when the principal was not around.” The parent member further stated that, “Challenges facing us were late coming of teachers, and sometimes teachers leaving earlier than expected”. Other challenges attributed to indiscipline were late coming and low performances among learners at schools A and B.

From the document analysis for almost all the school, it became clear that there were disciplinary problems among learners. It appeared in the school board meeting agendas that they tried to address the problem for almost three years and up to now there is no change.

During the visit to school A, the researcher observed a situation whereby some teachers left school knock-off time. From the document analysis of the school policies, it was observed that teachers were to remain at school till 16h00.

4.4.4.2 Language Barrier

All parent members from four schools visited stated that language was one of the barriers to their effectiveness. Parent members from schools A and B stated that the ministerial documents including the policies were written in English which they could not understand. The parent members further stated that the use of English language in school made it difficult for them to carry out their roles as per the expectation of the ministry. For example, the parent member specifically from school A indicated that it was difficult for him to conduct classroom observations because he could not understand the language used. He further explained that after lessons he asked the teachers to explain to him of what they were doing in the lesson.

Parent member from school C stated that sometimes one would not have courage to enter the classroom because you know you won't be able to follow what was going on.

4.4.4.3 Lack of Support and Cooperation from Parents and Community

Following the interview with the parent members from schools A, B, C and D, it emerged that some the parents and the community members were not cooperative with the school board members. Other school members (principals, teachers and chairperson of the school board) have already alluded to this.

The parent member from school B revealed that some parents did not like or show respect to the parent members. The parent further explained that some parents in their community were uncooperative because they did not support the elected school board members. Courageously, she said, "We do not care much about what parents in our community said; we go ahead as if we did not heard anything because we could not expect all people to like us." In addition she indicated that during parents' meetings school board members advised parents and encouraged them to improve their behaviour but they were not improving.

The parent members from schools A and C shared similar sentiments on uncooperative parents and community members. The parent member from school A commented,

“Our school is in the flood area. During the flood period learners camped at school and school board members cooked for them. Sometimes parents felt that we ate up their children’s food.”

The parent member from school C said,

“Community members created barriers in our work and this was caused by parents who talked about teachers in the community and in the presence of their children. We tried to do our work, but they blocked us.”

The parent member from school D stated that they established a lot of committees which were no more existing because the chairperson to the school board was not interested and he withdrew from most of these committees. She indicated that it was the roles of the school board chairperson to coordinate the functions of these committees. He felt that the regular absenteeism of the chairperson from school board meetings created barriers in their work.

4.4.4.4 Poor Educational Background and Lack of Understanding

Poor educational background and lack of understanding was identified by the parent members from schools A, B and C as the challenges facing school board members in carrying out their roles.

The parent member from school A indicated that some school board members did not understand their roles because they left everything to the teachers. He further explained that some parent members only came to school when the principal invited them. The parent member from school C indicated that they experienced a problem of old parent members who lacked knowledge and skills in educational matters and as a result they keep quite in school board meetings. Likewise, the parent member from school B stated that some parent members did not understand the value of education therefore they did not show interest in their children education.

On the other hand, the parent member from school A thought their education did not entirely prevent them from helping their children. He put it clear that “Even though I did not understand education, I could go to the class and observe. The teacher would explain to me after the lesson.” He further explained that the teacher’s explanation would help him understand what was going on and enable him to give feedback to parents on the status of education at their school.

The parent member from school C indicated that she agreed with the teacher members to conducting classroom observations because they had better understanding on educational issue. The parent further said, “We really do not know much about education, so teacher members should conduct lesson observation.”

The parent member from school D did not say anything about poor education background and lack of understanding as barrier to his effectiveness as a member of the school board.

4.4.4.5 Late Coming and Absenteeism

The parent member from school D indicated that some parent members were excused themselves from attending school board’s meetings. The parent member explained that other parent members were complaining that they did not have time to come to school. The same problem was experienced at schools B and C as the parent member stated that at their school not all parent members attended school board meetings.

Another parent member from school C also expressed a similar experience. She said,

Sometimes parent members who refused to come to meetings were acting as barriers because the meetings were postponed to another day. So, we would need another day for the meeting. School boards members who turned up had wasted their time and energy to come to school.

Parent members from schools A and B did not said anything about poor attendance and absenteeism as a barrier to their effectiveness.

The researcher attended a school board meeting at school D and observed that not all parent members attended the meeting and there were no apology received from the members who were absent. The meeting started one hour late because most of the members were late. Similarly, the documents review revealed that parent members were the majority in absenteeism. The school board minutes of the meeting further show that school board meetings were postponed two to three times on average before the meeting was actually held.

4.4.4.6 Lack of Training

The parent member from school D expressed that their chairperson withdrew from being a school board members. She indicated that the new chairperson was appointed and did not receive any training; hence it was very difficult for him to carry out the roles of the school board as an ordinary member and those of the chairperson. She added that because the chairperson was not trained they did not even use the School Board Evaluation Instrument (SBEI) to assess their performance because he was not familiar with it. She revealed that the tool was given during the workshop which the chairperson did not attend; hence he was not even aware of it.

The parent member from school D further explained that the training for the chairperson was needed because the chairperson would learn of what was expected of him. For instance, it was the responsibility of the chairperson to call school board meetings and approach the principal if he or she wanted them to discuss something. She further explained that currently, the meetings were convened by the principal.

The parent member from school A indicated that although some school board members were trained they were not trained on the roles of the school board as prescribed in the booklet for the work of the school board (The Guidelines on the Work of the School Board).

Training of school board members was not identified as a barrier to school board effectiveness by parent members from schools B and C.

During the documents review at school D, the researcher came across the standard tool (School Board Evaluation Instrument) set up by the Omusati Education Directorate to be used by school board to evaluate their performances. The tool was attached to school board minute. This substantiated what was said by the parent member at school A.

4.4.4.7 Controlling and Paying of the School Guard

From interview with parent members, it came out that paying and controlling of the security guard was one of the challenges faced by school board members at schools

B and D. The parent member from school D indicated that it was decided in one of the school board meetings that parent members should control the work of the security guard who was employed by the school to take care of the school properties during the night. He stated that this responsibility became difficult for them because they were afraid to come to school during the night in order to see whether the security guard was around or not.

The parent members from school B and D expressed the following problems respectively this way.

The parent member from school B stated,

We experienced problem with regard to the payment of security guard. Our school did not have money to pay the security guard. We knew it was a peanut, but the community did not have money to pay the security guard. We are even putting the life of the security guard in danger. Security guards are killed; just imagine a security guard earning N\$390.00 per month. This was less, but we have no other alternative. It is a barrier that we face.

The parent member from school D stated that, “There was no money to pay the security guard who takes care of the school property.”

Controlling and paying of security guard was not viewed a barrier at schools A and C.

4.4.4.8 Decision Making

The parent member from school D stated that the parent members were not always free to take part in decision-making. She said,

They were afraid that if they decided on a certain issue they might create problems for themselves or for their children. Hence in most cases they are quiet to avoid conflict between themselves and the teachers. They have got fear of taking decisions.

Delay in the implementation of decisions taken was another problem identified with regard to decision-making. The parent member from school A indicated that sometimes decisions took longer to be implemented or sometimes decision taken are not implemented at all. He gave an example whereby a decision to hold a school bazaar and to renovate the school building took very long to be implemented.

The parent members from schools B and C did not say anything with regard to decision making. The researcher's observation at school D confirmed that not all members participated in decision-making. During school board meeting the researcher attended, she noticed that not all members participated in decision making. The parent members did not appear to be free to add items in to the agenda or to discuss items on the agenda as requested by the principal. The principal

presented all items. The researcher noted that the principal would suggest decisions then the parent members support the suggested decisions.

4.5 Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

4.5.1 Principals' Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

The school board members were asked to mention the strategies that could be used to enhance their effectiveness in carrying out their roles. Their views on this question are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.5.1.1 Training of School Board Members

The principal of schools visited suggested that more training on the roles of the school board members should be provided to all members. They suggested that the Regional Officers or the Inspector of Education must continue training members of the school board on their roles.

The principal of school D stated that although the chairperson and the principal were trained, other school board members were not trained. The principal indicated that

school board members need to be trained on their roles and policies because sometimes their actions might conflict the policies. The principal of school D further indicated that she was inexperienced in school board affairs as she did not attend any training. She said she could have carried out her roles to the expectation of the ministry if training was provided to her. Furthermore, she indicated that some members were trained, but maybe they did not get anything out. In the training; hence school level workshop could be a good a refresher and a learning experience to her.

The principal of school C also stated that a refresher course would help the school board members to effectively carry out their roles.

The principal of school B also expressed that the training he received assisted him but it was not effective because it was 16-17 years ago, the system has changed and everything has changed; hence they needed training to cope up with the changes. For examples, he suggested that school board members should be training on how school money should be handled and what procedure to be followed when dealing with money. He suggested a refresher training to assist school board members to be more effective in carrying out their roles.

The principal from school C suggested that the school board should be empowered with knowledge and skills to go and carry out their roles. The principal further recommended that the government should train school board members on the

monitoring tool (School Board Evaluation Instrument), to enable school board members to use it effectively during classroom observations. He stated that if school board members used the tools to observe lessons it would guide them on what to focus, e.g., planning, building, learners' activities, finance etc. He stated that currently, school board members did not use the evaluation form to observe lessons because they lacked skills how to use it. The principal described a situation at their school where the parent members had conducted classroom observations using pieces of papers to record their findings. According to the principal this was not really effective and would not give them courage because they had no documents to guide them on what to observe.

Furthermore the principal stated that the system had changed, hence school board should be trained to help them understand changes in the policies and law affecting the education system. The principal felt that training would help school board members to govern schools effectively.

Sharing similar sentiment, the principal of school D proposed a workshop to be given to the school board members and the regional officers should monitor the implementation of what was learned in the training.

4.5.1.2 Training by the Principal

Following the interview with the principals, it also became out that for the school board members to carry out their roles effectively, the principal should conduct workshops for other school board members at the school level.

The principal of school B indicated that it was imperative if the principal should share new learned information with other school board members because they got more information from the regional office. He further indicated that he gave information to others school board members especially when the new system was introduced. He gave an example of how he shared with other school board members when the Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced.

When Universal Primary Education was introduced I trained them on the education policy regarding the use of Universal Primary Education. The school board members at our school understood what roles they should play when it comes to the government fund. For instance, who should sign cheques, how the money should be spent, what should be bought and what should not be bought and so on.

The principal indicated that the training could help the school board members in carrying out their roles.

The principal of school C stated that he discussed with other school board members on the roles of the school boards during school board meetings. He gave an example

of the policy on teenage pregnancy where he briefed the school board members on how it should be implemented. He further explained that school board members at their school understood the policy on teenage pregnancy because he explained it to them.

The principal of school D indicated that she did not train her school board members because she was not trained too. She further said the training for school board by principal was needed because it would help other school board members to be aware of what was expected of them. She was concerned that for the principal who was not trained it would be difficult for her to train others.

4.5.1.3 Incentives for Parent Members

Emerging from the interviews with principals of schools A, B, C and D, was the feeling that the parent members should be remunerated in order to carry out their roles effectively.

The principal of school C argued that the parent members suffered and they needed motivation. He said, "I think the parent members should be given incentives, which will be a motivation for them to be part of the school board and encouragement for them to effectively carry out their work." Likewise, the principal of school D stated

that a school board was the body that governed the school, but it seemed like they were not valued or appreciated. The principal was of the opinion that the parent members should be remunerated for the work they did for the school and other parents. The principal revealed that the parent members complained that in the years to come they would not participate if they were not going to be paid. The principal think that remuneration or any forms of incentives motivate the parent members to participate in school activities

Sharing the similar sentiments, the principal of school A indicated that the parent members were doing this work on voluntary bases. He further said that the parent members used most of their time on school activities, and if they were not going to be paid it would not meet their appreciation because they were tired.

From the document analysis, the minutes of the school board for school D confirmed that the parent members complained of leaving their household responsibilities in order to attend school board meetings on a voluntary basis. The minutes dated 23 February 2014 read, “Mrs X, the school board chairperson requested the principal to find out from the regional office whether school board was going to be given incentives for the work rendered to the school when their contract ended.”

4.5.1.4 Evaluation and Monitoring the Performance of the School Board Members

The principal of school B stated that for the school board members to effectively carry out their roles they should evaluate their performance on term or annual basis. The principal further added that monitoring of school board members performance was also done at the end of the term when teachers gave the report cards to the children because it is compulsory that the school board members must be there. He said, “Evaluating our performance gave us the picture of how we performed throughout the term and helped us to strategize how to improve our practises.”

Sharing his experience the principal of school C indicated that the school board members evaluated their performances in order to find out their weaknesses and strengths. He further stated that based on the findings they put up the action plan to maintain the strength and improve on the weakness. The principal indicated that he was not aware of the set standard, School Board Evaluation Instrument (SBEI), that they could use as a yard stick to evaluate their performance. The principal explained what they did when evaluating their performance. He said, “After the results were out we were eager to know the performance so that we measure it against our work.” He further indicated that if the performance is low the school board is also down.

The principal of school D indicated that they monitored and evaluated their work by observing the meetings' attendance and the involvement of school board members in school activities. She further stated that if the attendance and the involvement were low this was an indication that they needed to motivate and encourage attendance and involvement among all school board members.

The principal of school A explained that they evaluated their work through discussions during meetings. He said that in the meeting you could see whether everybody was contributing or not. He further stated that if school members were not contributing it showed that they were not free and in the next meeting he would motivate and encourage all school board members to be free and air the views towards the discussion. He said, "This encouraged collective decisions since everybody participated."

4.5.1.5 Access to the policies on the roles of the School Board to all Members

It emerged from the interview with principals from schools A, B, C and D that it was very important that every school board member had a copy of the policy on the roles of the school boards so that it could guide them in carrying out the roles.

The principal of school B stated that he was in possession of the Namibian Education Act of 2001, where roles of the school board members were stipulated. The principal

further explained that the school board members could not operate without attaching themselves to the policy on their roles. He said, “Policies are very useful because they guide one on how to make decisions and act on them accordingly.”

The principal of school C also indicated that he had the policy on the roles of the school board members. The principal explained that in order for the school boards to carry out their roles successfully they needed a policy to guide them. Similarly, the principal of school D stated that he knew the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 where the roles of the school board were stipulated and that a copy was available in the school.

The principal of school A indicated that he had a booklet on the roles of the school board in English version. In addition, the principal further indicated that the roles of the school board are also stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001. He said policies were there to guide the school board in carrying out their roles. He further stated that it was very important for school board members to be in possession of the policy.

All principals interviewed stated that the booklet on the role of the school board members was available at their schools but copies of the booklet were not distributed to school board members. They argued that it was necessary that the policy be translated in the local language so that parent members read on their own or ask somebody to read for them.

4.5.1.6 Application of Democratic School Governance

The principal of school D stated that democratic school governance contributed to the effective function of the school board because everybody was free to contribute their ideas. It also built team work among the board members. The principal of school D further said that democratic school governance contributed to effective functioning of the school board members because there were no restrictions on who to say what or who would not say what because they were all free to talk and reached one agreement.

The principal of school B stated that it was very important for the school to apply democratic school governance because if the principal become autocratic other school board members would not benefit and this would destroy the school as they end up having a bad school. The principal further indicated that democratic school governance encouraged teamwork where collective decisions would be taken.

Sharing the similar experience, the principal of school C stated that if the school was governed democratically where more people express their ideas the school would benefit in a way that it was not run by one person. The principal said if the person was wrong other school board members would correct him or her and the first persons to benefit from the democratic decision made would be the learners.

4.5.1.7 Commitment of the Teachers towards their Roles

From the interview with the principals, it emerged that the commitment of teacher members was one of the possible strategies to the effective functioning of the school board members.

The principal of school B suggested that the teachers should be committed to their work. He further explained that since the teachers could read and understood the policies, they should assist the parent members because not all of them understood everything concerning education.

Sharing the similar sentiments, the principal of school C stated that teachers read widely and they should take a leading role because they knew more than the parent members. He further suggested that for the school board to carry out their roles effectively teachers should come up with initiative because they have broad knowledge in education.

The principal of school D also suggested that teachers should be committed to their work, and should have school at heart. She further stated that teacher members should share with parent members on the school success and problem experienced so that collective decision could be taken.

4.5.1.8 Commitment of the Parent Members

From the interviews with the principals, it emerged that the commitment of the parent members was one of the possible strategies to the effective functioning of the school board members

The principal of school B stated that the parent members needed to get more involved, to get close to the school, visit the school more often and discuss any problems encountered.

The principal of school C added that parents should be upfront as well and should not regard them as people who did not know anything. The principal further stated that parents should take initiative because children are theirs and they represent other parents. At the end of the day, they were accountable for their fellow parents.

The principal of school C explained that for the parent members to be effective in the carrying out their roles they needed to be empowered and motivated so that they could demand what they want to be done at school. Furthermore, the principal wanted parents' voices to be heard. He expressed,

In most cases they were just behind the principal. It was like they did not have the mandate. I want them to be mandated to do things even to come to school and talk to teachers who dodged classes. They needed empowerment and motivation to carry out their roles. If they are mandated and committed to carry out their roles they can carry out their roles effectively.

Sharing similar sentiments, the principal of school D stated that the parent members needed to feel free in carrying out the school activities. The principal added that the parent members should not wait to be invited, but should invite themselves to the school.

The principal of school A stated that for effective functioning of the school board, parent members should not see themselves as useless people, but as an important organ of the school. The principal further suggested that parent members should use the power invested in them to deal with issues that hampered the performance of the school.

4.5.2 Teachers' Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

The teacher members were asked to mention the strategies that could be used to enhance their effectiveness in carrying out their roles. Their views on this question are discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.5.2.1 Training of School Board Members

The training of school board members was one of the key points suggested during the interviews with the teacher members. The participants considered training as a way of improving school board effectiveness.

A teacher member from school B indicated that training was important because it enhanced school board knowledge and understanding of their roles. He further stated that training enabled school board members to cope with the new changes in the Namibian education system. A teacher member revealed that he was fortunate because he was sent to represent their principal to the training and he felt empowered. He said,

Training helped me to follow what was required by the ministry policies because when I got stuck I got back to my notes and see whether I carried out my roles according to what was expected of the school board members.

Emphasising the need for training a teacher member from school B stated that training was necessary because most of the parent members were old, and he believed that whenever people get old they tend to forget, hence they needed training to refresh their memories.

The teacher member from school D expressed her appreciation to her principal for sharing with her of what is expected from the school board members. She said,

Although the teacher members were not trained, our principal assisted us to understand what was required from us as school board members. Some of the roles I understood them and carried them out effectively because of the assistance rendered by the principal.

She further stated that it was necessary for all school board members to be trained on their roles in order for them to effectively carry them out.

A teacher member from school A stated that training helps school board members to improve on their weaknesses in carrying out their roles. He further stated that dissemination of information regarding the roles of the school board members enabled them to carry out their role efficiently.

A teacher member highlighted that training built confidence among the school board members because they acquired deep understanding of their work.

The teacher members from schools A and B stated that the parent members needed refresher training, while teachers needed a proper training since they were not trained. A teacher member from school B further stated that regional office should provide training to all school board members to enable them to perform their roles effectively.

4.5.2.2 Incentives for Parents Members

In the interviews with teacher members, they indicated that school board members, especially parent members, have their responsibilities at home yet they were entrusted to carry out their roles as school board members. Therefore they felt that parent members should be given incentives to motivate them to effectively carry out their roles.

A teacher member from school D stated that the parent members spend most of their time doing school activities. They have their responsibilities at home they should be given a portion of wages to motivate and encourage them to carry out their roles

A teacher member from school B said,

For the parent members to carry out their work effectively they should be remunerated. They must get something from the government, but not only the refreshments offered when there was a school board meeting. The government should give a small allowance or money given per term just to thank them and encouraged them to come and do their work. They must be motivated just like any other person who woke up every morning going to work.

Document reviews on the financial report for 2012-2014 revealed that the parent members at this school have been given refreshments every time they came to the school board meetings.

Similarly, a teacher member from school A, indicated that the Ministry of Education should give incentives to parent members for the work they are doing for the school. He further stressed that parent members carried out their roles but their work was not recognised, hence some incentive should be given to them.

Another way of recognising school board work as suggested by another teacher member from school A, was that the parent members should be given an award during the regional and circuit prize giving ceremonies as a way of motivation. For instance he gave examples of an award to be given to parents, e.g. a t-shirt or a bag that anybody can see.

A teacher member from school B emphasised that the Ministry of Education should recognise the roles of the school board by giving award to school board members

with good performing school because they also contributed to the performance of the school.

4.5.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Performance of the School Board

From the interviews with teacher members, it emerged that for school board members to function effectively they should evaluate their own performances.

The teacher member from school A indicated that at the end of each year school board members should analyse the activities they had planned for themselves to find out whether they reached their goal. She further explained that if the activities have been carried out successfully, it means they reach their goal, but if it was not carried out it means they failed to do their work effectively.

Another way of evaluating their work as explained by a teacher member from school D was that at the end of each year school board members analyse the minutes for both school board meetings and parents meetings to find out whether the plan of action has been successfully implemented.

Indicating how they monitored and evaluated their work, a teacher member from B stated that they did not have the tools to evaluate their performance; instead they analysed the examination results. He further explained that whenever something was discussed and implemented they analysed the outcomes. A teacher member from school C stated that they have a check list with the school board activities which they analysed at the end of each term to find out whether the activities have been carried

out or not. A teacher member explained that if there were activities not carried out they put up strategies for improvement.

4.5.2.4 Access to the Policy on the Roles of the School Board by School Board Members

The teacher members thought that the absence of the policy or guidelines on the roles of school board, made it difficult for them to carry out their roles effectively.

Although the principal of school B had the policy, a teacher member from school B revealed that he was not even aware of a policy on the roles of the school board. He said,

To be honest, I am not aware of any policy on the roles of the school board. I can only remember a small booklet that stipulates the duties of the school board, but I cannot remember the name. The principal should give us a copy to guides on our roles.

He further emphasised that nowadays people act according to policies; therefore they needed it to acquaint themselves with its content and act accordingly. Furthermore, he explained that even when a staff member transgressed the policy there was nothing to prove whether the person did wrong or not because no policy in place to regulate their roles.

A teacher member from school C shared similar sentiments when he said, “I did not have it, I only saw it. I think every school board member should have a copy of the policy.”

Likewise, teacher member from school C said, “Mmmm...I did not have the policy and I did not even know the name.” She emphasised that they needed the policy to guide them in carrying out their roles.

A teacher member from school D said, I have the booklet called “The Work of the School Board, A Guideline for School Board Members.” She further stressed that the booklet and the information shared to her by the principal guided her in executing her roles successfully as a school board member. She further indicated that the policy on the work of the school board should be translated into local language so that parent members could read on their own. She felt that if school board members were given the policy they would be guided better in carrying out their roles effectively.

4.5.2.5 Application of Democratic School Governance

In the interviews, the teacher members expressed how they believe that democratic school governance contributed to the effective functioning of the school board members.

The teacher members from schools C and D stated that democratic school governance contributed to the effective functioning of the school board members because everyone was free to give his or her ideas without fear. Another teacher member from C stressed that if school board members shared their views they could point out their weaknesses and act on them.

A teacher member from school A stated in favour of democratic school governance that, “If no democracy the school board members keep quiet in the meetings, but with democracy members are free to share, take part in decision making and own the decisions.”

4.5.2.6 Commitment of Teachers towards their Work

The teacher members interviewed stated that teachers’ commitment towards their work was one of the possible strategies to enhance school board effectiveness.

A teacher member from school B felt that for the school board to perform their roles effectively, the principal should be committed and share information with other school board members. He said he expected the principal to share more of the things related to the roles of the school board from their principals’ workshops. He further emphasised that the principal should organise a visit to top performing schools so that the school board members could learn from other school board members in the region or other regions.

A teacher member from school D stated that teachers and principal should work hard, be courageous and be influential to other school board members. Another teacher member from school B expressed her experiences that for school board members to carry out their roles effectively principal and teachers should work in cooperation with other teachers, parents and learners.

The teacher from school A felt that since teachers were representing other teachers, they should take teachers problem to the board meetings, “We are selected by other teachers so that we take their problems to be discussed in the school board meetings”, she elaborated.

4.5.2.7 Commitments of the Parents toward their Roles

Following the interviews with the teacher members, it emerged that the commitment of parent members toward their roles was viewed as a possible strategy to enhance the school board’s effectiveness.

A teacher member from school C indicated that parent members should be committed towards their work and have the Namibian child at heart. The teacher member stated that they needed to be committed to their work because what they were doing was for the Namibian child.

A teacher member from school D felt that for effective functioning of the school board, the parent members should be free to discuss school related matters and they must feel ownership for their school. Sharing a similar point of view, A teacher member from school A emphasised that the parent members should be prepared to discuss with other school board members the ideas concerning education from other parents community.

4.5.2.8 Young School Board Members to be elected

The teacher members from schools B and C was concerned about the age of the parent members elected as school board members. They explained that some of the parent members were very much old because they are already on retirement. A teacher member from school B felt that these people were regarded as unable to deliver anymore and that's why they are on retirement. He further suggested that there must be an age limit of who to be selected to serve on the school board, because school board roles involved a lot of movement to and from school, which a retired person may not do effectively.

4.5.3 Chairpersons' Perceptions on Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

4.5.3.1 Training of School Board Members

The training of school board members was a key point that was suggested by the chairpersons during their interviews. The chairpersons considered training as a way of improving school board effectiveness. In general it was found that parent members have been trained to some extent, but not sufficiently and therefore adequate training is required for them to carry out their roles effectively.

The chairperson from school B indicated that she received two trainings and was satisfied with the training given to her because everything that they were doing at school was based on the training given. The chairperson from school A also indicated that he was trained. He revealed that there were school board members who were not trained and could not carry out their work effectively because they did not know what was expected of them. The chairperson further stated that although he received the training he felt that it was not sufficient because it did not cover everything they were experiencing in the field. He suggested that the regional officers should organise more training where the roles of the school board would be further deliberated on. He further suggested for the regional office to monitor the implementation of the training given in order to assist in cases of weaknesses.

4.5.3.2 Training by the Principal

The chairperson of school board B indicated that it was important for the principal to conduct some workshops at school level so that everybody knows what roles are expected of him or her.

The chairperson of school A also indicated that it was very important for the school board members to be trained because training informed them of their roles and how they were expected to carry out those roles.

4.5.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Performances of the School Boards

In the interviews with the four school board chairpersons, it was indicated that for effective functioning of the school board members, they should monitor and evaluate their own performance.

The chairperson from school B mentioned that they evaluated their work by organising a meeting to revise what they did during the term. She explained that based on the outcome of the evaluation they drew up a plan of action for improving their performance. Sharing a similar experience the chairperson from school C stated that before they could start with the meeting, they always revised the previous minutes to find out whether the resolutions taken during the meeting were resolved or not and to make follow ups if there were still things not resolved .

The chairperson from school A explained that they used the school board evaluation instrument to evaluate their performance. He further explained that the evaluation tool had many aspects that different school board members had to observe when conducting evaluation. He indicated that at the end they all came together to discuss their findings so that they improve the aspects that were poorly performed on.

4.5.3.4 Incentive for Parent Members

The school board chairperson from school A stated that parent members were concerned about leaving their responsibilities behind to come to school where they were not earning anything.

The school board chairperson from school C was also of the opinion that parents did not avail themselves to school because they wanted to be paid for the work they carry out at school and this was not happening.

The school board chairperson from school B did not mention incentive for the parent members as a possible strategy to improve school board effectiveness.

4.5.3.5 Access to the Policies on the Roles of the School Board

The chairpersons felt that the absence of the policy or guidelines on the roles of the school board members made it difficult for them to carry out their roles effectively.

The chairperson from school B indicated that he had the policy and stressed that every school board members needed to have a copy of the policy on the roles of the school board. She further stated that they are the decision making body at the school therefore they should be in possession of the relevant policies to help them in taking decisions.

Sharing a similar view the chairperson from school C revealed that he had the policy from the Ministry of Education, but he forgot the name of the policy. The

chairperson indicated that the policy is desirable so that they read for themselves and follow it when carrying out their duties.

The chairperson of school A responded that he had a booklet that stipulates what they should do or should not do as school board members. He further stated that it was very much important that each school board member had a copy of this booklet because it is where they referred to, when carrying out their roles.

4.5.3.6 Application of Democratic School Governance

From the interview with the three chairpersons from schools A, Band C, it came out that democratic school governance was viewed as a contributing factor to the effective functioning of the school board members. These chairpersons mentioned that democratic school governance helped school board members to share ideas on best school governance.

4.5.4 Parents Members' Perceptions on the Strategies to Enhance School Board Effectiveness

4.5.4.1 Training Provision

The need to train school board members was also brought up during the interviews with the parent members, as a key point in improving school board effectiveness. In general, it was found that parent members had been trained to some extent, but the

training was not sufficient and much more was required to be done in order to equip them effectively and efficiently.

The parent members from school D expressed that the training received last year by the principals was not the same with the training given to the parent members three years back. This school board member indicated that the changes in the system posed a lot of barriers because not all members who are expected to carrying out these roles were trained.

The parent member from school D suggested that the Regional Education Office should meet all school board members and share with them information on the roles of the school board in order to avoid conflict among the board members. He said,

If they cannot call all of us, they must come down to us and give us same information. School board members especially parent members needed more training at least once in each term. There was a lot of changes that the government brought in our roles, most of us were not aware of these changes therefore they must train us to acquaint ourselves with the changes and carry out our roles effectively.

Another parent member from school D observed that the principal and the chairperson used to attend meeting and training. She further stated that the principal could have given school board members feedback on the knowledge and skills learnt from the regional office and circuit on what was expected of the school board.

From the documents reviewed such as invitation letters from the regional office to the school board members, it revealed that only the school board chairperson and the principals were invited to and received the second training for half-day. Furthermore the document analysis of the minutes and letters to school board members confirmed that the principal did not train other board members on what they were trained as expected by the ministry of education, because it was not captured anywhere in the minutes of the school board meeting and no copy of the invitation for training sent to school board members. The minutes of previous meetings also did not reflect any feedback on training given to other board members by the two members of the school board who attended the regional training.

The parent member from school A stated that some school board members were trained including himself, but this was before the introduction of the booklet on “The Work School Broad, Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members.” The parent member further expressed that although he was trained there were things that he did not understand. He said, “The training given to us was not sufficient and effective. I still had many things that I did not understand. This became a barrier to me, even though I liked my work.” He further stated that the regional office or the principal should organise workshops or meetings to help them better understand their roles.

The parent member from school C revealed that he was not trained, but other members were. He asked, “How can the government expect us to carry out our roles if we were not trained”? He further explained that some people were new; they found it difficult to perform their roles because they did not know exactly what they were

expected to do. He felt that training could help them to understand their roles and how they could carry out these roles.

The parent member from school A stated that some parent members were elected but they lacked the understanding of school matters, hence training was needed. She further suggested that the Regional Office should follow up the training initially given in order to find the strengths and weaknesses and offer assistance to all school board members, more especially those who were not trained before.

The parent member from school C argued that,

If training was conducted it would refresh our memories, especially some of us who are old. The training would have helped me because when visiting the school I would know what to look at, what is bad or what is good.

The parent member from school D stated that their chairperson was new and he was not trained. She wanted their chairperson to be trained on the roles of the school board including those of the chairperson. The parent member felt that if the chairperson was empowered, he would invite them to meetings where they would discuss and advise each other on their roles. The parent member further explained that if they understood their roles very well, they would not fear because they know it is their roles and they have to fulfil them.

Upon the review of the school board meeting minutes at school D dated 12 November 2014, it was confirmed that the chairperson was new and he was not trained. In these minutes the school board chairperson requested the principal to

liaise with the regional officials to train him on the roles of the chairperson including those of the other board members.

4.5.4.2 Incentive for Parent Members

From the interviews with the parent members, it emerged that it was desirable for the parent members to receive some form of incentive. They had various reasons for supporting parent members' incentives. For example, the parent member from school D felt that they must be given incentive so that they have courage to carry out their roles. She emphasised that the government should pay them even a small amount of money so that they have courage to carry out their roles as it was expected from them.

The parent member from school C indicated that, "...I am of the opinions that after three years of carrying out these duties we must be rewarded. They must give us something to reward us. They must give us money." Likewise, the parent member from school B stressed that their work must also be recognised. She further emphasized that the government must pay parent members for the work they were doing. She jokingly said: "Even N\$0.50c can be given to us as a reward for our work.

The parent member from school A point out that he was discouraged because their work was not recognised. He argued,

Iyaa... aag! We came to work, we worked, we volunteered, they must look at us, and we must not continue as volunteers, they discouraged us, we must be

given something. It had been long time since independence they must look at us; we must not work as volunteers.

The researcher observed a school board meeting at school A, where a parent member remarked that he was tired of coming to school board meetings one after the other while she was performing this work on a voluntarily basis. The principal responded to this cry by informing the meeting that it was very important for them to meet so that they could select a suitable candidate to replace their grade one teacher transferred to another school.

4.5.4.3 School Board Monitoring and Evaluation of School Board Members

All parent member interviewed expressed that for the school board to improve its performances they needed to evaluate their work.

The parent member from school A stated that they used School Board Evaluation Instrument (a tool provided by the region) to evaluate their performance and this gave them a picture on how they were carrying out their roles. Another parent member from the same school added that in order to improve their roles they analysed the examination results to evaluate their performances. The second parent member further explained that after analysing the examination results they set targets with the objectives to help them reach the targets.

The parent member from school B indicated that for the school board member to improve their effectiveness they should evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The parent member further clarified that if there were some weaknesses they put up action plan to improve it.

The parent member from school C stated that every end of the year they sat and evaluated their roles. He further explained that they scrutinised the plan to determine whether they carried it out successfully. If there were roles that were not carried out successfully they discussed how they would improve it.

Another parent member from school C shared similar views. She mentioned that they revised the previous meetings minutes to evaluate their work. The parent member made it clear that the secretary read the minutes to determine what was done and what was not done so that they could address any gaps in performance.

However, the parent member from school D said that until then, they did not do any self- evaluation on their performance up to now. She said, we did not know how we performed. We are in the dark.”

4.5.4.4 Access to policies on the roles of the School Board

The parent member from school B indicated that the absence of the policy or guidelines on the roles of school board made it difficult for them to carry out their

roles effectively. She said one should be clear on the roles that you are expected to carry out. She demanded that the regional office or the principal should provide them with a copy of the guidelines on the roles of the school board. The board member was confident that they can read or ask their children to read for them.

Sharing the similar view the parent member from school C mentioned that she needed a copy of the booklet so that when she carried out her roles she would know exactly of what was expected of her. The parent member from school C added that if the school board members did not have the book they may not really take it seriously that what they were told was what they were expected to do. She further indicated that knowing their roles would also keep them within the limit of the law.

On the other hand, the parent member from school A stated that he had the booklet on the work of the school board which was helpful to him. He said,

We read this book and get information i.e. if a teacher was absent how to handle this problem, how to manage the school finance, it helped us to find out whether the money was used effectively or not. If some amount was not reflected we asked what the money was used for.

Parent member from school D was also aware of the booklet on “*The Work of the School Board, Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members*” as she stated that there was a book on the work of the school board and it was available at school but the book was not given to them. The parent member from school D said, “Only the

chairperson who was given the book, maybe because he just joined us and he was not trained.” She felt that every school board members needed a copy to read and understand the roles and that knowing their roles would help them in their performance.

4.5.4.5 Commitment of Teachers towards their Roles

From the interview with the parent members, it emerged that the commitments of the teachers toward their work contributed to the effective function of the school board members.

The parent member from school A revealed that there were teachers who did not perform their work effectively especially when the principal was not around. She further recommended that teachers should commit to their work, they should not only be there waiting for payment, but must have the nation at heart and give quality education to the children.

The parent members from schools B and C commented that some teachers were lazy with their work. They further emphasised that the teachers should commit themselves to their work and motivate children who perform poorly to improve. The parent members stressed that teachers should encourage the parents of poor performing learners to assist and motivate their children to do better.

4.5.4.6 Democratic School Governance

The parent member from school D indicated that it is good for a school to practise democratic school governance, because it allows people to express their opinions and ideas and people are free to share with others on how they want to govern the school.

Another parent member from school D cited that at their school, everybody was allowed to share his or her ideas and opinions and they always take one decision.

The parent member from school members A, B and C did not mentioned democratic school governance as a possible strategy to enhance school board effectiveness.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The school board members interviewed in this study pointed out their roles. Some of the roles mentioned were recommending the appointments of staff members, disciplining learners and teachers, promoting school welfare, making decisions as well as addressing matter affecting the school. However these roles could not be performed without any challenges. The school board members mentioned several challenges they faced in executing their roles. Major challenges include things such as lack of training, lack of educational background, poor attendance and absenteeism, lack of the policy on the roles of the school board, indiscipline among the teachers and the learners.

In order to improve school board effectiveness in carrying out their roles the participants suggested the provision of training to all school board members. This was deemed necessary because training provides the necessary knowledge and skills to school board members on how to carry out their roles. In addition, democratic

governance, incentive for parent members, access to policies documents on the roles of the school board, co-operation between school and community and school board self-evaluation were mentioned as strategies to enhance school board effectiveness. The next chapter interprets data and discusses the findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presents the data that was collected from interviews, observations, and document analysis. This chapter interprets and discusses meaning of the research findings previously presented. Firstly, the interpretations and discussions on the roles of the school board members, which include instilling discipline among learners, recommending the appointment of staff members, supporting the principal and teachers, managing and approving school finance, addressing school problems and maintenance of school facilities.

Secondly, the interpretation and the discussion of the challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles are also presented.

As outlined in chapter 1, this research was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles in rural primary schools. The purpose was to understand the individuals experience and perceptions with regard to the challenges faced by school board in carrying out their roles. In that context, the data collection techniques namely, interview guides, observations and documents review, were designed in such way as to answer the following questions:

- What roles do school board members play in the governance of the school?
- What challenges do school board members in Okahao Circuit face in carrying out their roles and responsibilities?

- How can the challenges faced by school boards be addressed?

Next, interpretations and discussions of the findings concentrated on the necessity of the school boards, roles of the school board in the governance of the school, the challenges faced by school board members in carrying out their roles and the strategies to enhance school board effectiveness.

5.2 Need for the School Board

From the data, the governance of every public school is vested in the school board members. The school board members were very assertive about their roles and were quick to mention that they were the highest decision making body in the school and whatever decision to be made had to go through them. School board members indicated that they had different roles to play as school governance, such as ensuring that recruitment of staff members are done in a transparent manner.

Many school board members mentioned the necessity of a school board, which is to ensure that effective teaching and learning are taking place. Therefore, if the school board members' performance is not up to standard, it can affect the performance of the school as a whole. However, the roles to be played by the school board chairpersons were a cause of concern as chairpersons did not appear to fully understand why school board chairpersons were needed. From their responses it

appeared that they were not actively involved in performing their roles as chairpersons

5.3 Roles of the School Board Members

5.3.1 Recommendation for the Appointment of Staff Members

The school board has a major role to play in ensuring that recruitment of staff members was done in transparent manner. While it was established that none of the parent members asked questions to the candidate being interviewed the teacher member from school A was aware of school board roles, which also included interviewing and short-listing candidates. However, one of the principals in the study indicated that during the interview asked questions while parent members observed. It was also mentioned by one of the teacher from school B that school management short listed the candidates and on the day of the interview they inform the parent members the short listing criteria used. Parent members were not fully and actively involved in the interview process as they acted more as observers during the interview. This was contrary to what is stated in MBESC (2004) that to recommend for the appointment of teachers and other staff members, the school board should participate in short-listing and interviewing short-listed candidates. The data show that the school board parent in this study did not carry out their roles in line with the prescribed guidelines on the work of the school board. This is one of the challenges that parent members faced in carrying out their roles as school board members.

Language barrier was noted as the main reasons why parent member participation is minimal. The teacher members from schools B and D specifically stated indicated that due to language barrier the parent members did not took part in the interview process. They observed and gave recommendations based on their observations. The interviews were done in English, which is an official language and since most of the parents members do not understand English, only teachers ask questions during the interviews while parents observe.

From the statement above it was clear that parent members from rural primary schools were affected by the English language and were unable to follow, understand and take part in the interview process. This has negatively impacted their performance during the interview process. The evidence showed that even parent members themselves, did not fully understand their roles in the interview process. For example, when parent member from school A explained why they were part of the interview process. He said, “We have to be present in order to observe the whole process of the interview.”

From data analysis it was very clear that parent members were not knowledgeable of what roles they should play in recommending the appointments of new staff members although they feel that they participated just like other members. As a result they performed this role differently from what is stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001. Hence, school board members in rural primary school

were less effective. The parent members revealed that the recommendations for the new staff members would not go through without the endorsement of the school board chairperson. In this case, the parent members were assertive that at school level parent members had the large influence with regard to recommending new staff members for appointment.

The data revealed that school board members had no power to transfer, replace or reject teachers when they misbehaved. They could only write a letter to the Inspector of Education requesting that the problematic teacher be transferred or replaced. In this case, school board members felt powerless in performing this role. This was done exactly in accordance with what is stipulated in MBSEC (2004, p.8) “in case of disciplinary problem concerning a teacher, the school board members must write to the Regional Education Director giving reasons why a particular person should be expelled.” The school board can only recommend, not enforced an expulsion.

From the data, it surfaced that the regional office seemingly delayed the appointment of new teachers. This contributed to school board ineffectiveness because one of their roles is to make sure schools have enough teachers so that teaching and learning would take place.

5.3.2 Discussing Problems Affecting the School

The school board members of all the four rural schools acknowledged that they attended to different matters at their schools. They understood that their roles were to ensure that all matters concerning their schools were discussed and solutions to school problems were found. In school board meetings, school board members exchange experience and discuss information on educational issues and map out strategies on how to develop their schools.

In view of the chairperson from school C, school board members discussed the improvement needed at school, for instance parental involvement in school activities, the need to have enough teachers, machines, and computers etc. Other aspects discussed by school board members were: the use of school funds, different strategies of improving schools. Further, it was observed in some of the meetings that chairpersons chaired the meeting, while one parent member was entrusted to conduct the opening and closing prayer.

The findings revealed that only principals and teacher members contributed to agenda items of school board meetings and they dominated the meeting process.

It also revealed that parent members did not present topics in their meetings, but they only supported matters presented by the principal and the teachers. Therefore the participation of parent members in school essential issues was viewed to be minimal. Less participation from the parent members is contrary to what Onderi and Makori (2012) expressed in their study that parent members were expected to add value to the school life through participation and take ownership of the school they serve.

5.3.3 Instilling Discipline among Learners and Teachers

The importance of school board members in disciplinary issues was identified and stressed by all the participants. Parent members believed that they had the responsibility to mould learners and teachers to perfection. This was in accordance with the stipulation of the MBESC (2004) that the role of a school board members is to monitor school activities and ensure that teachers and learners attending to their duties regular.

In case of a disciplinary problem concerning a teacher or learner they must listen and talk to the person concerned. Some parent members, specifically from schools A, B, and C, indicated that there were undisciplined learners and teachers at their schools and they effectively attended to such individuals.

Principals from all the rural schools indicated that parent members played their roles in improving the image of the schools. The principals applauded the parent members for enforcing discipline among the teachers and the learners at their schools. Although parent members were trying their level best to instil discipline there was a serious case of learners' indiscipline at school C, while at school A, the teachers' indiscipline was also reported. The above statements testified the fight that the researcher observed at school C during the collection of data. This was an indication that sometimes the learners and the teachers become unruly which inhibited school board members' performances.

A teacher member from school B expressed that at their school it was the roles of the teachers to discipline learners. This teacher felt that since they were at school it was more convenient for them to discipline learners. This is what Waghid (2005) expressed that the school principals and the teachers felt that they alone, are responsible for the school. In this case, school board members were not encouraged to perform their roles; hence the parent members did not do much as far as this role is concerned. On the other hand, this was contrary to what Quan- Baffour (2006) expressed, “in supporting the school staff, parent members can advise, guide and direct principal and teachers on issues relating to conflict resolution.”

A parent member from school C stated that she assisted the principal and the teachers to instil discipline among the teachers and the learners. This shows that the parent member was not aware of the school board roles, as a result she performed this role for others.

5.3.4 Decision Making

Although the principals interviewed indicated that parent members had more power than the principals and the teacher members with regard to decision making, they seemed to influence decisions on issues discussed more than the parents did. This was confirmed by the expression made by the principals of schools A and D as they

stated that teacher members had more influence in the decision making because some parent members' understanding on educational matters was limited.

The statement above is consistent with Baruth (2013) that the literacy level of parent members in rural school in most cases disadvantaged them and has serious bearing in their performances. It is evident that the level of education is one of the challenges that hamper the operation of the parent members because due to their status they tend to be excluded and marginalised.

The response from the principals of school A and D parent members played very little role in making decisions in educational matters and this was not a good examples of parental involvement in schools, in which parents are increasingly encouraged not only to benefit from education of their children, but also to become active partners in the production of education of their children.

It can therefore be concluded that literacy level of the parent members hindered them from making decision. As a result teacher members were more influential whenever decisions were taken.

Parent members indicated that they participated in decision making which accrued from the adoption of participative approach where ideas and opinions are shared, but they felt that their inputs did not influence the decisions. For example, a parent member from school B, when asked about her influence in decision making she expressed that: "regarding my influence I do not know" to show how she was in

disagreement with the statement. Evidently, parent members had experienced little influence over the decision made at the school.

The findings showed that some principals regarded themselves as the chief accounting officers who were responsible for whatever was happening at the schools. Hence they directed and guided other school board members on the decision to be made. This belief was more prominent at school C.

The practice of dominating decision making by the teachers and the principals is not in accordance with the stipulation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 which states that the overall governance of the school is vested in the school board members. This means that no one's influence should be more than the influence of other members when decisions on school issues are taken. The involvement of parent members and teacher members in decision making was too minimal because the principal influenced most of the decisions taken. Being accountable to the school does not entail that the principal should influence but rather he must facilitate and guide the discussions.

The principal of school B stated that, "I always leave parent members to decide first, if I know their decision was against the policies I then gave my opinions, that it would be much better if we do A, B, or C." In this case, the data clearly indicated that there was no share decision making at this school if the principal left parent members to decide. For example, it was clear that the principal, in many cases, acted as a "guider" but not a member of the school board.

The principals seemed not to understand what their roles in the school board were. Instead, they seemed to refer mostly to other school board members, parent members in particular. They actually seemed doing the work for the parent members in ensuring that the school was running smoothly.

In this case, the principal did not own the roles, but he performed these roles for parent members. This shows that the principal was not aware of the school board roles; as a result he performed this role differently as compared to what is stipulated in the Namibian Education Act of 2001. This understanding was more prominent at school C.

The move towards collective decision making is in line with value of democracy, transparency and equity, however it is evident that these values are not yet practised in these schools as the principals performed most of the school board roles. The introduction of the school board is an acknowledgement of the needs for democratic school governance by the state.

5.3.5 Supporting the Teachers and the Principals in carrying out their Roles

School board members interviewed concurred that as elected school board members they had the responsibility to assist the school principal and teachers in improving teaching and learning. This acknowledgement was in line with the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2004) stipulation which make it a mandatory for

school board members to support the principal and teachers in carrying out their duties.

One parent member from school D said “during my visit at school I sit in the classroom and observe, later I talk to the teacher and encourage him or her to work hard. I also give feedback to the principal.” In this case, the parent member did more than what was expected of her by the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 because she gave feedback to the teacher after the lesson observation. According to the MoE (2001) the roles of the school board in curriculum matter is to advise the regional director of education on educational needs and the curriculum of the school. It is also evident that the school board members acknowledged the fact that they have the responsibility to assist the principal and teachers to ensure improvement in school results. However, along with poor educational backgrounds, most parent members had no experience and capacity to assist the teachers in the classroom. Since the purpose of giving feedback after lesson observation is for the teacher to improve teaching, a question to be raised was whether parents really had any experience in professional matters such as teaching methodologies and the teaching of basic competencies by the teacher.

A teacher member from school A indicated that school board members give advice to teachers. He explained that they had a discussion with new teachers and informed them of what was expected of them before they started with their work. Another teacher member added that some parent members were quite innovative and had good suggestions to principals, learners and teachers on what to do. This, according to Quan-Baffour (2006), means supporting the principals and the teachers on issue

related to improvement of staff by recommending qualified teachers and motivate teachers and learners. This idea highlighted why having parent members in school governance.

A principal of school C and the chairperson from school B indicated that the parent members at their school praised and motivated the teachers for their performances which encouraged them to work harder. This shows that the parent members performed more roles than what was expected of them. For instance, motivation is an important part of participative management and parent members did this because they wanted teachers to work hard and improve the performance of the school.

School board members did not only visit classrooms and motivate teachers but also supported the principal and teachers in maintaining school buildings.

From the data it was clear that parent members were effectively performing this role. The chairperson from school C explained that they maintained the school buildings by making sure that any broken items were replaced. He confidently said, “This role was for the school board, but not the principal.” From this statement one may conclude that in this school only parent members were involved in these roles and the principal was excluded from members of the school board.. In this school the way school board members carried out this role was different from the stipulation of the Namibian Education Act, Act 16 Of 2001 because they were not working as a team like in some school where members had different activities to do as compared to other members.

The success of the school is, thus, not the responsibility of the teachers alone, but for all parties involved, that is; the school board members, parents, and community members. The rights and responsibilities of the parents might be incomplete if the parents were excluded from their children's education. As the African proverb goes; "It takes the whole village to raise a child" this means that the school alone cannot achieve the learners' good performance without the support from the parents and the community at large.

5.3.6 Exercising Control over School Finance

The data presented earlier revealed that only teachers and principals planned the school budgets. For instance at school A one parent member said, "The teachers plan the budget that they bring to us, we scrutinised it with the assistance of the teachers and principal, and if we were happy then we approved it." From such data, it surfaced that the principal and teachers had taken more responsibility in budgeting than it is required under the guidelines for the school board. MBESC (2004, p.21) explains that "school board must prepare an annual estimation of income and expenditure and present it to the school parents at general meeting convened by school board at least 30 days' notice to such parents, for further input and approval by the majority vote of such parents and voting at such meeting". However, the findings of this study revealed that some principals and teachers were still using the old way where only teachers took part in the budget process. The parent members acknowledged that it was their responsibility to approve the school budget but they

did not know that they should be part and parcel of the budgeting process. Budgeting is the role of the school board members and not the teachers and principals alone. Again, it was noted that the parent members are doing less in financial planning and management because they were not involved in the budgeting process.

With the introduction of participative school management, school board members were given the power to participate in control and handling of school finance. It is evident that participative management is not being fully employed at this school since the principal and teachers planned the budget and brought it to school board for approval. The school board carried out their roles differently from what is stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001.

The findings revealed that parent members scrutinise the expenditures. One could understand why parent members scrutinised the expenditures; because it would be unreasonable to expect parents to authorise the payment of the school fees for the running of the school without giving them opportunity to see how the money was spent. This was contrary to the findings of the study done by Niitembu (2006) that parent members relied on the guidance of the principal and teachers when it comes to income and expenditures without teachers' assistances. In this case, parent members performed their roles as expected by the Education Act 16 of 2001. It was imperative that the school parent members scrutinized the use of school fund on their own; otherwise the principals and the teachers may hide some information from them.

Some principals did not mention managing finance as the role of school board members. This implies that the principals exercise control over the school finance without the involvement of the school board members. This is differently from the stipulation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001.

5.3.7 Paying the Security Guards

It emerged from the data that parent members were not comfortable with some areas of school governance. For example, at schools B and D parent members were paying the school-employed security guards. The parent members were compelled to pay the security guard which they felt was supposed not to be their roles. However, this was in accordance with the study by Quan-Baffour (2006) stated that school board members must provide school with a safe environment by keeping criminals away from the school. In this case, school board members were performing their roles in accordance with the stipulations of the Ministry of Education.

It was also evident that the parent members from school D were performing additional roles of monitoring the security guard's performance, especially during the night. Although the MoE (2001) indicated that the school board may exercise power and perform other roles as may be required, parent members from school D were tired and demoralised by this role as it was risking their life to come to school during

the night. On the other hand, parent members felt that the Ministry of Education is seemingly ignoring some schools when it came to the provision of security services.

5.3.8 School Board Greatest Strength

From the data it emerged that there was a sense of strength among school board members in carrying out some of their roles. For instance, they linked the community with the schools, motivated teachers and learners to work hard and improve learners' performance and managed schools' finance satisfactorily. Despite many challenges experienced by the school boards, it was clear that at least school board members were performing some roles effectively and made some differences in the school's life.

The principals stated that the school board members were committed to their work and understand the use of school funds. It was clear from the data that school board members have been instrumental in resolving disciplinary problems and other areas of school development. In addition, parent members indicated that school board members were more in taking care of the school buildings. Though school boards were not excellent in all of their roles, there was a sense of improvement and hope for the better in future. The general observation was that school board members from the school visited play a very important role in some of their roles and they have to be congratulated for their actions.

The chairperson from school A indicated that based on the teachers' needs they had requested training for their teachers on several occasions. For examples, school board members initiated teachers' training on the implementation of the curriculum from the Regional Office through the Office of the Inspector of Education. This is an indication that school board members do not understand their roles. It is the role of the principal to make sure that there is a correct curriculum implementation because he is the professional manager of the school.

5.4 Challenges faced by School Board Members in executing their Roles

5.4.1 Literacy and Lack of Understanding of Educational Matters

Low educational level and illiteracy have played a role in the inefficiency of school board members in rural schools. The principals were concerned about the performance of the parent members. They specifically indicated that poor education background among parent members resulted in lack of understanding of educational matters. This is possible because illiteracy prevented parent members from accessing relevant school information from the principal. As Baruth (2013) remarks, literacy among the parent members especially in the rural areas may contribute to their inefficiency of school boards. Most of the parent members interviewed did not attain tertiary educational levels. The parent members' profiles showed that the highest qualification obtained by parent members was Grade 10. For example, the parent member from school D attributed their failure to execute their roles to lack of

education. She said, “Most of the things are new and we do not understand them.” This is understandable because many a time poor educational backgrounds among parents were commonly reported in the literature.

Policy understanding is very important but could be difficult for parent members in the rural areas whose formal education may be limited. Limited understanding of policies and how to implement them, led to schools in rural areas being left behind.

The parent members were not conversant with the language that is used in ministerial documents, in particular, the Namibian Education Act, Act16 of 2001 and *The Guidelines on the Work of the School Board*. For this reason, it can be concluded that the challenges with regard to language seemed to be located in parent members’ lack of understanding. It is against this background that the teacher members volunteered to read and interpret roles in order to ensure their involvement and active participation in school governing matters. However teachers were concerned that this process delayed most of their programmes because it took time to get the parents understand.

The teachers and the principals felt that the parent members did not perform their roles because of poor literacy and poor educational background. Although the parents in rural areas were illiterate and lacked knowledge on education matters, the parents remained important stakeholders in education and formed the majority membership of school boards. It is therefore the responsibility of the Regional Office

and the school principals to make sure that the parents understand their roles and responsibilities as required of them by the ministry of Education (MoE, 2005).

The elders are the ones who are taking care of grandchildren and are responsible for attending the parents' meetings where election of school boards are conducted. Given that most of the parent members were old and did not understand educational matters one can conclude that this was the main challenge inhibiting participation in school governance. Even though teachers may come up with good initiatives, parents might not support those ideas due to the level of understanding. According to Carpenter (2011) it was clear that the elders and less educated school board members may experience difficulties in taking decisions or may take decisions which may be against the Acts and regulations since they have limited knowledge of the educational policies.

Some principals were concerned about the parent members' lack of basic understanding and argued that these parents seemed not to fulfil their roles effectively. One could argue that the principal forgot that the parents may perhaps not be educated people and may not be familiar with educational matters. It was their responsibility to guide and advise the parent members in educational related activities where they may seem to be ineffective (MoE 2005).

The parent members felt incapacitated to perform their roles as entrusted to them by the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 because they did not know about their roles and how they could perform them. It was evident that parent members were willing to carry out their roles but their little education stood in their way. The school board

understanding of their roles was clearly limited. They were constrained by limited education they had in the field.

5.4.2 Lack of Knowledge in the Recommendation for Appointment of Staff Members

The process of interviewing and recommending staff for appointment proved to be very demanding, requiring a deep understanding of the interview procedures. One problem identified was the English language used in conducting the interview, which most of the parent members did not understand.

Parent members lacked the basic understanding and the right level of education needed to recommend the suitable candidates for appointment. In addition, they did not have any idea about short listing and interviewing processes. Due to the language problem, parent members could not comment on the interview process and could not influence the outcome of the interview as all was done in English. This was in accordance with the findings of Niitembu (2006) that the interview were done in English, which is the official language and since most of the parent members did not understand English only teachers ask questions during the interview while parents observe.

The principals and the teachers of rural primary schools dominate the process of the interview for the appointment of staff members. This was due to their perception that parent members are incompetent and thereby unable to make informed

decisions. Although the parent members have the responsibility of making recommendation for staff appointment, their involvement and power was somehow limited. This, according to Quan-Baffour (2006), means that because the parent members did not understand English some local officials twist their arms and appoint their favourite candidates as principals or Head of Departments.

The school board members stated that due to long procedures of the Ministry of Education, it took too long in getting approval for the recommended teachers. This was frustrating to the school board members because the learners were left without teachers for quite long and the parents (who had children at these schools) sometimes thought it was the school board members who were at fault. This is an indication that the regional offices contributed to learners' failure because learners spent weeks without being taught while waiting for the appointment of the teachers. This in itself is already a barrier to school board members in making sure learners were attending school and being taught.

The school board members were experiencing difficulties with regard to teachers recommended on a contract basis. The school board members felt demoralised and frustrated by teachers on contract who always quarrel with them when their contracts ended. It was evident that teachers employed on contract basis were not given enough information regarding their employment conditions. The Human Resource Division, the principals the teachers and who have knowledge on matters regarding appointments could have explained to these teachers to avoid inconveniences at the end of contracts. To avoid these pit falls discussed above, Quan-Baffour (2006)

suggested that it was important for the school board to be empowered in procedures of employment as to minimise the tension between themselves and these teachers.

5.4.3 Lack of School Board Training

As revealed by the presented findings, there was lack of training and capacity building to provide school board members with efficient skills. Those who were trained indicated that the training was not effective while some school board members were not trained at all. School board members felt that if they were unclear about their roles, it would be difficult for them to carry out their roles. It became evident that lack of training in rural schools gave rise to problematic situations as the school board members did not understand what was expected of them as stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001.

Lack of clear information on the roles of the school board may lead to school board members contradicting the educational policies. It was clear that parent members were not aware of the policies regulating the education at their school. For example, some parent members questioned how it was possible for pregnant learners to be allowed to attend classes. This means they did not understand the provisions of the policy on pregnancy among school learners. Lack of capacity building workshops in the rural areas gave rise to further problematic that the situations boards did not understand what was actually expected of them as stipulated by the Education Policy

The situation at school D was disturbing because all school board members, including the principal were not trained as compared to other schools where the principals and the school board chairpersons received training. Lack of training was confirmed by the parent school board members from school D who stated that their chairperson was not trained; therefore it was difficult for him to carry out the roles accordingly. She further stated that the school board meeting was convened by the principal. It was also evident that both the principal and the school board chairperson from school D needed training to guide them in their operations since both of them were not trained. According to MoE (2005), the principal should train and guide school board members to carry out their roles effectively. This could be the reason why parent members at this school lacked knowledge on educational matters because the principal and the chairperson who were supposed to train and guide them on issues of school governance were not trained. As a result, the school board members at this school could not be expected to function effectively. This, according to (Kumalo, 2009), means that the government expects school board members to carry out their roles but it does not ensure that these members have the capacity to do so.

It was also evident that the regional office failed to train and support teacher members on their roles and responsibilities as school board members. For example, the teacher members from all schools stated that they were failing because of lack of training and support from the regional office. Teacher members at these rural schools have been neglected, which worsened the problem and hence the need for training could not be over emphasised.

Given the challenges faced by school board members in rural schools, there is a need for training and empowerment workshops. The participants cried out for the regional office to get into the rural schools and offer training. If the school board members were trained, then the challenges facing the school boards could be addressed effectively. In fact, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2005) clearly obliged the Regional Education Office to train and capacitate all school board members.

Adequate training would make school boards understand and know what is expected of them. Training guides and it could help the school board members fulfil their roles. It is therefore the responsibility of the state to develop the capacity for school board and ensure that they perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.

5.4.4 Lack of Commitment from the School Board Members and Support from Community

The principal of school D highlighted that parents were not interested in the education of their children as they left everything in the hands of the teachers and the principals. The participation of the parents in the education of their children is important as it supports the teaching and learning at the school. Parents in rural areas were not co-operative, basically due to ignorance. The principals were frustrated by lack of support from the parents as they were not adhering to the decisions made during parents' meetings.

From the above statement, it was evident that the principal of school C agreed that one of the possible solutions to improve on the disciplinary problem was by active parental involvement and support.

5.4.5 Poor Attendance and Absenteeism

The school board members were struggling to cope with the high rate of absenteeism among school board members and parents from the community. The attendance of parents in parents' meeting was relatively low. The absence of the chairperson from school D had a negative effect on the performance of the school board because they were to lead and organise the activities of the school board members. Some parent members did not attend school board meetings and did not respond to invitations by either confirming attendance or giving apologies. So the school board members were forced to postpone the meeting because they did not meet the quorum. This was in accordance with the findings of Niitembu (2006) that some parents did not attend school board meetings or give their apologies. This was not a good practical example where parents absent themselves from meetings where they were supposed to discuss and solve matters affecting the school. High absenteeism among the parent members leads to the assumptions that they were not commitment and lack understanding about their role.

According to the MoE (2001) a member of the school board vacates office, if such member has been absent for three meetings of the school board in a year without the permission of the chairperson of the school board. Although parent members' absence from meetings at these schools was very high, the school boards did not take any action against the parent members who did not attend three meetings in a year.

5.4.6 Lack of Discipline among the Learners and the teachers

The issue of indiscipline proved to be the greatest concern among school board members. It was evident that the school board members were challenged with serious disciplinary problems. The parent members, for example, stated that since the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools, indiscipline had risen among the learners. Some learners were violent which resulted in the killing of a security guard. The school board member related his experience and how he had to deal with serious of disciplinary case that required learners' suspension and recommendation for expulsion. This was an indication that indiscipline in some of the schools visited was beyond control.

At some schools, the learners became violent. For example, one parent member stated that they talked to the learners about their behaviour but the advice seemed to fall on deaf ears. It was very important for parent members to talk to learners because they can remind them about their culture and the values they must follow if they are to be accepted members of their society Quan-Baffour (2006).

Consequently, the school board has the legal right to deal with learners discipline according to the Education Act 16 of 2001. The response from the school board member revealed that the situation of learner discipline was far worse than it seemed and therefore needed serious attention and intervention.

It was interesting to note that all participants were aware of the indiscipline among the learners at their schools. They believed children needed direction and guidance to achieve the desirable goals. The provision of a code of conduct for learners enforced by the school board members could reinforce discipline among the teachers and the learners.

It was noted that parent members indicated that some teachers too, were disobedient as they did not carry out their work effectively if the principal was not around. Despite the experience gained and training given to some school boards members, the school board members were still unable to critically address problems at hand thus failing in their duties to attend to disciplinary issues at their schools.

School board members alone could not resolve learners' disciplinary problems; they needed support from the parents Quan- Baffour (2006). The teacher members believed that the only solution to improve discipline among school learners was to encourage greater parental involvement and parental support. Therefore they thought it always important that school boards involved the parents in resolving learners' disciplinary issues. Disciplining the learners is a shared responsibility between the teachers, the school board members, the parents and the entire community. The input

of the parents is crucial to the improvement of learners' academic performance. This finding affirms the research by Onderi and Makori (2012) that rural schools are faced with indiscipline among teachers and learners. Nevertheless, it was the responsibility of the school boards to create a safe environment for learners and staff members.

5.5 Strategies to Improve School Board Effectiveness

5.5.1 School Board Incentives

At the time of data collection, all school board members were working on a voluntary basis. This means that they were not valued for the services rendered to the schools. Some of these school board members were the only breadwinners in their households and hence they needed to earn a living to enable them to feed their families. These findings were in accordance with what Onderi and Makori (2012) that by valuing school boards and making their roles attractive and worthwhile, school can attract better school boards. Some principal also felt that school board members needed to be valued and appreciated. For instance, school board members can be appreciated by awarding or recognising them during the regional or circuit prize giving and award ceremonies.

Overall, most of the participants stated that school board members were not valued; hence they recommended that they be remunerated. For example, the principal of school B suggested that “the parent members of the school board should be remunerated for the work they are doing. Apart from monetary remunerations, other incentives to the school board members which motivate them to be part of the school

board could be given and the school could attract members from the rural areas in becoming school board members. The majority of the school board members were supporting the idea of valuing the parent members for the work they were doing at school. It was common understanding that incentives would serve as a motivating factor to school board members to carry out their roles effectively. The issues of appreciation and recognition of school board contributions to the welfare of the school, was also raised.

In many cases, the parent members had to pay for their own transport to carry out school board activities. This idea was prominent at school B. These findings affirm what Quan- Baffour (2006) found in his study that for parent members to be more committed to their work, the regional office should look into the possibility of paying for transport when attending meetings to motivate the parent members to do their work effectively and with dedication, the Ministry of Education should provide incentive. If the parent members were valued for serving in the school boards, they would be more committed to their work and would always be available to perform their roles.

5.5.2 Access of the Policies on the Roles of the School Board members

The introduction of the “*Work of the School Board*” Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members” was expressed as an indication that the Ministry of Education intended to empower and assist school boards in facing everyday challenges in

governing the schools. It was also clear from the definition of the guidelines on the work of the school board that it will be difficult for the school board to carry out their work effectively without the guidelines.

The parent members indicated that getting a copy of the guidelines would help them understand their roles. It was found that there were only few members who were in possession of the guidelines on the work of the school boards. Without such guidelines, the school board members could face difficulties in carrying out their roles. According to MoE (2005) the school boards have the right to advise and a duty to see whether policies are implemented. It would be difficult to the school boards to advise or to see whether policies are implemented because they work without knowing their roles and rely heavily on assistance from the teachers

On the question whether the guideline on the work of the school boards was needed the parent members said, “We could read this book and get information i.e. if a teacher is absent how to handle this problem.” These documents may answer some of the questions and difficulties school board members may come across when executing their duties. The school board members perform their roles effectively when they know what is expected of them. The above statement was supported by the principal of school D who said that, “Any function that you perform one should have a policy to guide him or her but us we are operating in a vacuum.” According to Sinalumbu (2013) the policies guides members on their roles in order to avoid a situation of being challenged with being in breach of the law.

Most principals have a copy of the guideline on the work of the school board while one principal did not know about the document or its existence. The unavailability of the Act or the guidelines could mean that some decisions on roles of the school board were taken based on common sense as there may be no reference to the guideline or policy.

A policy provides guidelines for behaviour and framework against which behaviour is judged Baruth (2013). The school board members indicated that they did not have the policies on the roles of the school board. This made it difficult for school board members to carry out their roles, make informed decisions and manage schools according to the set standards. Hence there is a need for school board to be given the policy documents. This could give them the confidence to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

It was evident that many school board members (parents and teachers) did not have access to the policies. The non-availability of the guidelines to most of the school board members could mean that the school board members were carrying out their roles without a guide. It can be concluded that school board operated without the guidelines to inform them about their roles.

5.5.3 Provision of Training

The task of being a school board member is complex and could be overwhelming and stressful especially for people who might not have served in school boards before. Lemmer et al. (2009) believed that the roles of the school boards are complex and one cannot expect these roles to be performed effectively without some training that go beyond the normal process of picking up the duties.

The school board members suggested that for them to perform their roles effectively the Regional Office officials should organise more workshops so that everybody gets the information on the roles of the school board. It was commonly agreed among all participants that for school board members to execute their roles effectively they should be trained. For example, a parent member from school D expressed that training helped her to know what to look at and what is good or bad when visiting the school. Participants believed that they performed their roles effectively when they knew what was expected of them.

The statement above clearly indicates the importance for on-going training to be provided to the school board members. For parent members to support teachers and principals to teach effectively, the regional office and the principal must ensure that all school board members undergo a well organised training that focuses on their performance.

The general view among participants was that once all school board members are trained, their roles and the general running of the schools will improve significantly.

It is therefore important and admirable that the Ministry of Education offers training to school board members, but much still needs to be done for the members to serve as expected of them. Schools could improve when school board members better understand their roles and responsibilities. Naturally, school board members could only carry out their roles effectively when they have clear and thorough understanding of their roles. In this regard, necessary mechanisms need to be put in place to empower school board members.

5.5.4 Democratic School Governance

The school board members interviewed embraced democratic school governance because of the cooperation they have observed in their schools since participative management was introduced. Participants indicated that in their schools there were positive aspects that had been brought by participative management, namely, the sharing of decision making among the school board members and the involvement of all stakeholders. Specifically, one of the principals highlighted that in democratic governance, everyone has to know what is happening at the school to feel part of it. The fact that decisions are made at a school level raises within the school boards a great sense of ownership and responsibility among the stakeholders, and thus allows them to take responsibility for what is happening at the school (Mncube, 2009).

One parent member stated the following in favour of democracy, “I cannot complain. In this school we are exercising democracy and our decision is taken collectively. There is cooperation between the teachers, the learners and the parents and decisions are collectively taken.” This shows that school boards in the study agreed that democratic governance has increased good relationship between the teachers, the parents and the school management and was being implemented properly at their schools.

School board members interviewed believed that democratic governance contributed to the smooth running of the school because it allowed every member to participate in and share their views on school governance. They agreed that this type of management built team work and everyone felt empowered. They argued that democratic governance results in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. It was evident that participative management embraced democracy and all stakeholders were given an equal opportunity to articulate their concerns.

A teacher member from school D indicated that good behaviour, teamwork and co-operation were expected from all school board members. The statements above were evidence that the participants in the research confirmed that democratic governance has increased good relationship between the teachers, the parents and the school management and is implemented at their school. The involvement of all stakeholders in decision making meant that they contributed equally and were accountable for whatever problem had been experienced at school level.

The school board members interviewed believed that democratic governance contributed to the smooth running of the school because it allowed every member to participate in policy making and to share their views on school governance. This rests well with democratic school governance where the parent members' participating, influence policies effectively govern the school (Nadeem, 2012). They agreed that this type of management built team work and everyone felt empowered. When school board members take part in decision making it results in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. School board indicated that for democracy to prevail, all stakeholders should be given an equal opportunity to articulate their concern.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the interpretation and discussion of the findings of the results. The findings from participants' responses clearly indicated that the school board members are faced with challenges in executing their roles. The challenges include, learners misbehaving, non-availability of policies on school board roles and poor educational background. The school board stated their concerns which included; lack of knowledge and skills, delay in the appointment of teachers by the permanent secretary and a general lack of training. The school board in rural schools were affected by inability to recommend staff for appointment due to lack of education that made them not to understand the interview process. It was, however; also clear

that school board members seemed to do very well regarding some aspects of school governance. The participants suggested strategies to be employed in order to enhance school board effectiveness.

Chapter 6 will focus on the summary, conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter presents a brief summary giving the general overview of the study in order to show the extent to which the purpose and the objectives of the study stated in Chapter 1, has been achieved. The literature review, the document analysis and observations served as a means of verification for the validity and reliability of data. Qualitative methods were used to investigate the challenges faced by rural primary school board members in executing their roles. This is followed by the presentation, discussions of findings and the conclusions which were drawn from the findings. This chapter further presents the recommendations for improvements and for further study. The chapter closes with a summary of everything discussed in this chapter.

6.2 Summary of the Main Findings

This study set out to explore the challenges faced by school boards in the rural primary schools in carrying out their roles. It was hoped that the study would provide knowledge to school board members, teachers, principals, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders on the challenges faced by rural primary school board members in carrying out their roles and also help to contribute solutions to the identified challenges. The summary of the findings is as follows:

6.2.1 Roles of the School Board Members

All participants expressed that it was necessary that all schools had school boards because they played very important roles in the governing of the schools. Some of the key responsibilities of school board members included but were not limited to: recommending new staff for appointment, participate in decision-making, managing school finances and helping schools solve disciplinary problems.

The roles of the parent members in the interviews of the candidates who applied for teaching vacancies were of some concern as they were mere observers. From the observation it appeared that parent members were not fully and actively involved in the interview processes. In this case, school board members were not fully performing this role. Parent members played very little role in the selection of best candidates to be recommended for appointment as teachers. The regional office delays the appointments of new teachers. This contributed to school board ineffectiveness because learners remained for long period of time without a teacher.

From the data, it surfaced that the principals and teachers had taken more responsibility in budgeting than it was required under the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001. The budget is the role of the school board members and not the teachers and principals alone (Mestry, 2004). Again it was noted that even though they were not involved in the budgeting process, the parents had a say of how much to be spent on what, because they scrutinise and approved the budget that the teachers and the

principal had planned. The parent members relied much on the teachers and the principals' guidance in dealing with school finance

Parent members believed that they had the responsibility to mould learners and teachers to perfection. This is in accordance with the stipulation of the MBESC (2004) that the role of a school board member is to monitor school activities and ensure that teachers and learners attend to their duties regularly. In case of a disciplinary problem concerning a teacher or learner they had to investigate the accused.

Lack of parent members' involvement contributed to their ineffectiveness. The way school board members were performing this role was different from what is stipulated in the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001, because parent members were not involved in the initial stage of the budgeting. It is also imperative to note that the level of education among parent members has significance in the way budget is prepared and monitored.

From the findings, principals were too much influential on decisions taken in school board meetings, resulting in a lack of shared governance, and shared decision-making. This has negatively affected the performance of the school board members. Some of the observed factors that inhibited parent members of school boards to fully participate in the decision-making were inability to use the official language

(English) in meetings, low level of understanding of educational matters and late coming or absenteeism to school board meetings. In this case, it is evident that democratic governance, where participation from all stakeholders encouraged, has not yet taken place in these schools where interviews were conducted

The data revealed that school board members discussed various issues affecting their schools; however, these discussions were not effective as they did not include all members of the school board. The data has shown that the agendas for school board meetings were all from principal and teachers members and that they dominated the meeting process. The findings revealed that parent members did not present topics in their meetings and principals were influencing their decisions. The participation and decision making of the parent members in schools essential issues was minimal. These practices where the parent members were excluded from decision-making were against the idea of a participative management (Ngubane, 2009). This showed that the participative management has not yet taken place in some schools. Little has been done so far to involve parents in school matters. It is also evident that school board members were not knowledgeable about the stipulation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 regarding this role.

The school board members expressed that they had the role to maintain good discipline among teachers and learners. Based on these findings it is clear that even though parent members tried to maintain discipline, there were serious cases of

indiscipline among learners. The data revealed serious cases of learners' misbehaviour, while at one school it was reported that teachers left school before official knocking off time. The parent members revealed that sometimes the learners and the teachers become unruly and this inhibited their performances.

It was evident that at one school teachers were seemingly denying the school board members' opportunity to perform their roles as teachers took up this responsibility themselves.

Both school board members seemed not to be taking the ownership of the roles they were playing as they stated that they were assisting one another. Parent members felt they assist the principal and the teachers to instil discipline among teachers and learners while the principals felt they have consistently helped and guided the parent members to the extent that they end up doing most of the parent members' roles. In this case, the parent members and the principals did not want to claim full responsibility of the roles; they simply said they were performing on behalf of others. This implies that all school board members were not fully aware of the school board roles; as a result they failed some of their roles.

6.2.2 Challenges faced by School Board Members

All school board members expressed that they faced a number of challenges in carrying out their roles. Challenges faced by school board members included but were not limited to: late coming and absenteeism, lack of support from the parent members and the community, lack of training for school board members, literacy and lack of understanding of educational matters. The school board members were struggling to cope with the high incidents of absenteeism as some parent members did not take part in decision making. Absenteeism delayed school program implementation as the school board as well as and the parent meetings had to be postponed because no quorum was reached.

The parents were not interested in the education of their children as they left everything in the hands of the teachers and the principals. The participation of the parents in their children's education was important as this supported teaching and learning at the school (Siririka, 2007). High incidents of absenteeism among school board members and parents from the community were highlighted. Low attendance of parents during parents' meetings and the absence of chairpersons had a negative effect on the school board performance. Some parent members did not attend meetings and did not respond to invitations. Although parent members' absenteeism was very high, the school did not take any action against the parent members who did not attend the meetings.

The study revealed that only introductory training for newly elected school board members was conducted during the first year of office of the school board. Training of school board members has been generally ineffective, inadequate because it did not cover what school board members experienced in the field and was only provided to some members i.e. only the principals and the school board chairpersons. It was reported by some participants that those who received training lacked skills to use the knowledge gained and in some cases could not share with others who did not receive training. It was important and admirable that the Ministry of Education offered training to school board members, but much still needs to be done for the members to serve as expected of them. What seemed to be the case was that there was no evidence of continuous training of the school boards to promote effective performance of their functions.

Illiteracy among parent members especially in the rural areas may contribute to their inefficiency. This was practical because illiteracy prevented the parent members from accessing relevant school information from the principals. The data also revealed that parents could not express themselves in the official language. It was difficult for parent members to carry out their roles because they could not understand the English language used.

Most of the parent members interviewed did not receive education. It was apparent from data that parent members had limited understanding of educational matters.

Many school members are not operating democratically as they do not fully understand their roles. Most of the parent members had insufficient knowledge about the complexities of the teaching profession and therefore lacked the expertise to evaluate teachers and give feedback for improvement.

6.2.3 Strategies to improve School Board Members' Effectiveness

School board members interviewed mentioned different strategies that could be used to enhance their effectiveness. The key strategies mentioned by the participants were: provision of training, parent members' incentive, monitoring and evaluation of school board members, availability of the policies on the roles of the school board members. From the findings school board members were not happy with the way parent members were treated by the Ministry of Education. Parent members were not valued and appreciated for the roles they were performing.

School board members were ineffective because they did not evaluate their work to ascertain the degree of their performance and make changes in regard to their roles. It was also stated that the school board members were not in possession of the evaluation tool that they could use to evaluate the standard of their performance. From the data it was evident that school board members did not regard evaluation for their work as an important aspect in improving their performance. According to MoE (2005) the regional officers should train school boards on their roles. The

regional offices could be blamed for lack of knowledge that hindered parent members to evaluate their work.

It was evident from the data that school board members were not in possession of copies of the Namibian Education Act of 2001¹⁶ of 2001 and the “*Work of the School Board*” Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members. Some school board members were not aware of these guiding documents. Consequently, school board members did not know the provisions contained in these documents, which guide them in their work. It is imperative that the school board members be knowledgeable in educational law and be familiar with the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001. The non-availability of the guidelines from most of the school board members could mean that the school board members were carrying out their roles without a guide. By doing this they can do whatever they think is appropriate, not knowing that there are guidelines that stipulate their roles.

School board members had a number of strengths in performing their roles. These were, the ability to motivate teachers and learners to work hard and improve the schools’ performance, employed as security guards during the night, paying the security guards, inducting new teachers on school board members operations before they started with their work. In addition, school board members had been instrumental in investigating disciplinary problems.

6.2.4 Conclusions of the Study

School board members set rules and policies through which schools are organised and managed. The creation of school board was meant to increase participative management in school governance. In this research it is argued that participative management is to give more authority and responsibility to all role players in education and all stakeholders have to participate in decision-making. However, the school board members did not carry their work effectively due to lack of training and empowerment from the regional office and the principal.

Parents admitted that they lacked skills and knowledge on school board roles. This was seen as the challenges. One of the greatest challenges is the illiteracy rate of parent members. It is essential for them to be given the necessary training, which should give them opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge so they would be in the position to participate meaningfully in the governance of schools. Most of the parent members were old and did not understand educational matters; therefore they did not show interest in their children's education. Indiscipline among learners was a serious concern. The school board members were struggling to cope with the high incident of absenteeism as some parent members did not take part in decision making.

School board members interviewed believed that the following strategies would contribute to the effective functioning of the school board members: recognition and appreciation of the parent members, young parents to serve on the school board

members, and the effective training of school board members. They also believed that, once parents were members of the school board, they should receive on-going training on issues pertaining to the functioning of the school boards.

6.3 Recommendations for Improvements

1. It is clear that many school board members were still not aware of the School Board Evaluation Tool (SBEI) provided by the Omusati Regional Office. The tool was not used to evaluate the school board performance. This study is therefore recommending that school board members should use the School Board Evaluation Instrument (SBEI) to evaluate their performance. Such evaluation would improve their performance.
2. It is also recommended that after the election of the school board members, there must be training and roles of the school board members should be highlighted during their training.
3. This study recommends that in-service training sessions and workshops should be continuously held. Such workshops should be aimed and empowering school board members. Through receiving such training they would be in a position to plan, implement and become more conscious of their main roles.
4. This study further recommends that training should be done at school level to include all parent and teacher members. When parent members understand the training content, they will become confident in their roles and

knowledgeable of what was actually expected of them in terms of the Namibian Education 16 of 2001.

5. Currently, some members of the school board are not considered as the core decision makers. Decision making was often left with the school principals and teachers. To ensure effective school governance, all members of the school boards need to be actively involved in every decision taken at school. Active involvement of all parent members in the decision making process is recommended.
6. It is also recommended that all school board members should be rewarded for their tireless efforts and services rendered to the school and the community.
7. Since school board members were concerned about the time spent by the regional office to appoint teachers, this study recommends that the regional offices should speed up the process for appointment teachers.
8. It is also recommended that the school board members should clearly explain to the teachers appointed on temporary basis the policies regarding condition of employment on temporary basis in order to avoid inconveniences at the end of the contract.
9. School principals should be equipped with skills and knowledge needed to understand and effectively help other school board members in executing their roles. This knowledge can be accessed through workshops, reading relevant documents. If equipped with knowledge and skills on the roles and responsibilities, school principals will be in position to train other school board members at school level.

10. Lack of support from the parent members and community were reported in all schools visited. Therefore schools should find new ways of strengthening the collaboration between the school and community.
11. This study also recommends for the provision of policy documents to all school board members. These policy documents should be translated into local language to allow parent members to read on their own.
12. The term of office of school board members need to be reviewed. The three year term is over while school board members have just begun to gain capacity. Therefore this study recommends that school board members should be allowed to run for at least two terms in order to ensure continuity and utilisation of experience gained during the first years of their term of office.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

1. There is a need to investigate into how parents can be sensitised about the need to take up their rightful roles as school board members, irrespective of their literacy levels.
2. There is a need to investigate the suitable system of evaluating the roles of the school board members in rural primary schools.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This study investigated the views of the school board members on the challenges they are facing in executing their roles in rural primary school boards. The study revealed that school board members had significant roles in the governance of schools. This positive support for school board members indicates that they were integral part of the school. School board members were essential in running a successful school. This recognition was also based on the realisation that parents have the right to play an active role in their children's education, and that school board may help to alleviate some of the problems faced by learners.

Although school board members were supportive of their roles in governing their schools, they indicated that they faced challenges associated with school board activities. The major challenges were poor educational background and lack of understanding of educational matters, language barriers and indiscipline among learners, poor attendance and absenteeism. Other challenges included the delay in the implementation of decision taken and paying the security guard. However, they lacked the knowledge and training to do so. For the school board members to execute their roles effectively, it is essential for them to be given the necessary training regularly, which should include the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge for them to be in a position to participate meaningfully in the school governance.

In order for the school board to perform their roles as expected by the Namibian Education 16 of 2001 they suggested that they should be empowered with knowledge and skills regarding their roles.

The study ended with quite a number of recommendations for both improvement and possible future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of Namibia



UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Inspiring minds & shaping the future

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SEC/FOE/48/2014 **Date: July 29, 2014**

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

Title of Project: CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL BOARDS IN EXECUTING THEIR ROLES: A CASE STUDY OF FOUR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE OMUSATI REGION IN NAMIBIA

Nature/Level of Project: Masters
Principal Researcher: HILMA N. IILONGA (student No: 9234381)

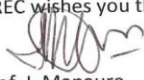
Host Department & Faculty: Educational Foundations and Management, Faculty of Education

Supervisor (s): Dr. J. Mushaandja (Main) (Co-)Dr. G. Likando

Take note of the following:

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

UREC wishes you the best in your research.


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

Appendix B: Research Permission Letter from the University of Namibia

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

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



The School of Postgraduate
Studies
P.Bag13301
Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: 2063523

E-mail: cshaimemanya@unam.na

Date:30 July 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN


RE: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

1. This letter serves to inform that student: **Hilma Iilonga** (Student number: 9234381) is a registered student in the Department of **Educational Foundations and Managment** at the University of Namibia. His/her research proposal was reviewed and successfully met the University of Namibia requirements.
2. The purpose of this letter is to kindly notify you that the student has been granted permission to carry out postgraduate studies research. The School of Post-graduate Studies has approved the research to be carried out by the student for purposes of fulfilling the requirements of the degree being pursued.
3. The proposal adheres to ethical principles.

Thank you so much in advance and many regards.

Yours truly,

Name of Main Supervisor: Dr. J. Mushaandja

Signed: -----

Dr. C. N.S. Shaimemanya

Signed: -----

Director: School of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix C: Request for permission to collect data in the Omusati Region

Mrs Hilma N. Ilonga
P.O Box 245
Okahao
Ongandjera
18 August 2014

To: Regional Director
Ministry of Education
Omusati Region

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR M. ED THESIS IN SCHOOLS IN THE OMUSATI REGION

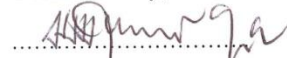
I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Master Degree of Education in the department of Education Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. Currently I am doing a research as part of the requirement for my Master Degree.

Literature have revealed that school board members in rural primary schools in Namibia are not fully involved in school governance and even those who are involved are not able to carry out their roles as required (Amunyela, 2012; MoE, 2007, 2008; Niitembu, 2006). Currently, it is uncertain what challenges the school board members face because no attention has been paid to researching the challenges faced by school boards in rural primary schools especially in Omusati Region.

In the light of the above information I would like to investigate the challenges faced by school boards in the rural primary schools of Okahao Circuit in the Omusati Region. This research is part of the requirement in fulfilment of the Masters of Education programme that I am pursuing. By pursuing this research it is hoped that the study will enlighten teachers, parents, policy makers in Okahao circuit and other stakeholders in education about the challenges faced by school board members in executing their roles. Furthermore, this study will help policy makers to plan interventions to address challenges identified regarding the performance of the school board members and thereby improving the quality of education.

Therefore, I am kindly requesting for permission to collect data in the schools in the Okahao circuit of Omusati Region. I will ensure that the school schedule is not interrupted. Data will be collected after school hours. Please note that research is purely academic and the information obtained from the schools will be treated strictly confidential. I will be very grateful if you will consider my request.

Yours Faithfully,



Hilma Namupaasita Ilonga (Mrs)
(M. Ed student, Faculty of Education)

Appendix D: Letter of Permission from the Ministry of Education Omusati Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Team Work and Dedication for Quality Education

Tel: +264 65 251700
Fax: +264 65 251722

Private Bag 529
OUTAPI

Enq: Mrs. Loide Shatiwa

19 August 2014

To: Inspector of Education
Principals
Okahao Circuit

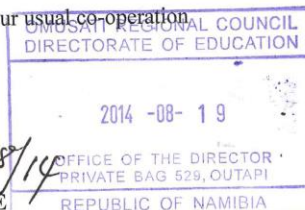
Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEACH IN THE OMUSATI REGION.

1. I write to refer to your letter of 18 August 2014 addressed to the Director of Omusati Education regarding the above subject matter.
2. I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to Mrs. Hilma Ilonga, a student at UNAM, to do research in some schools in Okahao Circuit of Omusati Region. On the understanding that participation by School Board Members in the envisaged research is voluntary. Further, no normal school proceeding should be interrupted by the exercises.
3. Please accord her your usual co-operation.

Sincerely yours,

Shapie 19/08/14
MR. LABAN SHAPANGE
ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Appendix E: Letter of Permission to Collect Data at Schools in Okahao Circuit

To: The Inspector of Education
Okahao circuit
From: Hilma N. Iilonga (M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education)
University of Namibia
Date: 21 August 2014

Dear Madam

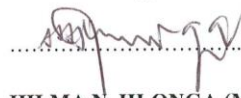
RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR M. ED THESIS AT SCHOOLS IN OKAHAO CIRCUIT.

I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Master Degree of Education in the department of Education Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. Currently I am doing research as part of the requirement for my Master Degree. I am currently investigating challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles in rural primary schools in the Omusati Region. The schools in Okahao Circuit have been chosen as a source of information for this research.

I am kindly requesting for permission to conduct part of my research at the primary schools in Okahao Circuit. Please note that the research is pure academic and the information obtained from schools will be treated strictly confidential. I intend to conduct the interview after school programs so that I do not interrupt the school schedules.

I will be grateful if you will consider my request.

Yours Sincerely,



HILMA N. IILONGA (MRS)
UNAM STUDENT

Appendix F: Letter of Permission to Collect Data at Individual Schools

To: The Principal
From: Hilma N. Iilonga (M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education)
University of Namibia
Date: 02 December 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR M. ED THESIS AT YOUR SCHOOL

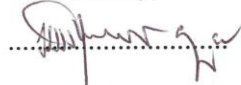
I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Master Degree of Education in the department of Education Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. Currently I am doing a research as part of the requirement for my Master Degree. I am currently investigating challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles in rural primary schools in the Omusati Region. Your school has been chosen as a source of information for this research.

I am kindly requesting for permission to conduct part of my research at your school. I would like to interview you, the principal, two teachers who are more experienced than others in school boards matters and three parents' components (school board chair person and other two parents) who are more senior and have experience in school governance will be interviewed.

Please note that the research is pure academic and the information obtained from your school will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be mentioned in the research. I intend to conduct the interview after school programs so that I do not interrupt the school schedules.

I will be grateful if you will consider my request.

Yours Sincerely,



Hilma N. Iilonga (Mrs)

Appendix G: Interview Guide for Principals

Introduction

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this study and for taking your time to share with me some information with regard to the governance of your school. In this interview, I will invite you to share with me, your views regarding the pertinent roles that school board members play in governing the school as well as the challenges that you faced in executing your roles as school board member.

Instructions

The questions have no right or wrong answers. All the responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the final report. Please feel free to answer the questions as kindly as possible based on your experience, understanding and knowledge. May I also request to tape- record the interview for the quality of data collection and interpretation? Thank you, we may start.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Provide the following information:

Name of school (Alphabetical letter):

1. Gender

Male.....

Female

2. Age

Less than 30 years:.....

between 41-50:.....

Between 31-40:.....

51 years or more:.....

3. What is the highest academic qualification you have attained?

.....

4. What is your position in the school board?

.....

6. For how many years have you served in the school board?

.....

7. Have you served as a board member of this school or were you with different schools? If yes, please specify schools and number of years in which you have served.

.....

8. What is your current occupation?

.....

9. Did/do you have any other responsibilities in the community apart from your occupation and your role as a school board? If yes, please specify.

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SECTION B: ROLES OF THE SCHOOL BOARDS

1. Why is it important for a school to have school board?
2. What roles do different school members' play?
3. How do school board members at your school perform their roles?
4. What do you consider to be the greatest strengths of your board member?
5. How do school board members link the school with the community?
 - 5.1 Can you tell me some examples how school board members link the school with the community?
6. How do the school board members assist the principal and teachers to improve teaching and learning at the school?
7. What are the school board's expectations for the principal and teachers?
8. What types of matters do you usually table and discuss in the school board meetings?
 - 9.1 What is the influence of the following categories of board members on the decision-making at your school?
 - a) Teachers
 - b) Parents
 - 9.2 To what extent do you influence decision-making?

SECTION C: SCHOOL BOARDS CHALLENGES

1. What do you think are the barriers of effectiveness at the board level at your school?
 - 1.1 Which of these barriers are more serious in your opinion?
 - 1.2 Why do you think are they issue of concern?
2. As a member of the school board, how do you describe your cooperation with:
 - a) Parent members
 - b) Teacher members
3. Have you experienced disagreement between board members during board meetings? If yes, how have you addressed it?
4. In what ways can you say the parents in school board and teachers create barriers to the effectiveness of the school board?
5. If you are requested to make changes in the way the school board is operates, what would you change?

SECTION D: SCHOOL BOARD EFFECTIVENES

1. Given the barriers the school board face as you mentioned earlier, what strategies does the school board use to improve the school governance?
 - 1.1 How do you think these barriers could be addressed?
2. What are the methods you will use to improve the performance of your school board?

- 3 Are you aware of any policies regarding your role as board members?
- a) Is a policy on the roles of the school board desirable?
 - b) Why?
- 4 How do you monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your school board's performance?
- 5 What are the standards school board uses for judging whether they performing its work effectively?
- 6 What would you like the following categories of the school board to do to enhance their effectiveness?
- a) Teachers
 - b) Parents
- 7 What types of training have you been offered by the regional education officers to enhance your roles?
- 7.1 How does this training enable you to help you function as an effective member of the school board?
 - 7.2 Have you ever organised workshops for school board members at school level?
 - 7.3 How effective were this training?
 - 7.4 What were the topics covered during the training?
 - 7.5 Why do you think it is necessary for the principal to provide school board with continuous training on their roles

- 8 What strategies can be used by the regional office to empower the school board to become effective in school governance?
- 9 How do you motivate other members of the school board to enhance their effectiveness?
- 10 How can democratic school governance contributed to the effective functioning of your school?
- 11 What experience have you gained as a result of serving on the school board of your school in terms of governing the school affairs?
- 12 Would you like to add anything that you feel is important for school board members to enhance their effectiveness?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation

Appendix H: Observation Sheets

Introduction

This instrument will be used to observe the challenges faced by school boards in executing their roles in meetings

School (Letter of alphabet)

Date

Time

Focus areas of observation	Observations	Comments on each area
School board meeting		
Agenda of the meeting Adequate		
Meeting attendance: Do all members present? Absent with apology? Any reasons?		
Time on issues: Do the amount of time correlate with the importance of the issues or is more time spent on petty issues?		

Issues discussed in the meeting: Do all issues of importance are discussed		
Level of discussions: (Level at which discussions are pitched)		
Meeting process: (who chairs, the roles of the chair),		
Involvement and contributions to decisions taken		
How decisions made? Do they vote? Majority rule? Or is one person dominant?		
Cooperation among the members: Do ideas from all members are accepted and regarded as important?		
Member participation in meeting: Who bring up the issues Are some issues		

brought up by members or is it the chairperson only?		
Role performed by each school board		
Key role of the principal		
Motivation by the principal		
Closure: Did the meeting finished with a reasonable time or was it unnecessarily long? Where all issues discussed or did some stand over?		

Other related areas observed

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Summary of the day

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Appendix I: Documents Review Guide

Investigating the challenges faced by school board in executing their roles

Documents review date.....

Documents reviewed and the focused areas	Findings	Comments
1. Invitations, Agenda and minutes of meetings		
a) Who invites the meeting		
b) Purpose of the meeting		
c) who chaired the meeting		
d) the roles of the chairperson		
e) school board members attendance		
f) School board members contributions to the meeting		
g) How decisions were taken		
h) Issues tabled in the		

meeting		
i) Who tabled the issues discussed		
2. School year plan		
Activities assigned to school board members		
Annual report		
Activities carried out by school board members to improve the school		
3. Trainings File		
Who conducted training		
What topics presented		
Materials received from training		

Other information obtained from the documents

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Appendix J: Informed Consent

I (initials & surname) _____ hereby acknowledge my participation in the research study, understand the content thereof and agree to give true and correct information to the best of my knowledge. Furthermore, I understand that I have the right to withdraw or change any information I provide in this interview and my participation is voluntary. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Place _____ and Date: _____