

Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia

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It all starts here [™]

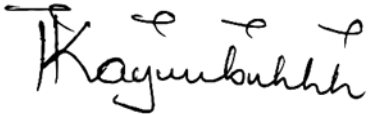


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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation/ thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kayunbuhhh'. The signature is written in a cursive style with several loops and flourishes.

18 October 2016

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Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for everything and for granting me the chance to go for further study, may his name be glorified.

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To the following family for everything they did to our family during that period; the Nanghonda family, Namwoonde family, Kayumbu Ireneus family, Hashipala family and Shimhanda family. May the Almighty God bless you abundantly.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Senior Tonateni Tuulikefo, Helao Nghipangwa and Immanuel Twaitavela Kayumbu.

ABSTRACT

School governance became one of the main concerns in supporting quality education in Namibian schools. Soon after independence, the new Namibian government realised that it is important for all stakeholders in education to participate equally and actively in governing their local schools, and introduced a policy on decentralisation and democratic school governance.

The Namibian Education Act (NEA) (Act 16 of 2001) makes provision that school boards can be established in all Namibian state schools. The logic behind the establishment of school boards in Namibian state schools was to address inequalities and discrimination regarding the provision of quality education that occurred before independence. Another aim was to decentralise decision-making processes, transferring authority and distributing resources from the national level to school level.

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of school board members and non-school board members regarding the challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia. A qualitative research paradigm was used in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data from 18 participants from four selected schools so that an in-depth understanding could be obtained about the challenges faced by school board members.

The major findings largely confirmed previous studies' findings in the Namibian and South African contexts. Findings revealed that school board members experience numerous challenges, such as poor understanding of their (school board members') powers and functions; poor training of school board members; a lack of knowledge and skills; and the need for remuneration for parent school board members as a token of motivation and appreciation.

The recommendations were made based on empirical findings, and emphasise the importance of continuous training of school board members (before and after start their duties) and the extension of their serving terms. It is further recommended that the NEA, specifically the specialised functions of school board members, be reviewed and translated to the local languages. The research further recommended that parent school board members always be given a sitting allowance after meetings.

Keywords: power, governance, quality education, school board, rural schools, Namibia

OPSOMMING

Skoolbeheer het een van die grootste bekommernisse geword in die ondersteuning van gehalte-onderwys in Namibiese skole. Die nuwe Namibiese regering het kort ná onafhanklikheid besef dat dit belangrik is dat alle belanghebbendes in onderwys gelyk en aktief deelneem aan die beheer van hulle plaaslike skole, en daarna het hulle 'n gedentraliseerde en demokratiese skoolbeheerbeleid bekendgestel.

Die Namibiese Onderwyswet (Wet 16 van 2001) maak voorsiening dat skoolrade in alle Namibiese skole op die been gebring kan word. Die logika agter die stigting van skoolrade in Namibiese staatskole was om die ongelykhede en diskriminasie in die voorsiening van gehalte-onderwys wat voor onafhanklikheid voorgekom het, aan te pak. 'n Ander doelwit was om besluitnemingsprosesse te desentraliseer, outoriteit oor te dra en hulpbronne te versprei vanaf die nasionale vlak tot skoolvlak.

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die persepsies van skoolraadslede en nie-skoolraadslede te bepaal aangaande die uitdagings wat skoolraadslede ervaar in hulle ondersteuning van gehalte-onderwys in Ohangwena plattelandse skole in Namibië. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsparadigma is in die studie gebruik. Indiepte-onderhoude is gevoer om data van 18 deelnemers van vier gekose skole in te samel sodat 'n indiepte-begrip verkry kon word oor die uitdagings wat skoolraadslede ervaar.

Die vernaamste bevindinge is in ooreenstemming met voorafgaande studies in die Namibiese en Suid-Afrikaanse kontekste. Die bevindinge het getoon dat skoolraadslede talle uitdagings ervaar, soos 'n swak begrip rakende hulle magte en funksies; swak opleiding van skoolraadslede; 'n gebrek aan kennis en vaardighede; en die behoefte aan vergoeding vir ouerlede van die skoolraad as teken van motivering en waardering.

Die aanbevelings is op empiriese bevindinge gebaseer en beklemtoon die belangrikheid van deurlopende opleiding van skoolraadslede (voor en ná hulle hul pligte onderneem) sowel as die verlenging van hulle dienstydperke. Daar word voorts voorgestel dat die Namibiese Onderwyswet, spesifiek die gespesialiseerde funksies van skoolraadslede, hersien en vertaal word na die plaaslike tale. Die navorsing het voorts aanbeveel dat sittende ouerlede van die skoolraad altyd ná vergaderings van 'n toelaag voorsien word.

Sleutelwoorde: mag, bestuur, gehalte-onderwys, skoolraad, plattelandse skole, Namibië

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCP:	Cluster Centre Principals
CMC:	Circuit Management Committee
CSBA:	California School Board Association
DoE:	Department of Education
EFA:	Education for All
EMIS:	Educational Management Information System Statistics
ETSIP:	Education Training Sector Improvement Programme
FEDSAS	Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools
HOD:	Head of Department
IoE:	Inspector of Education
IOL:	Institute of Open Learning
IToP:	Invitational Theory of Practice
LRC:	Learner Representative Council
MBESC:	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MCA:	Millennium Challenge Account
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MEAC:	Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NEA:	Namibian Education Act (Act 16 of 2001)
NSBET:	non-school board experienced teacher
NSFP:	Namibia School Feeding Programme
NSPI:	National Standard and Performance Indicators
OVC:	orphans and vulnerable children
PS:	Permanent Secretary
SACMEQ:	The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	Southern African Development Community

SASA:	South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996)
SBCs:	school board chairpersons
SBS:	school board secretaries
SDAs:	School Development Associations
SDCs:	School Development Committees
SDF:	School Development Fund
SDP:	School Development Plan
SGBs:	school governing bodies
SMT:	school management team
SSE:	school self-evaluation
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE:	Universal Primary Education
USA:	United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the orientation of the study will firstly be discussed. Key concepts used in this research will be clarified, and the background and rationale of the study will be provided. The research questions and aims of this study will also be identified. The limitations and delimitations of the study as well as the contributions of the research will further be discussed. This chapter will be concluded with a chapter outline.

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of school board members and non-school board members regarding the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in four selected rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region, Namibia. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. The in-depth data were used to create themes, which will appear in the presentation of the findings and discussion of this study (Chapters 4 and 5). In addition, the detailed data were also used to answer the research questions and to secure the conceptual framework that underpinned this study.

1.2 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Soon after independence, the issue of decentralisation and democratisation of school governance was introduced in the Namibian education system in 1993. The Namibian government recognised that it is essential for all stakeholders in education – such as parents, teachers, principals and learners, and their communities at large – to work together in the governance of their local schools (Smith, 2012). The Namibian government therefore introduced an Education for All (EFA) policy in its education system. The EFA policy came along with several changes, and one of them was the decentralisation and democratisation of school governance through the establishment of compulsory school boards in all Namibian state schools (Shanyanana, 2011). Kandumbu (2005) agrees that the introduction of the EFA policy transformed the philosophy of the Namibian education system to support quality education. The policy created an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate equally and democratically in their children's education and local schools' governance (Smith, 2012).

Nowadays, schools are no longer operating in isolation like in the past during the apartheid regime, but they are working in collaboration with communities they serve (Botha, 2013). Parents, teachers, learners and community members are therefore in the best position to realise their local schools' needs (Smith, 2012) and understand all the challenges that are faced by their local schools (Xaba, 2011). Sesane (2014) affirms that local stakeholders are at the greatest level to find solutions to all

challenges that are facing their schools in order to support quality education.

According to the Ministry of Education (MoE) (2008), there are seven major goals of the EFA policy, namely access, equity, democracy, justice, democratic participation, respect for human dignity, and lifelong learning. Furthermore, the Namibian Education Act (NEA) (Act 16 of 2001) and regulations made under section 16 (1–2) of this Act prescribe that:

Every state school must establish a school board to administer the affairs and to promote the development of the school, and the minister must establish a program with the aim and to promote accountability of, active participation, effective exercise of power and performance of functions by members of the school board (NEA, 2001).

The NEA (2001) also clearly prescribes powers and functions of school board members, such as to develop the mission and vision and goals and objectives of their school, and to advise the school's management on the extramural curriculum of the school. Furthermore, the NEA empowers school board members to guide the regional Director of Education on the curriculum and educational needs of their schools.

It further authorises school board members to attend interviews and to make recommendations to the Permanent Secretary (PS) on the appointment and recruitment of all staff members at their schools. In addition, school board members are legally permitted to develop and improve their school's infrastructure, and to allow the community to reasonably utilise school facilities (NEA, 2001).

The NEA also permits school board members to discuss and to decide on all cases of misconduct by learners and staff members at their schools. School board members are legally allowed to make sure that misconduct is properly examined. School board members are also authorised to make recommendations to the PS for appropriate action to be taken regarding the serious misconduct of learners and staff members at their local schools.

Finally, the NEA tasks school board members with a general responsibility of exercising other powers and performing other functions under the Education Act. Therefore, as stated by Xaba (2011), the overall functions of school board members are to promote the interests of learners and to strive to support the provision of quality education to all learners.

1.3 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

The following key terms are used in this study and will be defined in the context in which they are used in this research.

1.3.1 Power

The term *power* in this study is defined as the legal authority given to a local board of parents, teachers and learners at a school, which is termed a *school board*. According to Joubert and Bray (2007), this board is legally empowered by the NEA to govern their local schools and to support the provision of quality education equally to all learners. Joubert and Bray (2007) further state that power in this context entails school board members' abilities and skills that originate from an assortment of sources – such as legal and cultural norms, beliefs, values and socio-economic rules – to perform their powers and functions, and to get other stakeholders to do what they are requested to do.

1.3.2 Governance

Governance in this research refers to the powers entrusted to school board members to work together with the school management team (SMT) to govern and manage their local schools to support quality education at their respective schools. It also refers to the structure in which school board members develop and implement their school policies and make decisions that will not interrupt their school finance and the provision of quality education to their communities (Crouch & Winkler, 2008).

1.3.3 Quality education

In this study, *quality education* refers to education provided to the learners that will enable and empower them to contribute to their democratic societies. It also refers to education that will support learners to develop all characteristics and skills that will assist them to achieve their full potential as human beings from childhood to adulthood (Zhang, 2010).

1.3.4 School board

The *school board* in this context is referred to as the highest decision-making body, which consists of parents, teachers and learners who are responsible and accountable for the overall school governance at their local level (Sinalumbu, 2013). According to the MoE (2008), school board members work together with other authorities in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC) at cluster, circuit, regional and national levels to make sure that quality education is equally provided to all learners at their specific schools.

1.4 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Ever since Namibia got its independence in 1990, the Namibian government has been placing quality education at the highest position of its national priorities and the largest portion of its budget always goes to education. The Namibian government regards education as a right for every citizen and key to a better life, as specified in Article 20 of the Namibian constitution (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990) on rights to education.

Furthermore, the Namibian government has made education compulsory from pre-primary grade (previously known as grade 0) to grade 7 so that all learners can get the chance to acquire basic skills. In 2012, the Namibian government also introduced free primary education in its education system, which caters for the teaching and learning materials of all learners in state schools.

In 2016, free secondary education was also introduced in the Namibian education system. Moreover, the NEA (2001) empowered school board members to govern their local schools on behalf of other educational stakeholders to control its school finance and to ensure that learners are provided with quality education (MoE, 2008).

The Ohangwena Region, where the researcher carried out this study, is one of 14 political and educational regions in Namibia. It lies in the northern rural part of Namibia and borders Angola. According to the Educational Management Information System Statistics (EMIS), there are 249 schools (MoE, 2012) and all of these schools have legally established their school boards in accordance with the NEA.

Based on the researcher's background and experience as a school principal and a member of the Circuit Management Committee (CMC) in the Endola circuit in the Ohangwena Region, she (the researcher) was aware that some school board committees in their region were not effective and therefore they did not support the provision of quality education efficiently.

Moreover, according to several researchers' views on school governance (e.g. Joubert & Bray, 2007; Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008; Xaba, 2011; Sinalumbu, 2013; Khama, 2014), school board members were not aware of their core functions in school governance. According to the MoE (2008), parents in Namibian rural schools were not fully involved in their children's education as well as school governance. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) and Khama (2014) further claim that there was a lack of participation of parent and learner school board members in policy development.

In his findings, Mestry (2006) indicates that some school board members and school principals have little knowledge on the Education Act or simply interpret it incorrectly, which result in many schools experiencing financial mismanagement. Shumane (2009) claims that a lack of education and limited

access to information and resources were some of the barriers that hindered parent school board members' ability to perform their functions effectively as prescribed by the Education Act. Shumane further stresses that power-sharing, absenteeism of parents at their school board meetings and a lack of training of school board members were some of the obstacles that prevented school board members to execute their functions in supporting quality education.

Researchers (e.g. Heystek, Niemann, Van Rooyen, Mosoge, & Bipath, 2008; Sinalumbu, 2013; Heystek, 2014; Khama, 2014) agree that parents in the school board were not participating democratically in decision-making processes, while learner school board members were not involved in decision-making regarding sensitive matters relating to staff members' behaviours. Findings also indicate that there were no mutual trust, respect and co-operation among school board members (Heystek et al., 2008; Sinalumbu, 2013; Heystek, 2014; Khama, 2014). In addition, these researchers indicate that school principals, teachers, parents and learners who made up school board committees, all had their own challenges.

Many researchers from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries (e.g. Joubert & Bray, 2007; Chikoko, 2008; Xaba, 2011; Botha, 2013; Heystek, 2014) have published on school governance, but only a few researchers have written about school governance from the Namibian perspective. The researcher therefore decided to carry out this study in Namibia, specifically in the Ohangwena Region. Other researchers had previously conducted similar studies in countries like South Africa (e.g. Nong, 2007; Kumalo, 2009; Mabovula, 2009; Mncube, 2009, 2012; Xaba, 2011; Botha, 2013; Heystek, 2014) and Zimbabwe (e.g. Chikoko, 2008; Tshabalala, 2013), and recommended that further research be done in these areas. However, such research was not conducted in Namibia, specifically in rural schools in the Ohangwena Region.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Primary research question

The question this study attempted to answer was:

What are the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia?

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

- a) Which functions are performed effectively by school board members in accordance with the NEA in the provision of quality education?
- b) How are the school board members able to perform the prescribed functions to support

quality education?

- c) What are the possible ways to address the challenges experienced by school board members?

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia.

The objectives were:

- a) to investigate the functions that are performed effectively by the school board members in accordance with the NEA in the provision of quality education at their schools;
- b) to find out if the school board members can perform the prescribed functions to support quality education at their respective schools;
- c) to find possible ways on how to address the challenges experienced by the school board members in efforts to support quality education.

1.7 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study strictly focused on investigating the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education. It was restricted to four selected rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region. Four schools were selected and the participants were limited to eighteen. Therefore, the results obtained from this research are strictly limited to the four selected rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region and cannot be generalised to other schools and regions in or outside of Namibia.

According to Shumane (2009), no study is perfect or faultless. Shumane further emphasises that 90% of researchers experience problems during their data-gathering processes. In this study, the number of participants were suitable for this research. Most of the participants were rich in the information needed, except for one participant, who was a newly elected, inexperienced school board member chairperson at the school. This happened because all Namibian state schools were electing new school board members between June and July 2015 – the same time in which the researcher was collecting data. The situation therefore forced the researcher to interview outgoing school board members, such as school board chairpersons and school board secretaries. However, at School 4, the former school board chairperson was not around and all other former parent school board members were not readily available. Therefore, the researcher interviewed a newly elected school board chairperson.

In addition, most of the participants in this research, such as teachers, principals, some parents and

Inspectors of Education (IoEs), were full-time employees. Consequently, it was not easy for the researcher to get hold of them, since they were fully occupied with their normal work. Thus, the researcher almost spent a month in order to collect data from all 18 participants.

Five out of the 18 participants opted to be interviewed in their vernacular, namely Oshiwambo. These participants were all school board chairpersons (parents) and one experienced teacher. Due to this fact, the researcher personally translated and transcribed all five interviews to English, and asked a colleague who is fluent in both languages (i.e. English and Oshiwambo) to edit the translations. According to Hamutenya (2013), translation from a local vernacular to an official language has its own weaknesses, which might weaken the quality of the data gathered. In this study, the translation of interviews from Oshiwambo to English took up much of the researcher's time and might also have weakened the value and quality of the data.

Moreover, some participants were not comfortable with the use of a tape recorder, especially when they had to share crucial information that exposed the bad image of their school board members. There is therefore a possibility of bias in some participants' responses. However, the researcher had explained the purpose of the study clearly to all participants so as to minimise the limitations before actual interviews were carried out.

Besides the abovementioned concerns, a lack of literature and publication on school governance in the Namibian context, especially in the Ohangwena Region, limited the literature reviewed in this study at local level. Lastly, the findings may contribute to other existing literature on school governance in the Namibian context, particularly in rural schools in the Ohangwena Region.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In this study, the challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region were investigated. It is vital as the researcher sought to understand the functions performed effectively by school board members in accordance with the NEA in the provision of quality education. The researcher also sought to find out if school board members could perform the prescribed functions to support quality education at their respective schools. The researcher further wanted to discover the causes of challenges faced by school board members when performing their functions and possible ways on how to address those challenges to support quality education.

The outcome of this study will benefit school board members in rural schools of the Ohangwena Region to develop new knowledge, skills and understanding on their powers and functions as prescribed by the NEA, and to overcome challenges when executing their function to support quality education. Finally, this study might help school board members to perform their functions effectively

in support of quality education in rural schools, which is a core purpose of the Namibian education system.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Besides chapter 1, in which the introduction and a brief orientation of the research were provided, the rest of the dissertation will be outlined as follows:

- Chapter 2: The conceptual framework underpinning this study is presented. Literature on school governance and the challenges of school board members in Africa and developed countries are also reviewed;
- Chapter 3: The research design, the research paradigm and methodologies utilised in the empirical study are discussed;
- Chapter 4: The findings and presentation of the data are presented;
- Chapter 5: A discussion and interpretation of the findings of this study are provided; and
- Chapter 6: An overview of the whole study is provided. Major findings of the research are discussed and suggestions and recommendations for future researches are offered.

1.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the background and rationale of the study were outlined. The key terms used in this research were also clarified. The research questions and the aims of the research were presented. The next chapter will provide the literature review and conceptual framework that underpinned this study.

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the literature review and conceptual framework that guided this study. The terms “*quality education*”, “*decentralisation*” and “*democratic school governance*” will be discussed. Different researchers’ views on school governance, worldwide, nationally and locally, will be presented. The school governance in Namibia’s pre- and post-democratic era will also be discussed. This chapter will also shed light on the background of school boards in Namibia. Lastly, the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education and the ways in which those challenges can be addressed will be emphasised.

2.2 DISCUSSION OF TERMS UNDERLYING THE RESEARCH

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), a literature review is defined as a theoretical or conceptual framework. It can also be defined as the previous research findings concerning the problem at hand (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014). Researchers use a literature review as an instrument (Mouton, 2014) with the purpose of providing the content of the study by looking at other work that has already been done in the same subject area (Mertler, 2012). In this study, the literature was reviewed as a method of learning, exploring and discovering the existing writings, and to decide on and conclude what has been written and published by other researchers (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014) on the challenges of school board members in supporting quality education.

2.2.1 Quality education

The term “*quality*” was originally taken from a Latin word “*quails*”, which means “*a kind of*” (Zhang, 2010). From the Namibian perspective, quality is one of the four goals of the EFA in Namibia to ensure that quality education is provided equally to all citizens. Other three goals of the EFA are access, equity and democracy (MoE, 2008).

According to Shinana (2013), education is an essential aspect of the human’s life. Furthermore, the Namibian Institute of Open Learning’s (IOL) (2012) slogan indicates that: “*Education is the greatest equaliser*”.

Moreover, Zhang (2010) defines quality education as an education that empowers learners to contribute to their democratic societies. Zhang also indicates that quality education enables learners to develop all characteristics and skills that will help them to achieve their full potential as human

beings.

According to the MoE (2008), quality education offers all learners the necessary skills and abilities to develop and to become economically productive. Hailombe (2011) states that the provision of quality education in schools involves the delivery of basic educational programmes, teaching and learning materials as well as facilities. In addition, according to Zhang (2010), in order to provide quality education and for the learners to achieve high standards, competence and experience of teachers are required.

The EFA (2005) in the Global Monitoring Report emphasises that:

Access to quality education is one of the rights of every child and should be at the midpoint of education. Quality education regulates how teachers are presenting their lessons, how much learners are learning at school and the knowledge they are acquiring through the teaching and learning process, how well learners are learning and the degree to which their education will be converted into a diversity of personal, social and developmental benefits.

Shober and Hartney (2014) assert that school board members have a very important role to play in supporting quality education. Similarly, Male and Palaiologou (2012, p. 12) mention that:

Effective education settings are those which have developed productive and synergistic relationships between learners, families, the team and the community, because the context, locality and culture in which learners live are vitally important.

According to the NEA of 2001, school board members are empowered to develop the mission, vision and policies of their local schools to ensure the provision of quality education in their respective schools. Furthermore, school board members are authorised to recommend staff members to be appointed by the PS at their local school. They are permitted to control their school finances to purchase teaching and learning materials and other school needs. School board members are also empowered to control and oversee the development and improvement of their local school's infrastructure, to promote their school's welfare, and to link with parents and the community at large (NEA, 2001).

However, for the school board members to support quality education effectively, they need to create a conducive teaching and learning environment with sufficient and competent staff members (Shober & Hartney, 2014). School board members also need to make sure that the number of learners per class are appropriate and that teachers are qualified.

Hailombe (2011) indicates that school board members must make sure that there are adequate teaching and learning materials, and sufficient teaching and learning time. A conducive teaching and learning environment with basic needs and services, like water, electricity and sanitation (Hailombe, 2011), and a safe and secure environment with trust, respect and co-operation among stakeholders (Heystek, 2014), will support quality education.

In addition, Hailombe (2011) alleges that schools that provide food and care for their learners' well-being, like schools under the Namibian School Feeding Programme (NSFP) in Namibia, effectively support the provision of quality education. Tshabalala (2013) moreover affirms that schools with responsible and accountable SMTs are also on the right path of providing quality education to their learners.

Therefore, to support quality education, rural school board members together with their SMTs need to recommend skilful and experienced teachers (Hailombe, 2011). Zhang (2010) states that school board members must recommend competent teachers who specialise in the subjects they are teaching, and who are always punctual, dedicated and well prepared for the next lessons as they are the key aspects of quality education. Similarly, the MoE (2008) highlights that school board members must recommend that staff members who have genuine aims and objectives that are in support of quality education be appointed. According to Shinana (2013), educational stakeholders believe that when learners' results are excellent, it shows the success of their school board members. When the school's performance is outstanding, especially in grades 10 and 12, it proves the value, success and achievement of its school board members and the SMT.

2.2.2 Decentralisation of school governance

Decentralisation of school governance refers to the relocation and shifting of educational responsibilities from a national level to the provision of educational services to the public at regional and local level (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2009). Decentralisation of school governance increases the democratic participation of all educational stakeholders in their local schools' governance and administration (Botha, 2013).

One of the aims of the decentralisation of school governance, as indicated by Botha (2013), is to improve accountability and the effective management of human and physical resources in schools

to support quality education. Therefore, the shifting of school governance and administration from the central national educational offices to school level give all stakeholders a better role to play in the provision of quality education at their local schools (Barrera-Ossorio, Fasih, Patrinos, & Santibanez, 2009).

Hailombe (2011) perceives decentralisation of school governance as a gateway to various policy ends in the education system. Some of these policies are like the shift from autocratic school governance to democratic school governance: improvement of service delivery by shifting central decision-making to democratic, collective decision-making.

According to Botha (2013), the decentralisation of school governance enhances accountability and empowers all stakeholders to participate in all school programmes in support of quality education. Botha also adds that the decentralisation of school governance shifted the system of delegating decision-making power from a central office of the government to the school level. Barrera-Ossorio et al. (2009) stress that the decentralisation of school governance advanced an active involvement of all the stakeholders who were excluded from their schools' decision-making processes in the past. In Namibia, the decentralisation of school governance approach was established to give regional and local authorities as well as all stakeholders at the grassroots level of decision-making the authority to democratically take part in matters that concern their local schools (MoE, 2008).

In addition, Kandumbu (2005) argues that the decentralisation of school governance policy in Namibia has given rise to and has increased the interest in effective school governance, which supports quality education. Therefore, the establishment of school boards in Namibian state schools shows a significant decentralisation of power in Namibian school governance (Hailombe, 2011). It offers the power of speech in decision-making to the local stakeholders, who know more about their local education systems and its needs than the central policy-makers at national level (Khama, 2014).

Finally, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2009) claim that the decentralisation of school governance is supporting quality education in schools, hence improving the educational results and enhancing stakeholders' participation in school activities. Moreover, the utilisation of the NEA as a policy document and a guideline in school governance plays a vital role in inspiring effective communication, high standard of equal participation, and power-sharing in education (MoE, 2005b, 2008).

2.2.3 Democratisation of school governance

Democracy at school level refers to a system of school governance in which school board members are elected according to the ministerial policy initiatives to represent other stakeholders in decision-making cornering their local schools (MoE, 2005b). Sinalumbu (2013) defines democratic school governance as a system of leadership in which all stakeholders at school level elect their own school board members who will represent them in decision-making by means of a democratic election.

Moreover, Khama (2014) refers democratisation of school governance in the Namibian perception to the boarder responsibility of developing school policies and rules in which schools should be governed, organised and controlled. The MoE (2008) refers to democratisation of school governance as the practice of guaranteeing that schools are performing their outmost functions to achieve their practical goals of providing quality education to the learners and the community they serve. Therefore, all school board members have a crucial role to play in the governance and development of their local schools to support quality education.

In Figure 2.1, Sinalumbu (2013) acknowledges seven essential aspects that promote democracy in active school governance, which include *representation, participation, rights, accountability, open discussion, common good, and fairness*.



Figure 2.1: Aspects that promote democracy in active school governance (Sinalumbu, 2013)

- **Representation:** parents, teachers and learners choose who should represent them in the school board at a particular school by electing individuals, and elected school board members make decisions on behalf of other stakeholders (NEA, 2001). According to Joubert and Bray (2007), in a democratic school, governance problems and disagreements are resolved through discussions, and collective decisions are taken in a democratic way, which requires trust, respect and co-operation among school board members.
- **Participation** refers to the procedure in which all stakeholders are required to participate equally and actively in their local schools' decisions for the benefit of their children (Mncube, 2009). According to Xaba (2011), this implies that all school board members are expected to participate equally and actively in whatever decisions are to be taken, and to give feedback to other stakeholders.
- **Rights:** the NEA (2001) empowers school board members with rights and responsibilities to run their local schools, to participate in all school programmes at all levels of education, and to make decisions on behalf of other stakeholders. Furthermore, Sinalumbu (2013) claims that school board members are not only given the rights and responsibilities, but they are legally empowered to actively participate in all school discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Accountability:** when schools are governed in a democratic way and all school board members are equally participating in school programmes on behalf of other stakeholders, then they (i.e. the school board members) are accountable for the provision of quality education at their local schools (Xaba, 2011).
- **Open discussion** entails that school board members exercise their democratic rights in school governance, where all members are allowed to participate, think critically, contribute constructively and act responsibly (Joubert & Bray, 2007). In school boards, decisions are taken openly and in a collective way, where all members are involved and able to give their inputs and air their views in one way or another insofar as the interest of the learners to acquire quality education (Chikoko, 2008).
- **Common good:** in schools, all issues that need to be discussed and decisions to be taken require all school board members to reach one common and collective decision through consensus (Crouch & Winkler, 2008). In addition, it is imperative for school board members to discuss all concerns that hold back the provision of quality education and to come up with a collective resolution (Xaba, 2011).

- **Fairness** requires all school board members to be treated fairly and to be allowed to participate freely and express their views fairly during discussion so that they can feel respected (NEA, 2001). Khama (2014) suggests that school board members must avoid conflict, such as quarrelling, gossiping, squabbling, back-biting and power-struggling among themselves to be able to support quality education.

The MoE (2008) indicates that the practice of democratisation of school governance in Namibia is influenced by the empowerment of local stakeholders to govern their local schools and to make recommendations to the national authorities for the final decision to be taken. Steyn and Wolhuter (2008) suggest that schools must be governed democratically with equal and general participation in decision-making and clear responsibility of those who are governing them.

In addition, according to the MoE (2005b), democratic school governance policy requires school principals who are able to work with the school board chairperson and other school board members. Furthermore, it needs school board members who can work in a democratic and participatory way to build a good relationship and to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of quality education to all (Pomuti & Weber, 2012).

2.3 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN NAMIBIA

2.3.1 School governance in the pre-democratic era in Namibia

The formal education ideal in Namibia was first brought around by European missionaries (Shanyanana, 2011). At that time, there were very few formal schools and there were no school board members to govern them. European missionaries taught native people how to write their names, and how to count and to do simple calculations (Thomberry, 2004). They also taught them how to read the Bible and trained priests as their main priority was to evangelise and spread the gospel easily worldwide (Shanyanana, 2011).

These European missionaries' education was later utilised by German colonists, who took over the Namibian territory for 30 years from 1884 to 1915 as a method of colonisation and racial discrimination against the Namibians. Shanyanana (2011) further indicates that when the German colonialists arrived in Namibia, they first introduced the education in 1909 for white settlers only. Later, they introduced education to the native people in racial and ethnical groups.

During the German colonial regime, the education system was segregated. The education training and resources were provided according to the learners' racial and ethnic status. Schools were not at the same standard when it came to the provision of funds and assets (Angula & Lewis, 1997). The

German colonists came up with a well-designed teaching and learning curriculum that contained insufficient skills. Their purpose was to make sure that native people would continue to be manual workers and to work for the white minority (Amukungo, 1993).

However, when the South African regime took over the territory from German colonists from 1915 to 1990, they continued with their discriminating education system. Afterwards, the South African regime introduced the Bantu education system, which was specifically for black people. The Bantu education system was different from whites' education system in terms of the educational training syllabi and policies (Shanyanana, 2011).

Hailombe (2011) indicates that during the colonial regime, the Namibian education system was critically unfair and privileges were given to some citizens, particularly whites and coloureds. In contrast, the black Namibians, who were the majority in the country, received a lower grade basic education. Salia-Bao (1991) coincides that there were differences in the Namibian education system in different areas during the colonial era. Salia-Bao (1991) further claims that schools were not treated equally when it came to the provision of human and physical resources, like expenditure, teaching and learning syllabi, and learners' access to further studies.

According to Amukungo (1993), school governance, teachers' training opportunities, and salary scales and job opportunities within the education system were completely different. Shanyanana (2011) affirms that during the colonial time, all stakeholders were not involved in decision-making processes concerning their schools. Black people were not regarded as partners in education and were not involved in policy development concerning their local schools' governance. Therefore, Namibian school governance before independence was regarded as an undemocratic and non-participatory model, which was centralised, autocratic and irresponsible to all stakeholders regardless of their racial or ethnic status (Angula & Lewis, 1997). This was also revealed by Botha and Makoelle (2012), who highlight that in a centralised school governance system, overall school administration tasks are carried out by school principals, who report straight to the high authority. This implies that school principals in the Namibian education system before independence were regarded as administrators with limited power and control over their school programmes, finances, and human and physical resources.

In addition, before independence, school governance concentrated more on central rules and policies, which were limited to the hands of school principals and teachers at school level. Parents and learners had no say in their school programmes, needs and infrastructure (Angula & Lewis, 1997). Moreover, Khama (2014) agrees that during the apartheid era, schools were only managed

by school principals, who had to report straight to the government. Other stakeholders such as teachers, parents and learners, were not involved in their local school governance.

According to Angula and Lewis (1997), there was no legal establishment of equal participation of all stakeholders in the Namibian education system's school governance. Stakeholders' participation was restricted to parents who had limited power and were restricted to advice on school programmes. Parents and teachers were not involved in issues recommended and approved by the government, like schools' infrastructure development and the construction of classrooms in rural areas (Khama, 2014). Therefore, Namibian people regarded pre-democratic school governance as having been personalised or modified by the colonists to fit their aims and objectives, since it did not contribute to the Namibians' economic, social or cultural needs (Shanyanana, 2011).

2.3.2 School governance in Namibia in a democratic era

When the wind of change blew in Namibia in 1990, after it gained its independence from the South African regime (Shanyanana, 2011), the country inherited an educational system which had many inequalities, discrimination and racism, especially when it came to school governance (Amukugo, 1993). At the start of Namibian independence, the education system and school governance were still completely in favour of the white minority, then blacks and coloureds who were the majority (Angula & Lewis, 1997).

After independence, Namibia continued with an old colonial education system where parents were not involved in school matters (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Most people at rural areas suffered the consequences, such as a lack of access to quality education (Chikoko, 2008). Moreover, the biggest challenge that faced Namibia soon after independence was the designation of a new education system whereby quality education turned out to be a cornerstone. Therefore, one of the newly elected government's major concerns was to decentralise the whole Namibian education system, and to bring about a democratic, participative and collaborative school governance model (Angula & Lewis, 1997). So, the Namibian government made sure that all stakeholders in education were involved in all decisions related to the improvement of a new education system (NEA, 2001). The new government also reinforced democratic participatory structures at all levels of education, such as school boards, Learner Representative Councils (LRCs), teachers' unions and regional education forums.

After independence, the Namibian educational policies prioritised the provision of educated, skilled human resources to support quality education as well as economic growth and equitable social development in the country (MoE, 2005b). According to Marope (2005), education is a social and crucial means, which can significantly contribute to the national development of the country.

Therefore, well-educated, well trained and civilised people tend to contribute effectively to the education and socio-economic development of their country.

After 11 years of independence, the Namibian government introduced its own Education Act (NEA, 16 of 2001). According to the Namibian constitution (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990), the NEA is used as an instrument to address the past imbalances and practices in school governance. These two fundamental policy documents (i.e. NEA and the Namibian Constitution) facilitate the establishment of school boards in Namibia, which were officially introduced in 2003 (Niitembu, 2006). Furthermore, the NEA is employed to enhance and support quality education through the establishment of democratic structures of equal and active participation of all stakeholders in school governance (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2004).

2.3.3 The legal framework of school boards in Namibia

According to Quan-Baffour (2006), a school board is a philosophy that arises from a need of the community's involvement in school governance. James, Brammer, Fertig, James, and Jones (2011) define a school board as a crucial element in the education system when it comes to school governance. The MoE (2008) also defines a school board as a local board that functions within the legal framework of the NEA. School boards have a vital role to play in guaranteeing that schools are managed effectively and provide quality education to all learners.

The establishment of school boards in Namibia intended to inspire, motivate and stimulate all stakeholders at a grassroots level to support the provision of quality education. Taylor (2009) and Hooge and Honingh (2014) allude that the establishment of a school board motivates an average of the democratisation of school governance by shifting power to all stakeholders at their school levels. School board members are therefore expected to play a vital role in supporting quality education (Hooge & Honingh, 2014). Moreover, they are required to assist school principals and teachers in their professional or curricular activities in support of quality education at their respective schools (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2009). If school board members and SMTs respectively stick to their governing and management responsibilities (MoE, 2005b), it will absolutely increase the degree to which school board members will be able to support quality education in the school they are governing (Heystek, 2010).

2.3.4 The election of school board members

Section 19 of the NEA (2001) emphasises that school board members' election must be conducted democratically by a presiding officer, chosen by the PS. That presiding officer can be a staff member who is not working at the specific school. In the rural areas of the Ohangwena Region, school board

elections are facilitated by Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs). In addition, whenever school board elections are conducted at cluster centre schools, they are facilitated by Inspectors of Education (IoEs).

Furthermore, the NEA stipulates that school board elections must be conducted in a democratic way by use of secret ballots. It also permits schools to conduct school board elections by a show of hands where necessary, especially in rural areas where some parents are undereducated. In addition, the NEA highlights that elected school board members must elect a chairperson of the school board, a secretary and a treasurer among its members.

2.3.5 The composition of school boards

In Namibia, school boards are comprised of school principals, teachers and parents. However, at schools that are offering grades 8 to 12, learners are also members of the school board. The number of school board members in Namibian schools consist of the prescribed number of not less than five members and not more than 13 members. The number of school board members differ from one school to another, depending on the enrolment of learners at the school in that specific year. Section 19 of the NEA stipulates that parents must make up most school board members and that the chairperson of the school board must be a parent. This implies that parents and school communities have a crucial role to play in the provision of quality education at their local school (NEA, 2001).

Botha (2013) asserts that schools are no longer functioning in isolation, but within the community they serve, since they belong to the community. Therefore, parents and the community must be fully involved in the process of providing quality education.

Table 2.1: Table to determine the number of school board members

Number of learners at school	Number of school board members
Less than 100	5
100 to 199	7
200 to 399	9
400 to 599	11
600 and more	13

Table 2.1 determines the number of school board members to be elected at a certain school according to learners' enrolment at that specific school for that specific year (NEA, 2001) (Regulation 3(4)).

2.3.6 School board members' terms in the office

In terms of section 18 of the NEA, a term of school board members in the office is three years for teachers and parents, while learners only have one year. It further emphasises that a school board member can only serve on one school board at a time, notwithstanding the situation that he/she may have children in more than one school. Also, school board members can be re-elected; however, a chairperson of the school board, who must be a parent, shall not exceed three years in office (NEA, 2001).

2.3.7 Powers and functions of school board members

Section 16(2) of the NEA (2001) highlights the powers and functions of school board members as follows:

- to develop the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the school;
- to advise the school's management on the extramural curriculum of the school;
- to advise the regional director of education on the educational needs and curriculum of the school;
- to make recommendations to the PS on the appointment of teachers and other staff members at the school;
- to determine and to allow the reasonable use of school facilities for community purposes;
- to consider any case of misconduct by a learner or staff member of the school to ensure that such misconduct is properly investigated;
- to make recommendations to the PS on an appropriate disciplinary measure to be taken regarding serious misconduct of a learner; and
- to exercise other powers or to perform other duties and functions as may be authorised or imposed by or under the NEA.

2.3.8 Learners' participation in school governance in Namibia

According to Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), the issue of learners' participation in school governance was introduced in the Namibian education system before independence while Namibia was under the South African regime. After independence, the NEA (2001) improved the participation of learners, who are the primary beneficiaries of education, to be partners in school governance. This was done through an introduction of decentralisation of democratic school governance through the establishment of school boards in all state schools.

Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) were constituted in Namibian state schools in terms of section 60(1) of the NEA (2001). Section 60 of the NEA (2001) emphasises that all combined and secondary schools with grades 8 to 12 must establish a LRC in agreement with the recommended guidelines. This council must be instituted annually during the last school trimester and before the final examinations begin. Sections 27(2) and 28 state that the LRC must comprise:

An equal number of elected boys and girls, except where a school enrolls only boys or only girls and which number is one member for every forty learners of the school, rounded to the nearest even number. The principal must appoint an election committee consist of four members, two senior teachers and two learners to organise and conduct the LRC election, count the votes and announce the results of the election at a time and place approved by the school principal (NEA, 2001, section 27(2)).

Furthermore, sections 29(1) and (2) specify the criteria to be used on how and who to nominate and elect as LRCs. It stipulates that only learners who will be in the two highest grades at school in the following year will be nominated. Learners who are already members of the existing LRC can nominate a candidate to be elected and can also be nominated. Learners who have been charged with misconduct during the previous 12 months cannot be nominated. The NEA further indicates that the nomination and election of LRC members is an internal school issue, so there is no need for campaigning and the influence or involvement of outsiders during the process is allowed (NEA, 2001).

In addition, the newly elected LRC members must elect the chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer among themselves, where one must be a female. They (newly elected LRC members) should further elect a head boy and a head girl, who will represent them in the school board. The overall aim of LRCs is to promote the best interest and welfare of their respective schools and learners (NEA, 2001).

However, although learners are legally accepted as members of school board by the NEA, many researchers indicated that learners were not fully involved in their school governance as recommended. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) indicates in her research that although the learners' participation in their school governance was legally accepted, there were challenges hindering learner school board members' ways of executing their functions successfully.

Similarly, Uushona (2013) argues that learners' participation in school governance was not effective due to various reasons. Uushona recommends a change of other school board members' mindsets towards learners' participation so that opportunities can be provided for them to contribute effectively

to the provision of quality education in their schools. In addition, Grant (2015) advises that learners should be treated as people whose voices and ideas matter in their school governance. According to Grant, learners' participation in their local school governance implies the true democracy within schools.

Furthermore, Mabovula (2009) argues that for an inclusive democratic participation that promotes a stable school environment and supports the provision of quality education in schools, all stakeholders should take part in their local school governance. However, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) stresses that there was no national policy document that outlined learners' powers and functions as members of school boards. This implies that learners are not regarded as true role players in school governance. Also, learners were not recognised as partners in decision-making and were not consulted in problem-solving. Furthermore, at some schools, learners were not allowed to attend school board meetings.

Mncube (2012) also argues that cultural barriers were found to be one of the challenges that hindered learners' participation in school boards. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) agrees that due to cultural beliefs, learners were not actively involved in decision-making processes and problem-solving at their local schools. This perception is supported by Sithole (1998, p. 12 cited in Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 3), who indicates that:

On cultural and traditional grounds, elderly people do not discuss important matters in the presence of children, and to do so now would tarnish the respect which children must accord their elders, and bring and decay and morass in the traditional value system.

According to Smith (2012, p. 24), *"the relations and interaction of people between cultures has a positive or negative influence, on observing the differences between them"*. Therefore, it is usual and normal for people from different cultures to experience misunderstandings, misinterpretation and stereotyping due to simple differences in their views, cultural beliefs and values, and socio-political and economic issues. Smith maintains that many people value their cultural views and beliefs more than their national identity. So, to improve effective communication and good relationships among school board members, one needs to be aware and appreciative of the cultural views, beliefs, values and attitudes of other people.

2.3.9 Effective participation of school board members

Soon after independence, there was concern of effective participation of all stakeholders in the Namibian education system to support quality education. According to Steyn and Wolhuter (2008), people at grassroots level demand participation in decision-making in all forms of educational, political and social life. The booklet for the work of the school board in Namibia (MBESC, 2004) emphasises that a school board is the highest decision-making body at a local school level, where all members have equal rights to participate in decision-making processes. School board members are empowered to perform several functions and to work together with school authorities to ensure the provision of quality education to all children.

According to Haines (2007), effective participation requires all functions performed by school board members to make sure that the desired and meaningful education is taking place at their schools. Haines further argues that some parent school board members are unemployed and are not remunerated for the services they provide at their local schools. Khama (2014) agrees that parent school board members were occasionally using their own money for transport to and from school functions and meetings. This situation does not encourage parent school board members' effective participation; instead, it demotivates other prospective parent school board members from actively contributing to school governance.

Namibia went through a dynamic reform of the national strategy known as "Vision 2030" (Marope, 2005). Many Namibian policies, like the NEA (2001), the Education Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) (MoE, 2005a) and the EFA (2005) state that the educational leadership and school governance must be shared among all stakeholders. This includes equal and effective participation of school board members in decision-making, which must be done at all levels in order to solve school problems that affect the achievement of the school goals and objectives (MoE, 2008). Meanwhile, the MoE (2005b) utilised the ETSIP document as an instrument to bring all state schools in Namibia at a same standard when it came to the provision of quality education to the Namibian child.

The NEA (2001) further encourages parents' active participation in their local school governance and in decision-making processes. According to the NEA, school board members should meet on a regular basis to make certain decisions concerning their schools. Furthermore, school board members must work together with all stakeholders and people involved in the development of their local schools in support of quality education in their community (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2009).

Xaba (2011) advises that all school board members are required to participate effectively in the development of their school's vision and policies. They are empowered to actively take part in the

recommendation for the appointment of teachers and other staff members and to control school finances. In addition, school board members are also required to promote their school's welfare, to develop their school's infrastructure, and to communicate with parents/guardians of learners at their respective schools and the community at large (MBESC, 2004).

However, Mncube (2012) argues that lack of parent school board members' participation in school governance is caused by multiple factors related to changes in social structures. In rural areas, a great responsibility is placed on the elderly grandparents' shoulders, who are forced by circumstance to take care of their grandchildren; but due to ill-health, they are unable to participate effectively in school affairs. Some factors that forced old age parents to participate effectively in school programmes and to take care of their grandchildren are: the immigration of young parents to towns and cities and community instability; family distress; and an increasing number of single parents, especially mothers (Chikoko, 2008).

School board members are, in addition, responsible for and accountable to meet parents or the community they represent to inform them about school programmes and activities (MBESC, 2004). School board members are required to communicate some things to the parents and community, like: reports on the progress made and new plans; the mobilisation of parents and community support; and to convince people to actively take part in school programmes (Hailombe, 2011). Furthermore, school board members have the right and power to say freely what they feel and to be listened to with respect (NEA, 2001). Therefore, for the school board members to function effectively, all members must feel free to express their opinions openly without fear of criticism or intimidation (Xaba, 2011).

2.3.9.1 Policy development

According to the NEA (2001), one of the vital tasks of school board members is to set the vision, mission and goals for the school and to strive to achieve those goals. A school vision and mission statement directs the school to where it is aiming (MBESC, 2004) and it gives the school a sense of its own identity, purpose and direction (Joubert & Bray, 2007). In addition, this sense of purpose needs to be shared by teachers, learners, parents/guardians, and the community at large (MoE, 2005b).

Another important function of school board members is to make sure that their schools have policies (NEA, 2001). School policies are rules and regulations that guide schools to operate effectively and assist schools to achieve their visions (MoE, 2005b). According to Botha (2013), policies have to be formulated in accordance with ministerial rules and regulations. School policies can be about school times for teachers and learners; the code of conduct for staff members and learners; and the channel

of communication between staff members, learners and parents. Some of the school policies can be about punctuality and absenteeism of staff members and learners, the handling of school funds, and school uniform (MoE, 2005b). Nevertheless, Joubert and Bray (2007) emphasise that school policies must be clear to all stakeholders.

Furthermore, section 17 of the NEA (2001) indicates that school board members are authorised to develop the mission, vision and policies of the school, which means they are empowered to improve the relationship between schools, parents and their local communities in support of quality education. At the same time, Harber and Mncube (2012) stress that school board members act as a channel of communication between schools and other stakeholders for the information to flow effectively.

School board members also develop and adopt the code of conduct in accordance with the NEA for both teachers and learners to avoid indiscipline in schools. Another function of school board members, as indicated by Botha (2013), is to guide, manage and control schools in the way they should operate. In addition, school board members are empowered to govern schools and to make decisions on behalf of other stakeholders (Sinalumbu, 2013).

2.3.9.2 Recommendation and appointment of staff members

School board members have a major role to play in the recruitment of teachers and other staff members at school by merit. They also have an overall responsibility of abolishing the problem of favouritism and nepotism by ensuring that appointments of teachers and other staff members are based on their competencies in that subject (MoE, 2005b).

Section 17 of the NEA (2001) indicates that one of the functions of school board members is to make recommendations to the PS on appointments of teachers and other staff members at their schools. Beckmann and Prinsloo (2009) stress that the involvement of all stakeholders in the recruitment and decision-making process concerning staff members' appointment in schools is regarded as one of the key aspects in supporting quality education.

2.3.9.3 Developing school infrastructure and promoting school welfare

It is the duty of school board members to work together with the community (MBESC, 2004) and to initiate various projects, like extending classes, erecting school fences, and starting an early childhood development programme at school to support quality education (MoE, 2005). Other functions of school board members are to promote the interest of the school in general, to guarantee teachers' and learners' welfare, and to assure that all the school activities are supporting the provision of quality education (MBESC, 2004). According to Chikoko (2008), another function of

school board members is to provide quality environment, which requires the ability of all stakeholders to work together in the development of school infrastructure.

An additional function of school board members, as stipulated by the Education Act (NEA, 2001), is to monitor the attendance of both teachers and learners at school, and to make sure that teachers and learners are attending to their duties regularly and completely. School board members are also empowered to oversee discipline among staff members and learners. They are also assisting the SMT in hearing appeals and in disciplinary measures taken against staff members and learners (MoE, 2005b).

2.3.9.4 Financial management

Section 25 of the NEA (2001) emphasises the establishment of School Development Funds (SDFs) by the school boards in all state schools. The SDF consists of funds received at school or contributed by parents, money received from donations, aids or any other sources, and money earned on savings of money standing to the credit of the fund. According to section 25(1), the purposes of SDFs is to provide, develop and improve reasonable and necessary teaching and learning facilities at school. Another function is to raise and to improve educational, sport and cultural activities at school (Joubert & Bray, 2007). The MoE (2008) stresses that SDFs must not be used for any other purposes that does not directly benefit learners or the school. The SDF must also not be utilised for providing loans or any kind of borrowing by any person or company.

The MBESC (2004) highlights that it is imperative for the school board members and the community to take part in all activities concerning their local schools. So, school board members should make sure that individuals at schools do not misuse money and other resources contributed by parents, guardians or the community. School board members should therefore make sure that school filing systems are excellent; that schools are keeping good records of all the funds received and how they are used; and the records should be openly available to any stakeholders who want to see them.

Financial management in schools involves budgeting on how to use SDFs for the school to succeed (Joubert & Bray, 2007). According to Botha (2013), school financial management involves the process of purchasing school materials and the overall controlling of the utilisation of school finances. Botha (2013) explains that in education, decentralisation on school governance generally refers to the devolution and delegation of power and authority from the national state offices to the local level, where school governing power will be in the hands of school board members. In addition, Botha (2013) affirms that the authority given to school board members comprises decision-making power of the local school community over all educational resources, such as human, financial and physical resources at or needed at school.

Joubert and Bray (2007) and Botha (2014) agree that nowadays, the school board members are accountable for their local schools' financial management as well as their learners' performance. Joubert and Bray (2007) and Botha (2014) further coincide that the MoE gives schools freedom to use their SDF to satisfy their academic needs, while school board members control and report back to the ministry on how the funds are expended.

According to Botha (2013), for effective financial management, schools have to make sure that the people who are running their funds are skilful and knowledgeable on how to handle school funds. So, schools must make sure that school funds have footprints on how the school money came in and how the money was used (Joubert & Bray, 2007).

Furthermore, one of the Namibians' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is to provide free quality education to all citizens. When it comes to education, the government introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in all state schools in 2013 for all learners in the primary phase (from pre-primary [grade 0] to grade 7) (Ipinge & Likando, 2014). In addition, early in 2015, the Namibian government announced free secondary education in all state schools to commence in January 2016. This means that by 2016, education in Namibia will be free in all grades from pre-primary up to grade 12 (Ipinge & Likando, 2014). The reason behind the introduction of free education in Namibia is to ensure that all Namibian children are educated and get quality education as stipulated in Article 20 of the Namibian constitution (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990).

The Namibian constitution stipulates that primary education shall be compulsory, and that the state shall offer reasonable facilities to effectively render this right to every resident within Namibia by establishing and maintaining state schools in which primary education will be provided for free. It further indicates that children should not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have reached the age of sixteen (16), whichever comes first.

In addition, section 38 of the NEA (2001), subsection 1, supports article 20 by asserting that the government must provide all teaching and learning materials, such as school books, educational materials and other related basic needs for primary and special education in state schools, free of charge to all learners from pre-primary to grade 7 or until the age of 16 years, whichever comes first.

With UPE the Namibian government provides funds to all primary schools to buy their school needs, and school board members are tasked with an overall function to control these funds (Ipinge & Likando, 2014). Botha (2014) states that due to the decentralisation policy, these funds land into schools' accounts after following a long and narrow governmental administrative process. This

process takes a long time as it starts from the national educational level to the regional level, and then to the local schools' level.

However, Nyandoro, Mapfumo, and Makoni (2013) revealed in their findings that school board members were not effective in managing their SDFs due to a lack of skills in various aspects of financial management. As the Zimbabwean context is like the Namibian context regarding the ability and skills of parents, it may be deduced that the parents on Namibian school boards may also have some problems with the financial management. Some of these aspects are the preparation and use of the budget for decision-making, keeping an inventory for school assets, and raising school funds. Nyandoro et al. (2013) therefore suggest that capacity building programmes on financial management be given to school board members, especially to parents.

According to Botha (2013), if parent school board members are well trained and motivated, they can play an important role in providing financial support. Parent school board members can control their local school funds effectively if school principals and other SMT members know how to work collaboratively. Botha also emphasises that school principals are tasked with an overall responsibility of protecting their local schools against the overinvolvement of school board members. An overinvolvement of school board members, especially parents, needs to be controlled in order to give teachers time to teach and interact freely and professionally with learners (Botha, 2013). This will also provide the learners the opportunity to study and concentrate on their academic and extramural activities without disruption (MBESC, 2004).

2.3.9.5 Budgeting and the purchasing of school needs

According to Botha (2013), the decentralisation of power from the central educational offices to school board members empowered school board members with the authority to create an opportunity for all local stakeholders to participate in all school activities, like budgeting, managing of school assets, and purchasing and paying for school needs.

Furthermore, to ensure the effective provision of quality teaching and learning materials, school board members have another important function to perform, which is to set their local school budgets. The school budget indicates school money in the bank, money to be received, and how the money will be used. In addition, the school budget clearly specifies which teaching and learning materials the school must buy in a certain year (MBESC, 2004). Moreover, all teachers in their department as well as other staff members must be consulted for all school needs to be considered before the budget is finalised. School budgets also clearly suggest what teaching and learning materials the school intends to purchase (Joubert & Bray, 2007).

According to the MoE (2008), schools are managed and administered by the use of finances, for example, to buy teaching and learning materials, and to repair and maintain the school buildings. Therefore, Botha (2013) stresses that school board members together with SMTs can play a crucial role in the management of their local school finances. School board members are empowered to ensure that there are budgets in schools and that school funds are spent wisely according to the budget.

Joubert and Bray (2007) concur that schools must set up school financial committees which will be responsible for all school financial activities. School financial committees should consist of all stakeholders within schools and should be headed by school members. Botha (2013) emphasises the principle that it is essential for school board members and the SMT to be taught on how to use the school money that has been provided by the MoE for the development of the school, and to buy teaching and learning materials. Therefore, the school board must take all reasonable measures to supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners.

In conclusion, Botha (2013) stresses the school fund is one of the main areas that creates conflicts among educational stakeholders, especially in rural areas. Botha therefore suggested that staff members who are given a responsibility of dealing with the SDF should be trained well so that they can be fully aware of what is expected of them. Joubert and Bray (2007) agreed that school financial committee members need to be trained for them to acquire the competence on how to deal with money in support of quality education in schools.

2.4 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (WALES, ENGLAND, AND USA)

The term “*governance*” is derived from the Greek word “*kybernân*”, which means to navigate a ship (Joubert & Bray, 2007). In education, school governance is referred to a process whereby government develops and implements educational policies that affect funding and the delivery of quality education to learners. Moreover, school governance requires an overall task of planning, organising, leading and controlling all school activities in support of quality education. Crouch and Winkler (2008) indicate that school governance deals with the power given to the school board members to develop policies and procedures according to which their local schools operate.

From a historical point of view, school governance in developed countries differ from African countries (Joubert & Bray, 2007). In this study the researcher decided to use Wales, England and the United States of America (USA) because these countries are some of the first developed countries that had these school board structures in their education systems. In addition, many

developed countries in Europe and Asia viewed the way in which successful school board members reacted to their challenges in executing their functions to support quality education in their local schools.

2.4.1 School governance in Wales and England

State schools in Wales are governed by elected governing bodies, comprising parents, teachers and learners. One of the crucial tasks of the governing bodies in Wales is their involvement in learners' performance as well as overall educational outcomes. To support quality education, school governance in Wales is supported by effective communication and good relationships among their educational stakeholders. In addition, the effective communication and good relationship between schools and educational departments in Wales support the provision of quality education (Farrell, 2014).

Furthermore, the school governing bodies of state funded schools in England are faced with many different types of challenges. James (2013) indicates that many of the challenges of SGBs in England are long-standing, while some are related to England's recent educational policies introduced by their central government. Some challenges that are also facing SGBs in England are: school governors' low profile; institutional and environmental accountability; and the role and responsibility of SGBs.

According to Farrell (2014), SGBs in Wales are challenged and weakened by their school funding system which distributes funds to individual state schools. However, thus far the school governance in Wales has improved from low to high priority with regard to the school governors' effort to support quality education (Farrell, 2014).

2.4.2 School governance in the United States of America

The education system in the United States of America (USA) is organised into three stages: the district stage, where there are 15 000 schools in a district; the state stage, which is controlled by the government education authorities; and a federal stage under the United States Department of Education (Resnick & Bryant, 2008).

State schools in California are governed by school boards. These school board members are locally elected as public representatives, trusted with governing their local schools. Citizens oversee their local schools' governance as keystones of democracy in state schools in the USA. The duties and responsibilities of school board members in the USA are to provide direction for community schools and to supervise the professionals who manage the day-to-day tasks of state schools. The school

boards also support the schools by establishing an effective and efficient structure for the school district, and by providing accountability to the community (California School Board Association [CSBA], 2007).

Furthermore, for an individual stakeholder to be elected as a school board member in the USA, he/she must be nonpartisan, not belonging to a political party. He/she must be 18 years old or older, a citizen of the state, and a resident of the school locality. In addition, he/she must not be prohibited by the constitution from holding public office. School board members in the USA consist of three to seven members and they can serve for four years. A staff member at school cannot be elected as a school board member, unless he/she has resigned. Candidates who want to be elected as a school board member must fill out a declaration of candidacy form and then start campaigning to be elected (CSBA, 2007).

In addition, there are challenges facing school board members in the USA, according to Resnick and Bryant (2008): some of the challenges are caused by their involvement in broader decisions concerning their schools, staff members and learners; the role of community life; economic development; and other issues like health and safety in school. However, Resnick and Bryant (2008) further maintain that stakeholders' participation in education enhances democracy and supports quality education in state schools.

To conclude, schools in developed countries are governed by school board members consisting of parents, teachers and learners at those specific schools, like Namibian schools. However, the difference is that in some developed countries, like the USA, school board members use to campaign before elections, whereas in Africa, specifically in Namibia, they are nominated by other stakeholders.

2.5 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE

In this study the researcher will discuss South Africa and Zimbabwe because those two countries also have their school board structures in their education systems. Furthermore, those two African countries observed the way in which successful school board members reacted to their challenges in executing their functions to support quality education in their local schools.

2.5.1 School governance in South Africa

State schools in South Africa are governed at a local level by SGBs, which consist of elected parent, teacher and learner representatives. Learners are only represented in schools offering grade 8 and higher. In terms of section 24 of the South Africa Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996), the functions of SGBs are as follows: to “determine the language and admission of the school, draft and adopt a

constitution for the school, draw up a code of conduct for learners, prepare the school budgets, developing a mission statement for the school; and to recommend to the provincial Head of Department on the appointment of staff members” (FEDSAS, 2002).

In South Africa, SGB committees are headed by parents, who are elected as chairpersons. According to Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham (2003), school board committees that are headed by parents, exercise trust, respect and co-operation among its members. Furthermore, school board committees that are headed by parents effectively link schools with the community.

In addition, the South African Department of Education makes sure that all state school board members are members of the SGBs’ association called Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS). Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies for South African Schools (FEDSAS) is a voluntarily SGB association of state schools which represents them in dealing with education authorities. It provides valuable support to its members and supports the provision of quality education in state schools. The aims and objectives of FEDSAS are as follows: to provide training to SGBs; to create awareness; to make resources and knowledge available to train SGBs; and to equip them for their functions (FEDSAS, 2002).

2.5.2 School governance in Zimbabwe

State schools in Zimbabwe are governed by local governing bodies called School Development Associations (SDAs) whereas private schools are governed by School Development Committees (SDCs) (Tshabalala, 2013). These committees consist of five parents elected by their fellow parents of learners enrolled at the schools. The school principal and deputy principals or Head of Department (HoD) are automatically members of the SDA. Other SDA members are teachers at schools and councillors appointed by the local authority, where responsible school authorities are a local authority (Chikoko, 2008).

According to Tshabalala (2013), the involvement of all stakeholders in education is a prerequisite for supporting quality education in Zimbabwean schools, since it improves the culture of teaching and learning in schools. However, even though schools were doing more to involve parents in school governance, parent members of SDAs were not participating actively and equally in decision-making processes (Tshabalala, 2013).

Some of the challenges that were faced by the Zimbabwean SDAs are as follows: most SDA members were willing to participate in school governance matters, but were discouraged by a lack of time and expertise in understanding school governance matters. A lack of communication between the schools and parents was another noted challenge. Also, most parents were hesitant to be

elected as school board members and were not attending school meetings (Chikoko, 2008; Tshabalala, 2013).

In addition, SDCs and SDAs were not effective in managing their SDFs due to a lack of skills in various aspects of financial management. Parent members of SDAs were not aware of their role in school development. Lastly, some SDCs and SDAs were operating without the Statutory Instrument (Act 87 of 1992), while some were failing to understand the content of the Statutory Instrument (Nyandoro et al., 2013).

In conclusion, African state schools, especially South African and Zimbabwean schools, are governed by school board members as well, which comprise parents, teachers and learners, like in Namibian state schools. The difference, however, is that state school board members in South Africa are called School Governing Bodies (SGBs), while in Zimbabwe, they are called School Development Associations (SDAs). However, most of the power and functions of the school board members in African schools are the same, such as to develop school policies; to recommend the appointment of staff members; to develop their school infrastructure; to promote school welfare; and to communicate with parents and their community.

2.6 CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN GENERAL

School board members in rural areas are faced with many challenges when executing their functions to support quality education (Khama, 2014). According to Heystek et al. (2008) and Sinalumbu (2013), some of the school board members' challenges are mainly associated with their ability and inability to execute their functions as prescribed by the Education Act. However, some of the school board members' challenges are possibly caused by the nature of the prescribed functions, which require specific skills and knowledge to be performed (Chikoko, 2008; Xaba, 2011). According to Joubert and Bray (2007), Xaba (2011), Sinalumbu (2013) and Khama (2014), school board members were not aware of their core functions in school governance and there was a lack of participation in policy development, especially from parents' and learners' side.

In her findings, Niitembu (2006) indicates that there was a lack understanding of policies that stipulate the powers and functions of school board members. Some school board members' low level of basic qualification was also noted as one of the challenges that hindered them to support quality education effectively. However, Niitembu (2006) also notes that there is a positive involvement and a spirit of teamwork among school board members.

Also, according to Shumane (2009), a lack of education and limited access to information and resources are some of the barriers that hindered parent school board members' abilities to perform

their functions as prescribed by the NEA. Shumane further states that power-sharing, absenteeism of parents in their school board meetings and a lack of training for parent and learner school board members are some of the obstacles that are preventing school board members to execute their functions in support of quality education.

According to Shanyanana (2011, p. 111):

The Namibian education system is faced with the challenges of how to enable all the stakeholders to participate fully and actively in policy development and decision-making processes, either at the national or local level.

Heystek et al. (2008), Sinalumbu (2013), Heystek (2014) and Khama (2014) concur that parent school board members did not participate democratically in decision-making processes, while learners were not involved in decision-making regarding sensitive matters concerning staff members' behaviours. These researchers further discovered that there were no mutual trust, respect and co-operation among the school board members. Furthermore, school principals, teachers, parents and learners who made up the school board committees, all had their own challenges.

Hamutenya (2013) revealed some of the barriers that prevent parent school board members from actively participating in school activities, such as the distance between schools and their houses, illiteracy, unemployment, and a lack of understanding and knowledge about their functions. Hamutenya (2013) further points out that parents' socio-economic status, other parents' and the communities' negative attitudes toward them, and a lack of confidence are other obstacles that can prevent school board members to execute their functions as prescribed by the NEA. In addition, other problems such as lack of time due to different reasons (like school board members' work, house chores, community responsibilities) and natural issues (like sickness and death) can also prevent school board members from fully participating in school programmes (Hamunyela, 2008).

Xaba (2011) advises that it is necessary for all school board members to undertake training and capacity building workshops before they assume their duties, since the basic among school governance challenges is the capacity to govern. Similarly, Niitembu (2006) suggests that school board members' training be done each term in parents' local languages.

Correspondingly, Sinalumbu (2013) highlights that the issue of school board members assuming duties before training create problems. Some of those problems are: unfamiliarity with meeting procedures; problems with the professional language used in meetings; difficulties in managing large volumes of papers; not knowing how to contribute; and arguments. Also, some school board

members, especially parents, might feel intimidated by the presence of other members who seem knowledgeable, and might see their roles as simply endorsing what others school board members have already decided.

Although the NEA (Act 16 of 2001) and the SASA (Act 84 of 1996) strongly emphasise that the parents constitute most school board members in any decision to be taken, many of the parents, especially in rural areas, are either not participating in school activities or not supporting the provision of quality education at their local schools (Xaba, 2011; Khama, 2014).

Kumalo (2009) further points out some challenges that were faced by school board members: a lack of training for new school board members before they assume their duties; school board members' unfamiliarity with their school board meeting procedures; problems with specialist language usage; and finding it difficult to manage the large capacity of papers. Other challenges that were facing school board members, according to Kumalo (2009), were not knowing how to make contributions during meetings; a lack of knowledge and understanding of the ministerial policies; feeling frightened by the presence of other school board members who have more knowledge, like teachers; and seeing their functions as simply "rubber stamping" what other knowledgeable school board members have already decided upon.

Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) reported that school board members were faced with challenges due to the absence of a national document that stipulates the powers and functions of learner school board members. According to Shekupakela-Nelulu's findings, schools had little direction about the functions of learner representatives in school governance and therefore learners were not regarded as actual members of the school board.

Nyandoro et al. (2013) additionally reveal in their study that school board members were not effectively managing their SDFs due to lack of skills in financial management. Nyandoro et al. (2013) indicate that school board members were failing to prepare and use school budgets for decision-making. Moreover, school board members were failing to keep inventories of school assets and to raise funds for their local schools. As a final point, Bush and Heystek (2003) and Quan-Baffour (2006) argue that regardless of how school board members were faced by various challenges of school governance in their respective schools, the establishment of a school board in all state schools provided a good image of supporting quality education.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

A conceptual framework in qualitative researches explains the relationship between the concepts used in the study (Mouton, 2014). It is used to outline the possible cause of action or the current

preferred approach to an idea or the thought, and connects the study to all characteristics of the study under investigation. In this study, a conceptual framework was employed to support the literature reviewed by the researcher. This research was guided and supported by the Invitational Theory of Practice (IToP) (see Figure 2.2), which hinges on four principles, namely trust, respect, optimism and intentionality (Egley, 2003).

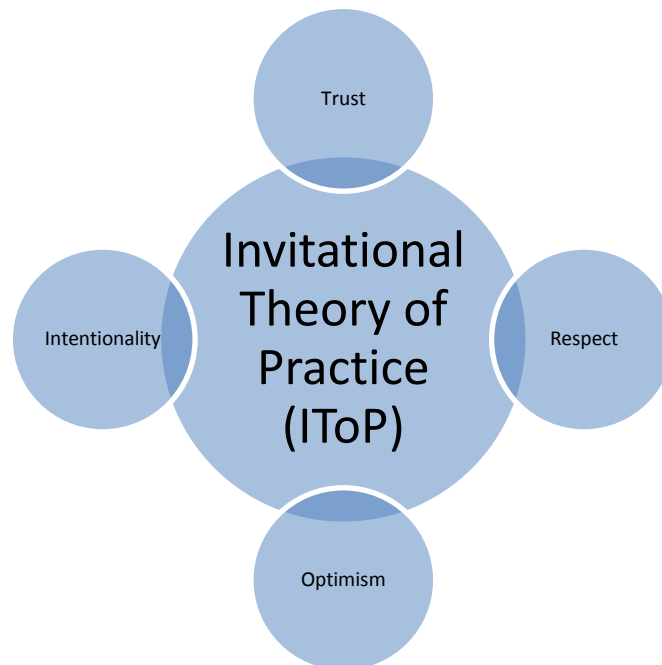


Figure 2.2: Invitational Theory of Practice (IToP)

2.7.1 Invitational Theory of Practice (IToP)

The Invitational Theory of Practice (IToP) offers reasonable methods and procedures to educational improvement through effective school governance. It provides the approach for making schools more inviting and productive (Purkey & Novak, 1996). According to Stanley, Juhnke, and Purkey (2004), the IToP improves trust, respect and co-operation among school board members. It also enhances effective communication and good relationships among educational stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents, learners and the community), which is an essential aspect in the provision of quality education to the learners at school.

The aim of the IToP is to create schools with conducive environments that will invite all stakeholders to actively participate in their local school's governance and the school in support of quality education. In addition, for the school environment to be conducive and to support quality education, school board members should show trust and respect among themselves. They should also show a sense of excitement and satisfaction for all stakeholders (Purkey & Novak, 2008).

Therefore, school board members and SMTs should work from the dependable and trustworthy position of trust, respect, optimism and intentionality. According to Purkey and Novak (2008), these principles are very important to school board and SMT members as it provide guidelines and sustain the broad focus on achieving school goals, which is quality education.

Stanley et al. (2004) define four principles of the IToP as follows:

- *Trust* involves mutual belief in the honesty and integrity of school board members. It also entails an intentionality to care, support, and encourages school board members to perform their functions effectively;
- *Respect* comprises the value and respect of individualism, and respect of other school board members' opinions in decision-making;
- *Optimism* entails holding great expectations of other school board members so that they can execute their functions at their level best; and
- *Intentionality* involves school principals and school board chairpersons to democratically invite other school board members as well as other stakeholders to equally participate in school governance.

Furthermore, according to Stanley et al. (2004) and Purkey and Novak (2008), the IToP theory transforms how school board members and other stakeholders communicate within their local schools. It assesses five mechanisms within schools, such as people, places, programs, policies and processes:

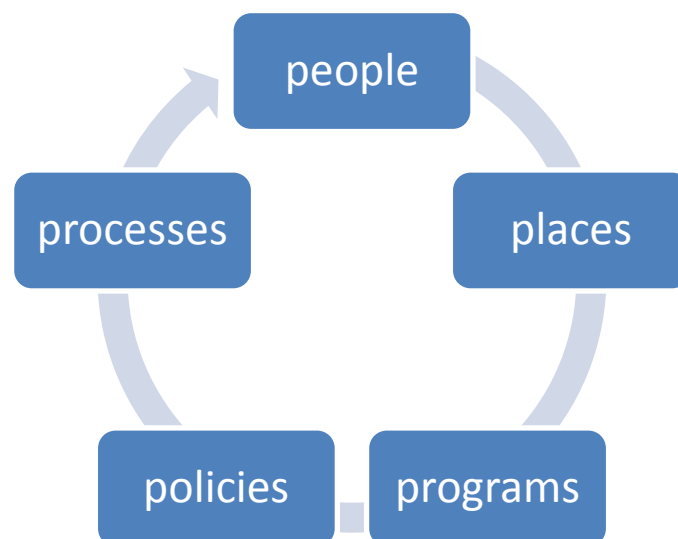


Figure 2.3: Five P's mechanism of a school according to the IToP

The figure above illustrates five mechanisms of a school (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 19). According to Purkey and Novak (2008), inviting behaviours within schools and among school board members and other stakeholders can be developed following the five P's mechanism of schools:

- *People* are human beings, educational stakeholders within schools are human beings;
- *Places* are physical environments, schools in which all stakeholders usually interact are physical environments;
- *Programs* are organised activities in schools that are planned by all stakeholders to achieve a specific goal, which is the provision of quality education;
- *Policies* are rules and regulations or procedures drawn up by all stakeholders and used to regulate ongoing functions of the school in support of quality education; and
- *Processes* are a well-organised series of actions or steps taken to achieve a particular end.

Purkey and Novak (2008) further point out that the IToP theory addresses the whole school culture in order to make the school more inviting, satisfying and an inspiring experience for all stakeholders and guests. Therefore, by focusing on five the P's mechanism that structure every school to be inviting, school board members should maintain effective communication and a good relationship to overcome their school governance challenges (Shaw & Siegel, 2010).

However, although this study is guided by the IToP theory, the researcher incorporated some concepts that were picked from the literature review and designed/created her own conceptual framework of school governance (see Figure 2.4), which directed this research. This study is therefore guided by a conceptual framework of school governance which focuses on: trust; respect and co-operation; power-sharing; effective communication and good relationship; and school board members' competencies to perform their functions as prescribed by the NEA (2001).

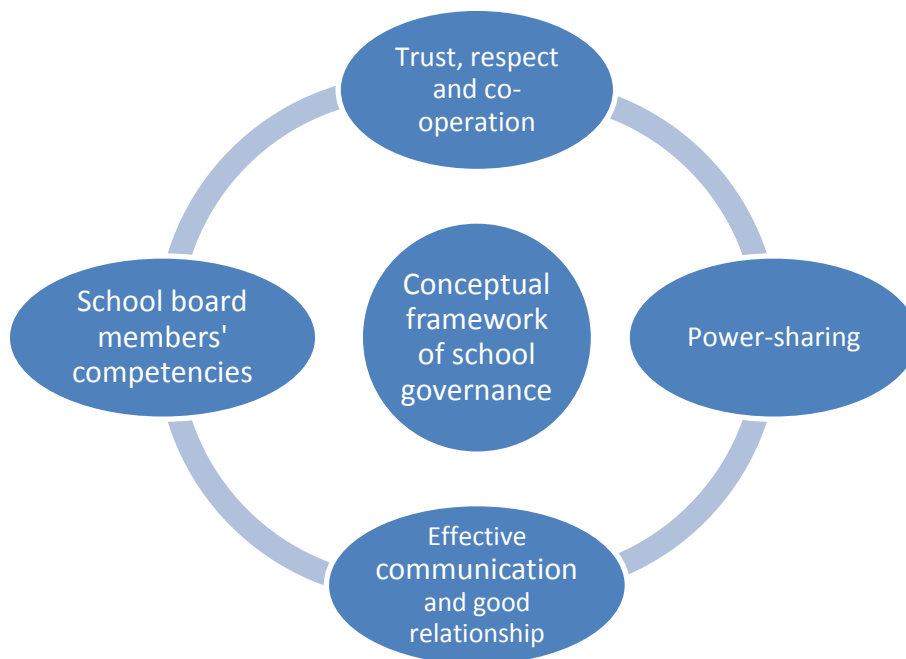


Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework of school governance

2.7.1.1 Trust, respect and co-operation

Trust, respect and co-operation are regarded as mutual human characteristics that can bring about change in school governance if school board members happen to trust and respect each other (Karlsson, 2002). Heystek (2014) states that trust, respect and co-operation can build a strong foundation for the balance of power among school board members. Heystek (2014) further argues that though trust, respect and co-operation are difficult to measure, the desired manners and conduct of school board members differ from culture to culture. Therefore, to maintain trust, respect and co-operation among school board members, their cultural differences and local backgrounds should be considered.

According to Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p. 189 cited in Herron, 2009, p. 10), trust is defined as *“an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based upon the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open”*. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999 cited in Herron, 2009) further developed five facets of trust, which are clearly defined below:

- *Benevolence* is all about the confidence that one’s well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the trusted party, and that there is an assurance that others will not exploit one’s vulnerability or take advantage, even when the opportunity is available;
- *Reliability* is about consistency of behaviours and knowing what to expect from others, and the sense of confidence that one’s needs will be met in a positive way.

- *Competence* includes some level of ability to perform as expected and according to the standards of the task;
- *Honesty* encompasses trusting a person's character, integrity and authenticity. It also has to do with accepting responsibility for one's actions, and not falsifying the truth in order to shift blame from one to another; and
- *Openness* has to do with the extent to which relevant information is shared and where openness indicates mutual trust.

According to Herron (2009), the five facets of trust are organised under two broad dimensions of trust, namely *competency-based trust* and *relationship-oriented trust*. In addition, Heystek et al. (2008) indicate that trust is assertive in the school governance and school vision. Heystek et al. (2008) further maintain that if there is trust, respect and co-operation among school board members, they will be more willing to go through difficult processes, ups and downs, and risks and potential losses. Moreover, trust, respect and co-operation are mostly efficiently recognised when school board members commit themselves to their school visions, and everyone under their school governance knows that those commitments are honest and truthful.

According Harber and Mncube (2012), school board members stand in a right position of trust towards their local schools. Harber and Mncube (2012) also state that trust in this sense means that there must be openness, respect, co-operation, effective communication, a good relationship, active participation and accountability among school board members in support of quality education. According to Xaba (2011), school board members must develop a trustworthy relationship among themselves when executing their functions in support of quality education to act in good faith, but not to disclose confidential information.

Furthermore, Joubert and Bray (2007) advised that school board members must not conduct themselves in a way that may jeopardise the interests of their schools. Joubert and Bray further highlight that a supportive role of school board members must be that of trust, honesty, integrity and openness. In addition, school board members must foster a sense of co-ownership and co-responsibility among other stakeholders concerning their respective schools' welfare.

In his findings, Heystek (2014) argues that the high level of trust, respect and co-operation among school board members (who are school principals, teachers, parents, learners and the community) made the Finnish education system successful. Heystek further claims that trust, respect and co-operation between parents and teachers, school principals and teachers, as well as between learners and teachers, are core factors that contribute to the provision of quality education at school.

Harber and Mncube (2012) also maintain that a democratic school culture is characterised by democratic relationships among school board members that are built on mutual trust, respect and co-operation. Harber and Mncube (2012) further indicate that a good relationship among school board members and other stakeholders – such as school principals and teachers, teachers and learners as well as parents – will result in mutual trust, respect and effective co-operation.

According to Taylor (2009) and Heystek et al. (2008), in many rural schools, school board committees are ineffective due to a lack of trust among school board members, more specifically between school principals and school board chairpersons. According to the MBESC (2004), although school principals are not chairpersons of school board committees, they still have a vital role to play in making sure that school board members are properly elected and constituted, and that the school board conducts its business correctly.

In addition, the MoE (2005b) states that school principals should bear in mind that elected parent school board members may possibly not be well-educated, and for that reason may not be familiar with the Education Act, regulations, and relevant ministerial circulars and procedures. Therefore, school principals are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and advising school board members on all matters, and to establish a cooperative atmosphere in support of quality education.

School board committees will only be active and instrumental if school board members trust and respect each other, and are free to express their opinions openly without fear of criticism or intimidation. If school board members remain silent when there are concerns that need to be discussed, then they are betraying the trust of people who elected them (MoE, 2005b).

To conclude, Nkengbeza (2014) stresses that trust, respect and co-operation among school board members and other stakeholders provide a friendly atmosphere, which is a concrete foundation in the provision of quality education in the school. It is therefore very important to build mutual trust, respect and co-operation among school board members and SMTs, between school principals and school board chairpersons, and among school board members, staff members and the entire community.

2.7.1.2 Power-sharing

Democracy, power-sharing and all stakeholders' participation in school governance are some of the important aspects in the provision of quality education (Joubert & Bray, 2007). According to Deal and Peterson (2009), power-sharing is essential in the development of the school vision, mission and policies. Power-sharing supports decision-making processes, inspires improvement, strengthens commitment among school board members, and toughens teamwork. Deal and

Peterson (2009) further claim that shared school mission, vision and policies shape and reflect what schools anticipate to achieve, which is the provision of quality education.

Mavuso and Duku (2014) claim that school board members are empowered to create a favourable relationship among the stakeholders at their local levels and between the government and school communities so that there will be shared decisions and responsibility to develop and maintain their schools.

In addition, Maile (2002) and Chapman et al. (2010) argue that the success of power-sharing and collective decision-making in school governance requires school board members to understand where the power comes from, which will improve their capacity to act. Therefore, Harris (2014) suggests that it is imperative for school board members to share values and beliefs of what their school desires to achieve.

Furthermore, the MoE (2005b) clearly stipulates that there must be a sense of balance of power among school board members and school principals to support quality education. Section 16 of the NEA (2001) authorises school board members in partnership with SMTs to plan and monitor their local school programmes. The Act further permits school board members to make sure that teachers and learners are attending to their school tasks and responsibilities regularly and completely to support quality education (NEA, 2001).

To conclude, Chikoko (2008) points out some of the decisions that entail school board members to equally participate and come up with a collective shared decision: the financing of education; curriculum and the provision of human resources; decisions about school administration; and external relations.

2.7.1.3 Effective communication and good relationship

Effective communication is one of the vital elements in school governance which has to do with effective interaction of school board members (Calitz, Fuglestad, & Lillejord, 2002). It is essential for school board members to have effective communication as more effective interaction with other members will have a greater influence in the provision of quality education (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009). According to Chapman et al. (2010), effective communication requires school board members to be heard in a trustful, respectful and honest way for the best interests of the learners. In addition, information within the school needs to flow freely without creation and confidential discussions need to be kept safe.

Furthermore, the MoE (2008) indicates that schools are in communities to serve them. However, schools can only meet their community needs if there is effective communication and good relationships between all educational stakeholders, government, and the community (MoE, 2008).

Effective communication integrates all characteristics of effective school governance, such as goal-setting, decision-making and problem-solving, and the delegation of responsibilities among stakeholders. Poor communication in the school governance can influence the interest of the school board members negatively (Calitz et al., 2002). According to Harris (2014), negative attitudes due to poor communication among school board members can lead to feelings of inadequacy, which in turn, can impact school performances and hinder the provision of quality education. Consequently, school board members who represent their communities in school governance should be fully involved in their local schools' affairs because school communities' link may help school board members to build their schools and to maintain them later (MoE, 2005b). School board members might also monitor school programmes and support the provision of quality education by checking and ensuring that schools have started on schedule, that all teachers turn up for their classes, and that learners receive textbooks and other materials allocated to them. Moreover, the MoE, school board members and SMTs share the function of ensuring that school resources are utilised effectively and that learners are provided with quality of education (MoE, 2005, 2008).

Joubert and Bray (2007) confirm that school board members need to build a strong working relationship among staff members, and need to ensure that there is good communication between school principals and staff members. It is therefore vitally important for the school board members to effectively communicate in the ways that inspire their understanding and support quality education. However, for the school board members to have a meaningful communication, they need to listen carefully and reflect on what others are saying, and should then reply positively, in a way that others will find supportive (MBESC, 2004).

Lastly, Hamutenya (2013) stresses that effective communication between schools, parents and the community help to detect and categorise the required resources and services from the community, for example, the community can provide information on traditional and cultural matters at school level. Chapman et al. (2010) further suggests that for effective communication and a good relationship among school board members, there must be a reconceptualisation of school governance in relation to the transferring of knowledge, trust and shared decision-making. All these aspects can only be attained if all school board members are well-trained and competent enough to perform their functions as prescribed by the NEA.

2.7.1.4 School board members' competencies to perform their functions

According to the MoE (2005b), school board members need to be trained before they assume their duties. Xaba (2011) affirms that school board training will equip school board members with the necessary skills and knowledge in terms of regulations and legislation concerning school governance. In addition, the school board training will support school board members to become full and active partners in school governance; as opposed by Chikoko (2008), who states that parent school board members are just mere providers and maintainers of schools' physical infrastructure. Hamutenya (2013), however, underscores that the quality of school governance is more likely to be increased if all school board members are motivated through training to be involved and to take part in their children's education.

Similarly, Harber and Mncube (2012) maintain that for the effective functioning of school boards in schools, all members need to be trained in democratic skills or capabilities, such as speaking skills and listening skills, chairing skills, organising and planning skills, assertiveness, and conflict resolution skills. Xaba (2011) advises that the school board members' training be an ongoing activity that takes place before and during school board members' term of office.

Moreover, the MoE (2005b) states that school principals should always organise mini-meetings and workshops with new school board members to familiarise them with simple training. Training can be on working-together rules and simple guidance on how schools work. In addition, school principals should use existing documents on school governance that schools have collected and stored, such as reports, year plans, budgets, School Development Plans (SDPs), and external and internal policies to create a level at which schools must operate. School principals should make sure that those documents are filed well for future use (MoE, 2005b).

Shinana (2013) also claims that all stakeholders, who are the backbone of the schools, including school board members, need some form of guidance on how to perform their functions and conduct themselves towards an achievement of the school's objectives. Chikoko (2008) concurs that the government alone cannot control all schools, but it shares its power with other stakeholders in education at the local level. However, according to Xaba (2011), this can only happen if participants in schools' governance (school board members) are trained, empowered and capacitated to perform their functions and to decide on matters affecting their local schools.

Correspondingly, Haines (2007) maintains that school board training is a cornerstone that supports school board members to execute their functions effectively. Therefore, school board members must be trained to be able to raise their concerns openly with other stakeholders without fear that other members will perceive their views as criticism. Moreover, during school board training sessions,

school board members must be informed about changes that are to be implemented in schools (Mabovula, 2009).

Mncube (2012) argues that as school board members comprise people with different beliefs, expectations, abilities and levels of education, their training is required to prepare them for shared and co-operative school governance. Therefore, with adequate and ongoing in-service training, school board members will be able to make informed decisions (MoE, 2005b). Equally, Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009) maintain that school board members need to be trained and need to acquire knowledge and skills on school governance. Cunningham and Cordeiro further indicate that through training, school boards members can gain more knowledge and understanding. Training will also assist school board members to develop abilities that will help them to better define their functions and will allow them to self-monitor their own actions and activities (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009). Cunningham and Cordeiro also affirm that there must be empowerment programmes in the form of lectures, seminars and workshops in place for the proper functioning of the school boards.

To conclude, the school governance philosophy in democratic countries requires all school board members to acquire certain governing knowledge and skills to be able to perform their functions effectively as prescribed by the NEA (Shinana, 2013). Shinana further mentions that this philosophy demands well-equipped stakeholders, including school board members, to be available at all levels of education in support of quality education. However, they will only be able to perform their functions effectively in support of quality education if they are competent (Shinana, 2013).

Lastly, Blumsack and McCabe (2015) came up with seven signs of effective school board members:

- power-sharing with other school board members;
- respect oaths and other school board members;
- trust, respect and understanding among school board and staff members;
- equal participation, defending views and listening to other school board members' views;
- effective communication, doing homework and asking tough questions during discussions;
and
- continuing learning through training.

2.8 SUMMARY

The literature review and conceptual framework that guided this study were outlined in this chapter. The IToP theory, which can support school board members in executing their functions to support quality education in rural schools, was reviewed. This study borrowed literature from developed countries internationally, nationally and locally. In the next chapter, the research paradigm, research design and methods that were used to collect data will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research paradigm that guided this study will be outlined in this chapter. The research design that suited this research will be discussed. The data collection techniques that were utilised to gather the data will further be described and the procedures that were employed to analyse the data will also be discussed. Finally, issues regarding the ethical considerations in this study will be highlighted.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study was positioned within the broad category of interpretivist research. It employed a qualitative research methodology within the parameter of the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist paradigm is generally combined with an interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). Historically, interpretivism has its origins in the Hermeneutics, which is the study of the theory and practice of interpretation (Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2014a). Social constructivism and interpretivism will be discussed next.

3.2.1 Social constructivism

According to Andrews (2012), social constructivists perceive knowledge as a theory that is socially and culturally constructed by people through their interactions with each other and their environment. Creswell (2009) agrees that social constructivists hold the assumption that participants seek to understand more about the environment in which they live and work.

Furthermore, social constructivists argue that participants often tend to develop personal or biased meanings of their experiences, which are often discussed socially, culturally and historically. These subjective meanings, according to Andrews (2012), lead researchers to look for the complexity of views, rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories.

In this study, the researcher was guided by the social constructivist approach in the investigation of challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools. Social constructivists emphasise the importance of culture and context by understanding what happens in society (Shuford, Howard, & Facundo, 2006) and construct knowledge based on this understanding (Nieuwenhuis, 2014a).

As reality is subjectively determined and socially constructed (Nieuwenhuis, 2014a), this study aimed to determine the underlying assumptions held by participants regarding their own actions and activities when performing their prescribed functions in supporting quality education. Another aim of this research was to study participants within their social contexts (Mouton, 2014).

In addition, the researcher sought to understand how the challenges experienced by school board members when performing their functions, can be addressed. Nieuwenhuis (2014a) agrees that social constructivist researchers commonly address the process of interaction among their participants, and concentrate on the particular environment in which their participants live and work in order to understand their historical, social and cultural settings.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm was invented in the 19th century as a theoretical theory of meaning, understanding and interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2014a). Nieuwenhuis (2014a) further claims that since the original formation of interpretivism, three different interpretive theories (phenomenology, critical theory and constructivism) have been developed.

According to Creswell (2009), interpretivist researchers intend to make sense of participants' meanings about their environment. Nieuwenhuis (2014a) concurs that interpretivist researchers start with assumptions, traditions and norms that lead to the truth or reality, which is socially constructed through interactions such as language and shared meanings. Nieuwenhuis (2014a) claims that the main purpose of interpretivist research is to offer the perceptions of a context. Another reason is to investigate the context under study and to provide views into ways in which a specific group of people make sense of their context. Interpretivists' views are based on the following assumptions, as stated by Nieuwenhuis (2014a):

Human life can only be understood from within, social life is a distinctively human product, the human mind is the purposive source or origin of meaning, human behaviour is affected by the knowledge of the social world, and that the social world does not "exist" independently of human knowledge (p. 58).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design suited this study because it sought to understand the challenges of school board members in support of quality education in rural combined schools.

3.3.1 Qualitative research design

Qualitative research is established on a naturalistic approach that intends to understand a phenomenon in its setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b). This implies that qualitative studies are carried out in real-life situations and not in an experimental situation. Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 135) define qualitative research as a *“research method which focuses on phenomenon that occurs in natural settings and it involves studying that phenomenon in all its complexity”*. Leedy and Ormrod further indicate that a qualitative research design improves the conceptualisation of analysis and is based on meanings that are expressed in words instead of numbers.

Gay, Geoffrey, and Airasian (2009) agree that a qualitative research design can be used to deeply examine the research site in order to get an in-depth understanding about the way things are. Qualitative research also intends to get an in-depth understanding on why things are the way they are and how participants in that environment perceive them. A qualitative research design clarifies the data collection approach (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b). Qualitative researchers put an emphasis on meanings, understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon under study as participants view and experience that phenomenon in their day-to-day life (Mouton, 2014).

All above definitions view a qualitative research design as studying and interacting with people in their natural environments. The researcher decided to use this design as she was going to interact with school board and non-school board members in their schools. She (the researcher) desired to collect detailed information on the challenges faced by school board members when performing their functions as prescribed by the NEA to support quality education.

Moreover, participants used their day-to-day experiences to provide information. Participants were asked about the functions of school board members that support quality education and challenges faced by school board members in efforts to support quality education at their respective rural schools in the Ohangwena Region.

3.4 SELECTION OF SCHOOLS

It was important for the researcher to select the research sites where data was sufficiently gathered (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014). In this study, the researcher purposefully selected four rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region: two schools were underperforming schools, and two schools had a high performance in grade 10 for five consecutive years. The researcher decided to

Figure 3.1 shows a geographical position of the cluster covered by this study. It shows the political and educational regions, including the Ohangwena Region.

According to Hailombe (2011), almost 80% of the Namibian population live in rural areas. People in Ohangwena rural areas are characterised by poverty, unemployment, lack of formal education, difficulties with access to water, transport problems, and a lack of electricity (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2008). Many schools' infrastructure in Ohangwena rural areas are inadequate and learners' performance in comparison to urban schools is weaker (Ninnes, 2011).

In the results of the analysis of The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ III), Ninnes (2011) reveals that four regions in Namibia that are economically better off, performed above the regional level or above the SACMEQ average in reading and mathematics, while Namibia overall performed below the regional average. Ninnes further indicates that out of four poor performed regions, Ohangwena and Omusati have been in the bottom line of four regions in reading in all three SACMEQ tests, where Ohangwena was the last. UNESCO (2008) points out that these four regions have been in a bad economic state. Furthermore, when comparing the data from SACMEQ II and III, it shows that absenteeism levels were the highest in five regions that fall in the northern Namibia, including Ohangwena (Ninnes, 2011).

In addition, UNESCO (2008) emphasise that the rural areas of the Ohangwena Region are less developed and people mostly depend on agriculture and livestock. There is a high number of unemployment, which forces young, energetic and educated people to migrate to towns and cities in search of a better future. The migration of youth to towns and cities results in very few people in rural areas – mostly senior citizens, undereducated youth and children. This situation causes school boards in Ohangwena rural schools to elect uneducated youth and pensioners as parent representatives in their school board committees (UNESCO, 2008). Therefore, school board members in rural areas and poor communities need to be given the support they need to become strong and practicable (Masuku, 2010).

UNESCO (2008) further indicates that rural schools are mostly associated with poor performance, high recruitment of unqualified teachers, very few qualified teachers, and poor contribution of school board members to teaching and learning due to a lack of understanding. This is the opposite of urban areas, where schools are associated with high performance of learners due to the recruitment of qualified teachers and a high contribution of school board members to school programmes, including teaching and learning. School board members in most urban schools are educated and understand their functions in support of quality education (Xaba, 2011).

Moreover, the Ohangwena Region currently has nine ongoing programmes and projects to support the provision of quality education. One of these programmes is the social accountability and school governance project, funded by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). This programme is training all school board members in the Ohangwena Region.

The Namibian government has also been trying its best to bring all schools countrywide at the same standard as per Vision 2030. Furthermore, the MEAC has developed an instrument called the “National Standard and Performance Indicators” (NSPI) to evaluate and to standardise schools (Ninnes, 2011). In addition, currently there is a project funded by Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) that is building and renovating some schools in Namibia. Out of the 249 schools in the Ohangwena Region, 10 rural combined schools were expanded and renovated to suit the national standard (MoE, 2005a, 2005b; Ninnes, 2011).

3.4.2 Context of selected schools

This study focused only on four rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region. All selected schools were offering grades from pre-primary (grade 0) to grade 10. All the schools had feeding programmes for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) funded by the NSFP to support quality education. Three of the selected schools were expanded and renovated by the MCA between 2009 and 2014. The aim of MCA in renovating and expanding these schools were to support the provision of quality education by addressing poor quality school infrastructure and equipment.

According to UNESCO (2008), the majority of learners who attend these rural schools are from poor families, and most of the parents and guardians in these areas are unemployed and pensioners. Learners only depend on agriculture and livestock, old age pension, and social grants for OVC from the government. Some parents or guardians who are working in rural areas, earn a low income (UNESCO, 2008). Many learners in rural areas stay far from their schools and must walk long distances to and from school (UNESCO, 2008).

- **School 1**

School 1 was established in 1978. It is far from the tar road. A total of 656 learners were enrolled in 2015. There were 30 staff members (1 principal, 2 HODs, 24 teachers, 1 administrative officer, and 2 institutional workers). There were 13 school board members (4 teachers, including the school principal, 7 parents, and 2 learners). This school was fully equipped with all the basic facilities, such as water, electricity, an administration block, a library, a science laboratory as well as a computer laboratory. It had a fence and teachers’ houses on the premises. In addition, this school is one of 10 combined schools in the Ohangwena Region that were renovated and expanded by the MCA. However, this school has not been performing well academically in grade 10 for the past five years.

- **School 2**

This school was established in 1929. It is also far from the tar road. A total of 802 learners were enrolled in 2015. There were 29 staff members (1 principal, 2 HODs, 23 teachers, 1 administrative officer, and 2 institutional workers). There were 13 school board members (4 teachers, including the school principal, 7 parents, and 2 learners). Like school 1, this school was fully equipped with all the basic facilities, and teaching and learning materials. It had a fence and teachers' houses on the premises. It is one of 10 combined schools that were renovated and expanded by the MCA in the Ohangwena Region. In addition, for the past five years, this school has been performing exceptionally well academically in grade 10.

- **School 3**

School 3 is a combined school which was recently established – two years after independence. It is very far from the tar road. In 2015, 851 learners were admitted. There were 36 staff members (1 principal, 2 HODs, 30 teachers, 1 administrative officer, and 2 institutional workers). There were 13 school board members (4 teachers, including the school principal, 7 parents, and 2 learners).

Unlike other schools that took part in this study, School 3 was less developed in terms of infrastructure. It had 16 proper classrooms and 6 sheds made with corrugated iron, which were not conducive for teaching and learning. It had tap water and electricity, but there was a lack of an administration block for staff members, science laboratory, computer laboratory, and a library. This school also had a fence. Nevertheless, it has been performing exceptionally well academically in grade 10. It was one of three schools in the Ohangwena Region that has scored high passing rates (MoE, 2012).

- **School 4**

This school was established in 1980. It is also far from the tar road. A total of 270 learners were enrolled in 2015. There were 18 staff members (1 principal, 1 HOD, 12 teachers, 1 administrative officer, and 2 cleaners). There were 10 school board members (3 teachers, including the school principal, 5 parents, and 2 learners). Like schools 1 and 2, this school was also fully equipped with all the facilities and basic services, teaching and learning materials, and had teachers' houses on the premises. It had all the facilities as it was also one of the 10 combined schools that were built and renovated by the MCA in the Ohangwena Region. However, for the past five years, this school has not been performing well academically in grade 10. It was one of the two schools with the 10% pass rate in the Ohangwena Region (MoE, 2012).

3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In this study, the researcher used a purposive sampling method to select participants. Purposive sampling is a method whereby selection is done with a particular purpose in mind (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014). The participants in this study included 12 school board members (four principals, four school board chairpersons, and four school board secretaries), four teachers who were non-school board members, and two Inspectors of Education (IoEs) responsible for circuits where selected schools are located.

Participants in this study were school board members with the following portfolios: school principals; school board chairpersons from the parent component; and school board secretaries at selected schools. The researcher also interviewed non-school board members who were experienced teachers with interest (positive attitudes) in their schools, who were always punctual, hardworking, who contributed positively to school development (staff meetings) and have been teaching at the selected schools for more than six years. Principals of the selected schools assisted the researcher to select the aforementioned teachers.

Other participants, who were interviewed as non-school board members, were two Inspectors of Education in the Ohangwena Region who were responsible for two circuits where selected schools are situated. The Inspectors of Education were selected because they have a broad picture of challenges that were faced by school board members in their circuits. Similarly, teachers who were non-school board members were also selected to examine whether they were aware of the challenges faced by school board members in their respective schools. However, the findings obtained from non-school board teachers might be biased because some of them had not been school board members before and they might just have given information according to their day-to-day observations. Nevertheless, the reason why the researcher interviewed participants from different schools with different portfolios is to triangulate the findings concerning the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b).

3.6 PILOT STUDY

Before conducting a real empirical study, a pilot study is done to test the functionality of the research instruments and to make necessary adjustments where possible (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014). A pilot study was conducted with two participants from two schools in different regions. One school was in the township of South Africa and the other was in the rural area of Namibia. The researcher conducted pilot interviews with two participants: one school principal as a school board member; and one experienced teacher as a non-school board member.

Pilot interviews assisted the researcher to determine whether the interview questions to be used

could collect sufficient data for the study. Through piloting, the researcher gets the chance to familiarise him/herself with the interview protocols, questions and instructions (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2014). Therefore, in this study, the piloting of data collection instruments gave the researcher a chance to identify ambiguities in the interview questions and to evaluate the responses given. This was also stated by Babbie (2007), who affirms that once the researcher is unconfident and unsure of what to ask, say or do, it might cause participants to feel uncomfortable or tired.

However, after piloting this study, no ambiguities were found in the interview questions and no amendments were made to the instrument. There were also no other difficulties discovered. The research instrument therefore remained unchanged in the main study.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Leedy and Ormrod (2012) and Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2014) emphasise that it is important for the researcher to clearly identify and state all methods and techniques used during the process of sampling, data collection and data analysis. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from 18 participants in their natural settings.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is a two-way conversation, where questions are asked and answers are given, in order to gather the information and to learn about the interviewees' ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b). The purpose of a qualitative interview is to understand the world from side to side, through the eyes of the participants, as a valuable source of information.

Mweti and Van Wyk (2014) add that interviews are used to collect information from a specific group of people and to get their opinions on a certain subject. Mweti and Van Wyk (2014) are also of opinion that even though interviews are time-consuming, they are very useful for the researchers to get in-depth information. Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke (2010) assert that if participants trust the researcher and think that the topic under investigation is relevant, they will provide in-depth information, which according to Nieuwenhuis (2014b), the researcher will not be able to collect in any other way or with any other techniques.

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data from 18 participants (see Appendices E to G). Gay et al. (2009) define semi-structured interviews as the purposeful interaction in which a researcher interacts with the participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) support the use of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research as they *"tend to be informal and friendly since discussions are held openly and in trust"*.

Furthermore, open-ended questions generate detailed information and participants' perceptions about the topic under discussion (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b). Open-ended questions can direct people to talk about the problem under study (Mweti & Van Wyk, 2014). By using open-ended questions in interviews, the thematic analysis of data generated from participants' responses are normally quite interesting, since one can get the information that was never thought of (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b).

Participants in this study were interviewed individually. Semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to acquire in-depth and valuable information, as it allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions. It also allowed the researcher to probe participants to elaborate more on the information they provided. In this case, the researcher listed possible questions, although follow-up questions were also asked. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder with the consent of the participants. In addition to a voice recorder, the researcher also made some notes (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b).

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Nieuwenhuis (2014c), data analysis comprises breaking down the data gathered into handy themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The main purpose of data analysis in qualitative research is to comprehend different elements of one's data, established through an examination of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables (Mouton, 2014).

Another reason for the data analysis, is to check if there are patterns or trends that can be identified and isolated or to institute themes in the data gathered (Guest, 2012). In this study, the researcher employed the thematic data analysis approach to analyse the data gathered from in-depth interviews with the 18 participants.

3.8.1 Thematic data analysis

Flick et al. (2010) define thematic data analysis as the best common method of data analysis in qualitative research. This method of analysis puts an emphasis on identifying, scrutinising and recording patterns or themes within the data, and these themes are then categorised for analysis.

According to Guest (2012), thematic data analysis is done through the process of coding in six phases to create meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarisation with data; generating initial codes; searching for themes among codes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the final report.

Similarly, Mertler (2012, p. 15) suggests some steps to be followed in thematic data analysis and interpretation: *"grouping the data that provide similar type of information in a chronologically order*

and develop themes. Other steps were to categorise the information and examined data for contradictions, similarities and relationships”.

In this research, the data was analysed by following the order of thematic data analysis as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2010):

- specific facts about the case were arranged in a logical order created by the researcher;
- categories of data were identified, and this helped the researcher to cluster the data into meaningful groups;
- specific data were examined for specific meaning;
- the meaning was analysed in relation to the research problem;
- patterns were identified, referring to underlying themes;
- an overall analysis was made;
- a generalisation was drawn; and
- conclusions and recommendations were made from the data gathered.

In this study, the researcher interviewed 18 participants individually. Five of the participants preferred to be interviewed in their vernacular, which is Oshiwambo. After the data had been collected, the researcher listened to the recorded interview data several times before transcribing the interviews. Interviews that were conducted in Oshiwambo were transcribed directly to English. The researcher requested a colleague who was fluent in Oshiwambo and English to check and edit the translations.

The researcher reviewed the data to identify themes, patterns and relationships. Data with similar meanings were categorised by using a coding method. The researcher then generated four main themes with sub-themes clustered under them.

3.9 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

When qualitative researchers speak of “*credible and trustworthy*”, they are talking about the research that is “*valid and reliable*” (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b). Nieuwenhuis (2014b) also indicates that trustworthiness in qualitative research is characterised by credibility, applicability, conformability, transferability, dependability, and the authenticity of a study.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2014b), to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, the researcher must employ several data collection methods in the study. Nieuwenhuis (2014b) further advises that the researcher must also consider triangulation as another measure to enhance trustworthiness. This can be done by engaging with other investigators and peer researchers in the study to assist with data interpretation to boost trustworthiness.

In this study, an issue of credibility and trustworthiness was one of the concerns. Although the researcher employed only one data collection instrument, namely an in-depth interview with each participant, an issue of triangulation was considered, where multiple data sources were sought with prolonged engagement. The researcher therefore used two methods of triangulation, namely data triangulation and environmental triangulation, to validate the data in this study. The trustworthiness of the research was further addressed through a thick description of the findings. A thick description is when data is described sufficiently, rich or thick so that readers can draw their conclusion from data (Mouton, 2014).

3.9.1 Triangulation

Nieuwenhuis (2014b) defines triangulation as a traditional method commonly used by qualitative researchers to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of their studies, and to evaluate their findings. Nieuwenhuis (2014b) claims that triangulation is regarded as one of the best validating methods, which can minimise the risk of logical bias as it relies on information collected from different participants, groups and contexts using multiple methods.

According to Flick et al. (2010), there are five types of triangulation, namely data, investigator, theory, methodological and environmental triangulation. In this study, the researcher employed only two types of triangulation, namely data and environmental triangulation. Data triangulation involves the use of different sources of information, and is the commonest and easiest method to implement in qualitative studies, while environmental triangulation entails the use of different sites, settings or contexts and other important features related to the environment in which the study was undertaken (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In this study, the researcher used in-depth interviews to collect data from 18 participants. Those participants were four school principals, eight teachers, four parents, and two Inspectors of Education responsible for the circuits where selected schools are located. The purpose is to triangulate the findings from all participants at four selected rural combined schools concerning the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education and to facilitate the verification and validation of the findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2014b).

3.9.2 Data verification

After the interviews had been transcribed, the researcher verified the data with all participants, with the exception of four school board chairpersons whose interviews were done in their vernacular and directly translated to English. Data verification was done to make sure that the transcription and interpretation made by the researcher was factually and empirically correct. This was suggested by

Leedy and Ormrod (2010), who highlighted that after the researcher has drawn up the conclusions and before drafting the final document, he/she must consult with participants to establish whether the results of the study are representing their views accurately. All school board chairpersons were, however, not contacted for verification because their interviews were transcribed directly from Oshiwambo to English, although they were interviewed in Oshiwambo.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the crucial parts of this research was for the researcher to highlight ethical issues to be considered, as indicated by Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2014). The researcher adhered to strict ethical considerations, as required by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University. Therefore, the following ethical practices occurred before and during the interviews:

- Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher had obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Appendix A).
- The director responsible for the Ohangwena Region provided the researcher with a letter of permission to undertake the study in four selected rural combined schools (Appendix C). The researcher also wrote letters to the Inspectors of Education responsible for circuits where selected schools were located. Letters were also written to four selected school principals.
- All participants who took part in this research had received letters a month before they were interviewed.
- All participants in this study participated voluntarily. It was made clear that there was no remuneration for participation (Mouton, 2014). Aims and objectives of the study were thoroughly explained to all participants. The issues of confidentiality, anonymity and right to withdraw from the study were also explained. All participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any stage if they intended to do so. All participants had signed consent forms (Appendix D) before they were interviewed and to give permission for their discussions to be audiotaped. According to Creswell (2009), consent forms acknowledge that the participants' rights were respected and protected during the study.
- Another essential ethical aspect was the issue of confidentiality – the confidentiality of the findings and results of the study, the protection of participants' identities, and the undertaking to destroy the audiotapes. In this study, questions during interviews were answered confidentially by participants to protect them from possible victimisation. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect schools' and participants' identities. The researcher will keep the tape records safe and the tape records will also be safely stored by her supervisors for a period of seven years.

3.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research design that was used in this study as well as the research paradigm that guided this study were outlined. The background of the Ohangwena Region, where this research was undertaken, was provided. The researcher also explained how the sites and participants in this study were selected. The methods and procedures utilised to collect, analyse and interpret the data were further described. Issues regarding the credibility and trustworthiness of the data as well as the ethical considerations applicable to this study were also highlighted. The findings that were obtained by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed how data were gathered. The research methods and instruments utilised to collect data in this study were also discussed. In this chapter, the fundamental data generated from in-depth semi-structured interviews, as outlined in chapter 3, will be presented. A total of 18 participants were interviewed in this study. The researcher used the thematic data analysis approach to analyse the data and developed four main themes. The main themes will be used to present findings on how participants perceive the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in four selected combined schools in the rural areas of the Ohangwena Region.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), data presentation is the process whereby a researcher presents the data thoroughly and accurately, and in such a way that the data speak for itself. Qualitative data will be presented in tables, figures and other types of presentations to help readers to understand the findings. Moreover, qualitative researchers usually include participants' discussions and voices to clarify the findings (Mouton, 2014).

In addition, Nieuwenhuis (2014c) advises that qualitative researchers pay attention to some aspects during data presentation, such as noticing, collecting and reflecting on the data that has been given by the participants. Nieuwenhuis (2014c) further advises qualitative researchers to analyse and present their data in a form of a summary: that is, summarising what they have seen or heard. This is done by using common words, phrases, themes or patterns that would help researchers to understand and to interpret the data accurately.

In this study, the researcher used thematic data analysis to analyse the data and developed four main themes. Names of schools and participants in this study have not been disclosed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Schools were coded as School 1 to 4; school principals (SP1–4); school board chairpersons (SBC1–4); and school board secretaries (SBS1–4). Similarly, the participants who were non-school board experienced teachers were coded as (NSBET1–4), and the Inspectors of Education were coded as (IoE1–2). The researcher also quoted some of the participants' responses in their own words (where appropriate) for the data to make sense (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Table 4.1: The composition of selected schools

Schools	Grade offered	Learners	Staff members	School board members
1	Pre-primary to grade 10	656	30	13
2	Pre-primary to grade 10	802	29	13
3	Pre-primary to grade 10	851	36	13
4	Pre-primary to grade 10	270	18	10

Table 4.1 represents the composition of four selected schools in the Ohangwena Region, where the empirical study was undertaken. It indicates the grades offered and number of learners, teachers as well as school board members at each school.

Table 4.2: Participants and their gender

Categories of participants	Males	Females	Total
School principals	4	0	4
School board chairpersons	2	2	4
School board secretaries	3	1	4
Experienced teachers	0	4	4
Inspectors of Education	2	0	2
Total	11	7	18

Table 4.2 shows the gender of all participants in this study. Although Inspectors of Education (IoEs) are not school board members, they were interviewed in this study for their in-depth evidence and broader understanding as overall supervisors at circuit levels.

Furthermore, the IoEs were school principals in the past. Similarly, non-school board experienced teachers were included in this study for their knowledge through observations as they have been working in the same environment with school board members. However, the IoEs and non-school board experienced teachers' views might have been general, broad and biased.

Participants were from five groups of school board and non-school board members: school principals; school board chairpersons; school board secretaries; non-school board experienced teachers; and IoEs. The findings of this study were dominated by male participants, which means that there was no gender balance in the selection of participants. However, this information will not be used in this research because it was not the purpose of this study.

Table 4.3: The educational level and professions of school board chairpersons

Schools	Gender	Professions	Qualifications
School 1	Female	Retired teacher	Standard 8
School 2	Male	Retired teacher	Standard 8
School 3	Male	Retired teacher	Standard 6
School 4	Female	Unemployed	Standard 8

Table 4.3 shows the gender, professions and educational levels of school board chairpersons from the four selected schools that participated in this study. It shows that most of the school board chairpersons were retired teachers, who were pensioners at the time of data collection. The data from the empirical study undertaken with 18 participants from four rural combined schools in the Ohangwena Region are presented below according to the following four main themes:

- Theme 1: Functions of school board members;
- Theme 2: Human interactions, actions, and activities of school board members;
- Theme 3: Challenges faced by school board members;
- Theme 4: Ways on how to overcome challenges faced by school board members.

Additional sub-themes were clustered under the main themes in order to group and interpret the data in a broad perspective.

- Theme 1 attempts to answer the first sub-question of this research: *Which functions are performed effectively by school boards members in accordance with the NEA in supporting quality education?*
- Theme 2 attempts to respond to the second sub-question of this research: *How are school board members able to perform their prescribed functions to support quality education?*
- Themes 3 and 4 attempt to answer the third sub-question of this research: *What are the possible ways to address the challenges experienced by school board members?*

4.3 THEME 1: FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

This section presents the perceptions of participants (i.e. school board and non-school board members) on the functions performed by school board members as prescribed in the NEA. The functions performed effectively by school board members will firstly be discussed, followed by a discussion on functions that are not performed effectively by school board members in efforts to support quality education.

Most of the participants had an idea and identified functions of school board members as prescribed in the NEA. According to SBC3, school board members had many functions to perform in supporting quality education. One main function of the school board members, as mentioned by IoE2, was to make sure that schools have strong vision and mission statements. According to IoE2, strong vision and mission statements guarantee where schools are going and where they are coming from. SP1 said that:

The most important functions of school board members are to appoint staff members at school and to see to it that schools have budgets to be able to run school activities. Another function is to see to it that discipline is maintained in schools. They are empowered to discipline learners and staff members, and to recommend that a learner be expelled from school. They also look at their school's welfare in general.

Similarly, SBS3 added that one important function of school board members is to make sure that schools are run according to the policies and Education Act. According to NSBET4, school board members used to visit schools, going into classrooms, checking learners' work and how the teaching and learning process was progressing at their schools. Although all participants mentioned all the functions of school board members as stipulated in the NEA, it emerged from school principals' responses that some functions were performed more effectively than others.

4.3.1 Functions performed effectively by school board members

Participants revealed that some functions of school board members were performed more effectively in comparison to other functions. Those functions were school board members' involvement in the process of staff recruitment and the development of school infrastructure.

According to participants' responses, the functions of promoting schools' welfare and linking schools with parents and the community were also performed effectively. SBS3 indicated that they (school board members) make sure that there are enough teachers at school, which is one function they are doing well. They make sure that there are enough places for teachers and classes for learners.

Responding to the question on functions that were performed well by school board members, IoE1 had this to say:

The functions of school board members are to make sure that schools are running smoothly by participating in the recommendation of newly appointed teachers. They make sure that schools are operating in conducive environments by making sure that learners' behaviours are taken care of.

4.3.1.1 Recommendation and appointment of staff members

It arose from participants' answers that school board members were fully involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff members at their respective schools. All participants in this study agreed that school board members were playing a major role when it came to attending interviews and recommending qualified and competent staff members to be appointed. SP1 indicated that:

Whenever there is a vacant post at our school, firstly I (school principal) must inform our school board chairperson. Then she (school board chairperson) notifies the school board secretary to invite all other school board members to the meeting on an agreed date, time and arranged venue.

A similar opinion was raised by NSBET2, who further exposed that learner school board members were not involved in staff members' recruitment and the appointment process. She said that:

Learners do not have any involvement in appointing staff members, and also teachers who are not school board members. So, those who are involved are school board members only, school principals and HODs. They are an umbrella to ensure that schools are run accordingly and that there are qualified teachers to support quality education.

According to SP1, learner school board members were not involved in the appointment of teachers; however, parent school board members were playing a major role in selecting teachers during interviews. SP1 further explained that during school board meetings to discuss the selection of candidates, school principals used to clearly explain how the post became vacant. If the vacant post had already been advertised, then school principals had to explain how it was advertised, who advertised it, and for how long it was advertised. Furthermore, school principals had to explain the requirements for the vacant posts, who applied, who shortlisted, who were shortlisted or not shortlisted, and the shortlisting criteria that were used. SBS1 explained that:

After receiving application forms, the SMT used to shortlist the applicants. After shortlisting, they reported all shortlisted candidates and those who were not shortlisted to us (school board members). They (SMT) clearly explained why some candidates were shortlisted and not others. We also used to check the application forms before we started with interview sessions.

According to SBS2, school board members were not involved in shortlisting the applicants. The shortlisting process was done by principals and members of the SMT. SP1 said that:

After shortlisting, school principals had to discuss it with school board chairpersons and had to agree on the interview date. Then they informed school board secretaries to invite all school board members to attend an interview on the arranged date, time and venue. During the interviews, parent school board members are required to be the majority. If they did not meet a quorum, the interview would be postponed.

A school board chairperson from School 3 (SBC3) confirmed this by saying that:

If there is a vacant post, our principal used to call me and we would call a meeting to discuss and interview the candidates. During an interview session, parents need to be the majority. If they are not, an interview will not take place.

In an effort to respond to the question on how school board members were involved in recruiting staff members, SP1 further revealed that before interview sessions began, school board members had all been given application forms to read and to see if candidates to be interviewed were suitable. Another purpose, as mentioned by SBS1, was to check and confirm that all qualified candidates were shortlisted and invited to the interview. According to SBS1, this process assisted school board members to understand that candidates who were not shortlisted, were in fact not qualified. SP4 said that:

All applications first come to the SMT. They are the ones who shortlist candidates. Then they explain that 'we shortlisted this candidate or did not shortlist this one because of what and what'. Then we invite all school board members, read through shortlisted candidates, and those who can read are given minutes and applications to read.

In addition, SBC1 indicated that after they had looked at all application forms, school board members were asked if there were relatives of candidates who had to be interviewed in the interview room. In cases where school board members were relatives of candidates, they were excused. According to SP4, this was done to avoid corruption and favouritism. SP1 further explained that if a relative of one candidate happens to be part of the interview panel or the whole discussion, if that candidate happens to be recommended, people might feel that nepotism occurred.

On a similar note, SBC1 confirmed that school board members don't include learners' and candidates' relatives in their interviews, because people are not the same. They assume that learners and candidates' relatives might not keep the discussions confidential.

This point was also raised by NSBET2 and SP1. SP1 explained that:

Before the formulation of interview questions, we (school board members) had read through all applicants' details to check if there were relatives involved in the interview process, because if we allow relatives to be part of the interview, people might feel it was not free and fair.

According to SBC2, some school board members, like teachers and SMTs, used to form interview panels. He further explained that the panellists used to set up interview questions in the presence of all school board members and gave them (school board members) copies too.

It emerged from participants' responses that during interview sessions, all school board members were given copies of interview questions. According to SBC3, throughout the interview processes, school board members used to observe and take notes on how the candidates were responding to interview questions. They (school board members) did not give marks; only panellists used to award marks. SBC3 further clarified that some parent school board members used to be members of the panel, asking questions like teachers while others were observing.

SP1 explained that after interview sessions, school board members were given an opportunity to discuss the candidates' performances among themselves. During that stage, school board members were discussing and agreeing on who they thought performed exceptionally well in the interviews while panellists were analysing the marks. SBC2 clarified that:

During interviews, all school board members used to be invited, although interviews used to be in English and some of us don't understand English. We (parents) used to sit there taking notes of what we could see and hear. Some of us used to ask questions too, like

teachers.

According to SP1, after discussions, parent school board members were called in and school board chairpersons used to present their findings. They (school board members) normally used to rank the first to the fourth candidate. After the school board's presentation, the panellists also gave their results on who performed well. Panellists also ranked the candidates from the first to the fourth candidate. SBC3 said:

After interviews, we all discussed our findings, and in most cases, we used to get the same results on each candidate's performance according to our observation and panellists' marks.

Similarly, SP4 maintained that:

Parent school board members did not give marks. They used to observe and take notes. They evaluated candidates only on how they acted, spoke and on physical appearances. But we finally had only one or few differences or disagreements.

SP1 further exposed that if there were differences in interview results, school board members and panellists had to discuss the differences and come up with one common decision on what to recommend to the Ministry of Education (MoE).

According to SP2, aside from interview performances, school board members were permitted to give their personal views with regard to the interviewed candidates. SP1 also added that if they knew of any personal issues related to candidates to be recommended that might influence the school negatively, they revealed them at this stage. SP2 further indicated that after interviews, school board members are legally authorised to agree or to reject whether to recommend such a candidate or to say, 'no we do not want such a person because of convinced reasons'.

According to SP3, some of issues that caused candidates to be disqualified had to do with their conduct in the community. For example, as stated by SP3, if a candidate ranked number one is a drunkard or has a bad record in the society, this is the time school board members used to discuss the matter.

In addition, loE2 said that after school board members' and panellists' discussion on candidates' personal issues, those candidates can be disqualified if the allegations are true and related to

educational policies, and the school board members might recommend that a second candidate be appointed. This point was supported by SP1, who said:

First we look at the performance of candidates in interviews. Then we also look at other issues in case; maybe if one of us know about a particular candidate, because if you only use score sheets, perhaps a candidate you are about to recommend might negatively influence the school. Once we recommend, we keep the information to ourselves until we receive feedback from the DoE.

Moreover, SBS4 pointed out that besides marks awarded by panellists and school board members' personal views, candidates' attached documents, such as certificates and diplomas awarded for outstanding performance in certain subjects, were also considered. This opinion was reinforced by SBS4, who stated that:

Some of candidates are verbally gifted: they can talk nicely, but looking at their attached certificates, they did not perform well whereas some candidates were not verbally gifted, but looking at their attached certificates and diplomas, they were brilliant.

SBC2 emphasised the importance of looking at candidates' attached certificates and diplomas because some parent school board members do not understand English. Looking at candidates' certificates and diplomas awarded for outstanding performance assisted them to recommend the best, skilled, experienced and most competent candidates.

Responding to the question on how school board members were performing this task, most of the participants were of opinion that school board members were performing this task effectively. In contrast, IoE2 was not satisfied with parent school board members' involvement in the recruitment process of teaching staff. He said that:

... Not well, but in most cases school board members are involved in recruiting staff members. Due to illiteracy, our parent members of the school board do not interview candidates – they just observe, because they do not understand English; but in urban areas, school board members are the ones conducting the interviews.

It emerged from participants' responses that school board members were supposed to be recruitment agents, like private companies' board members. Owing to parent school board members'

low level of education, they could not interview candidates because they could not speak English. According to IoE2, parent school board members just act like passengers. He said that:

They (parent school board members) sat in meetings and interviews as observers and were convinced by teachers that that candidate performed well and answered all the questions correctly. As they did not understand what candidates had said, they just agreed and recommended.

The general perceptions of most participants were that school board members were involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff members, although they were not asking questions and awarding marks. Most participants' responses revealed that school board members' involvement in staff recruitment and the appointment process prevented favouritism and nepotism. SBC3 clearly pointed out that parent school board members were considered crucial partners in support of quality education as interview sessions could not take place if they did not meet the quorum.

4.3.1.2 Development of school infrastructure

Participants' responses revealed that school board members were performing the function of developing school infrastructure effectively. All participants indicated that school board members were involved in developing their school infrastructure.

According to IoE1, school board members' involvement in school development was to make certain that the teaching and learning processes were taking place in conducive environments that support quality education. IoE2 further added that some schools had SDPs and plans of action for academic improvements (PAAIs) whereby they set up projects to develop their schools. According to participants' responses, many of these projects were: renovating and repainting school buildings; erecting a school fence; and building school libraries or computer laboratories. This point was supported by SBC3, who mentioned that:

Two years ago, we just concentrated on teachers' and learners' performances. We did not check the school environment, facilities and buildings. We ignored some components, like cleanliness and school infrastructure. This year we looked at our toilets, cleaners, school fence, and our school environment is now clean and conducive.

As a result, SBC1 highlighted that school board members together with other stakeholders (i.e. teachers, parents and the community) used to organise fundraisers in the form of bazaars so as to raise funds for their projects. IoE1 agreed that when schools were planning certain projects, school

board members were always involved as they were regarded as the final decision-makers at school level. He said:

Many schools in my circuit are using parent school board members to influence other parents to take part in fundraising projects whenever they want to raise funds to buy photocopier machines or build their school offices. You would find that the parents bring some chickens, cooking porridge, selling it.

All participants were asked whether parent school board members were actively taking part in their school development. SBS1 stated that parent school board members were fully involved in school projects to support quality education. SBS1 further indicated that they were actively participating in fundraising, bringing things that could be used, and cooking and selling food for money.

According to SBS2, apart from parent school board members, other parents and community members were also actively participating in the construction of school facilities. SBC3 stressed that school board members gave the SMT permission to go ahead with their school development plans. He further pointed out that school board members were in the right position to influence other parents and community to take part and support school projects. This point was also raised by IoE1, who emphasised that:

Community parents offered their cars at no cost to be used by schools to go buy and deliver building materials like cements. Some parents also offered their expertise when it came to the construction of school offices, libraries and laboratories.

One example of school board members' involvement in school development was given by SBS2, who acknowledged their school board members for their active participation in school development plans. He said:

Our school board members contributed a lot to our school development: they gave their inputs and suggestions on the schools' future plans. As you can see, our school buildings are being painted outside – that was the school board members' initiative. They came up with an idea of repainting school buildings because they were looking old and some community parents volunteered to repaint them.

The general idea here, as pointed out by IoE2, is that well-informed school board members with strong school board chairpersons and school principals were playing major roles in developing their school infrastructure.

4.3.1.3 Promoting school welfare

According to NSBET3, promoting their school welfare was another important function performed effectively by school board members. All participants agreed that school board members visited schools voluntarily. IoE1 stated that:

Sometimes school board members went to school when they were called to attend meetings or when there were problems to be resolved. They made sure that learners' absenteeism at their schools was controlled and reduced.

According to NSBET3, parent school board members were controlling learners' late-coming. Early in the morning, they chased learners when they were going to school late. SP1 further indicated that parent school board members held discussions with other parents to wake their children early to go to school. SBS2 similarly stated:

Our parent school board members played a big role in learners' arrival to school in the morning. They (school board members) are scattered from different corners of villages so that they can chase learners to move faster and arrive earlier at school.

In addition, SP1 maintained that school board members held discussions with parents of learners who used to be absent to take their children's education seriously. He further indicated that parent school board members held discussions with other community parents concerning their children's behaviours. SP1 explained that school board members held discussions with school principals on staff members' absenteeism and late-coming. This point was also raised by NSBET3, who said that:

Our school board are always between teachers, learners and parents. For example, there were two grade 10 boys at our school who dropped school. Our parent school board members went to their houses to discuss with their parents. They encouraged learners to come back to school. As I am speaking, now those learners are in grade 11 and it were parent school board members who motivated them.

SP2 revealed that school board members were legally authorised to discipline both learners and staff members, and to sit in on their disciplinary hearings. According to SP1, this was done when

staff members or learners disobeyed school rules and ministerial policies. In a similar point, IoE2 gave an example of a learner who went to school under the influence of alcohol and a staff member who was always late for class. SP2 said that:

School board members are assisting school principals to put up professional manners in schools. If there is anything of a serious nature before school principals recommend to the PS, school board members should be called in for advice.

SP2 further gave an example on how school board members helped school principals to keep professional conduct at schools. He said:

For example, if a staff member must be disciplined or reprimanded at a high level for committing a serious offence, it should be done through the school board committee before it reaches high offices.

On a different note, SP3 disclosed that parent school board members were not willing to actively contribute when it came to community issues. He indicated that parent school board members were not eager to be involved when they were dealing with disciplinary hearings for children of well-known people in their community. He (SP3) said:

Our parent school board members find it difficult to discuss and to make decisions in issues relating to the community, like the removal of those bars near our school. No one would want to be exposed as the cause of the removal of the bars. Again, when dealing with children of well-known parents in the community, like a headman, you can really read from their (parent school board members') faces and contributions that they are not willing to be involved.

So, the overall understanding of all participants concerning this function was that school board members were performing this function wholeheartedly in support of quality education at their respective schools.

4.3.1.4 Links with parents and the community

It emerged from participants' responses that one of school board members' main functions was to link schools with parents and the community they represent. According to SP3, school board members were effectively linking their schools with parents and guardians of learners at their

respective schools. SBS2 further explained that as most school board members were parents, they were in a right position of representing other parents in schools and the community at large.

Most of the participants indicated that school board members were performing this function effectively. IoE1 emphasised that school board members were tasked to report to their community parents on the school's progress, to inform them about the school's plans and programmes, and to convince them to take part in school activities. SP1 said:

School board members at our school divided themselves into groups whereby they went in villages addressing people on different issues, like learners' absenteeism and late-coming. They went to identified houses where well-known late-coming learners were coming from and spoke to their parents.

According to SBS4, school board members were playing a crucial role in influencing parents to take part in school programmes. When it came to the school feeding programme and grade 10 camping, most of the parent school board members were influencing and motivating other community parents to take part voluntarily. He (SBS4) said:

Always during our grade 10 final examination, all grade 10 learners used to camp at school, and parents, including school board members, used to sleep here with them and cook for them. They also used to supervise learners during evening study, while teachers supervised them during afternoon study. There always used to be two parents every evening: one to supervise the boys and one for the girls.

Moreover, school principals' responses disclosed that whenever schools had parent meetings, school board chairpersons were the ones who used to invite other parents on radios. SP1 clarified that:

During parent meetings, those who used to address parents and presenting topics to be discussed, were parent school board members. We (SMT) used to present only a few topics, and this platform improved our parents' participation in their children's education.

In addition, SBS2 confirmed that:

School board members are coordinating between schools and parents. They make sure that parents are involved in their children's education, because the general

understanding of the school board is to sensitise the understanding of parents' involvement in education.

All participants indicated that school board members were actively involved in linking their schools with parents within their communities as schools could not exist in isolation, but with the support of their communities.

4.3.2 Functions not performed effectively by school board members

Participants' responses revealed that some functions of school board members were not performed effectively as prescribed by the NEA. Most of the participants indicated that parent school board members did not execute some of their functions effectively, for instance policy development, curriculum assessment, and the managing and controlling of school finances.

In addition, SBS3 disclosed that learner school board members were not involved in most of the school board functions, except those that involved other learners. A similar point was raised by NSBET2, who indicated that learners at their school were not part of school board and were not involved in any of the school board members' discussions. She (NSBET2) said:

Aaah, learners? I don't know whether learners are also members of the school board (low voice). I did not realise that they are part of them (school board). We have LRCs at school, but they don't attend school board meetings.

Similarly, SBS4 further maintained the argument by saying, learners who are always elected as school board members are only there by name, just to put it in black and white; but in reality, they do not turn up for school board meetings.

This implies that learners were not involved in school governance in most of the selected schools.

4.3.2.1 School policy development

It was clear from participants' answers that one of the crucial functions of school board members was to develop the school's vision, mission and policies, which is the backbone of their schools. IoE2 explained that school board members were legally authorised by the NEA to set their school vision, missions, goals and targets, and to strive to achieve them.

Unfortunately, IoE2 pointed out that due to some parent school board members' educational levels, abilities and competencies, this function was not being performed effectively. Most of the

participants' responses revealed that school policies in all selected schools were being drafted by SMTs, then approved or endorsed by school board members.

Responding to a question on whether all school board members were involved in the development of school vision, mission and policies, SBS1 had this to say:

It is the responsibility of school board members to make sure that their schools have a vision, mission, targets and goals. At our school, SMT members are the ones who draft school policies, and we (school board) approve them and see how those policies are implemented. We used to work hand in hand with the SMT when it came to those things.

According to IoE1, school board members were supposed to draft school rules and policies in line with ministerial policies; however, most participants' responses disclosed that due to some parent school boards members' level of education, SMTs took over this responsibility.

Similarly, SP4 confirmed that the SMT used to draft school vision, mission statements, targets, goals, and all other policies. Those drafted policies used to be discussed by school board members for approval, then the same policies would be discussed by all parents in their meeting for adoption. SP4 said:

Truly speaking, we just call the SMT to draft school policies. Later, we invite school board members and read the drafted policies to them. They ask questions, discuss, and later approve and adopt them as school policies.

In addition, SP3 clearly stated that parent school board members were failing to assist in school policy development due to the language barrier. He (SP3) explained that:

Towards the end of each year, schools complete school self-evaluation (SSE) forms, where school board members are also required to complete them. However, SSE manuals are written in English and most of our parent school board members cannot read English due to their level of education. Parent school board members were failing to evaluate their respective schools accurately.

According to SBS3, due to some parent school board members' low level of education, school principals and teacher school board members were forced to translate the SSE manual from English to Oshiwambo (parent school board members' vernacular), although it was not easy. SP2 added

that during the process of translation, some parent school board members felt discouraged to be part of something they do not understand, especially during SSE.

In contrast, SBC3 believed that as the school board consisted of three different components, namely parents, teachers and learners, they always worked together and helped each other to support quality. He (SP3) indicated that if there is a problem, we used to meet, discuss and come up with a solution.

Furthermore, SBC2 gave an example of some policies that were developed by their school board members. He (SBC2) stated that their school board members came up with policies on late-coming and the use of cell phones during lessons by learners and teachers.

Lastly, the participants' responses revealed that some parent school board members were not actively participating in the development of school policies, while learners were not involved in this function at any school.

4.3.2.2 Curriculum assessment

According to the participants' responses, some school board members were performing the function of curriculum assessment by monitoring teaching and learning processes. It emerged from NSBETs' responses that a few parent school board members were visiting schools, going into classrooms, observing how the teaching and learning was taking place. At some schools, parent school board members were checking learners' books. SBC1 highlighted that:

We (school board members) used to visit schools, talking to learners and teachers, motivating them, visiting learners and teachers in their classes to see how teachers were teaching and how learners were learning, and to check the learners' books.

Most school board chairpersons' responses revealed that school board members were mainly monitoring the education programmes and teaching and learning processes through school principals. In an effort to respond to a question on whether all school board members were performing the function of curriculum assessment effectively, SP3 indicated that parent school board members were not willing to assist school principals in this function due to the language barrier. According to SP3, only school principals and SMT members (HODs) were assessing the teaching and learning processes in schools. He (SP3) argued that:

I am receiving less support from parent school board members' side on that function.

Only the school board chairperson, who used to come and move around classes, are checking learners' books. If I invite other parent school board members, they always give excuses like 'I am busy, I have a lot of work' or even 'if I come, what do I know if I don't understand anything'?

Correspondingly, SP4 maintained the similar argument saying parent school board members were not visiting schools to assess the curriculum because they regard teachers as superior to them.

Responding to a question on whether parent school board members were assessing the teaching and learning processes, IoE2 believed that it was not easy for them (parent school board members) to assess the teaching and learning processes due to their low level of education. He (IoE2) argued that some of parent school board members do not understand the curriculum. Thus, it might be difficult for them to assess it (the curriculum).

On a different note, SBS2 indicated that educated parent school board members, such as retired teachers, were not experiencing problems with curriculum assessment like uneducated parents. He (SBS2) explained that some parent school board members were teachers before. Therefore, it is easy for them to assess and monitor how the teaching and learning were taking place.

Most of the participants' common understanding was that school board members in selected rural combined schools were not performing this function effectively due to fear and a lack of education of parent school board members. According to IoE2, the NEA do not pronounce itself clearly on whether parent school board members are supposed to assess the teaching and learning process or not.

4.3.2.3 Financial management

It emerged from participants' responses that one of the most important functions of school board members was to manage and control school finances at their respective schools. SBS1 replied that one of school board members' functions is to make sure that the SDFs or whatever funds of the school are spent properly to the benefit of learners.

All participants were asked whether school board members were involved in the management of their SDFs. Most of the participants' answers revealed that parent school board members were not actively involved in managing and controlling their SDF, and learners were not involved at all.

4.3.2.3.1 School board members' involvement in budgeting

Participants were asked whether school board members were involved in their school budgets. Like policy development, most of the participants' responses exposed that parent school board members were not actively involved in the process of drawing up their school budget.

According to the school principals' views, parent school board members were not involved at the onset of school budgeting, but they were called in to approve and endorse budgets. SP4 explained that:

Oh, normally they are not involved in budgeting due to time and a lack of understanding on budgeting issues. Parent school board members do not understand those things – even when people are talking of percentages, they don't understand. So, they used to be informed that we set up a budget of such amount. 'We are going to spend such amount in A and B'.

Responding to a question on whether parent school board members were involved in budgeting, SBC1 indicated that parent school board members were not involved in budgeting, but the (SMT) used to read the budget to school board members before they presented it in the parents' meeting.

According to SBS1, their school budget was being drafted by the SMT in conjunction with all staff members. She (SBS1) explained that their school principal used to ask all staff members to identify all school needs to be included in the school budget for that year. Then the school principal and other SMTs draft the budget and take it to the school board committee during their meeting to look at it, discuss it. If some needs are not included, they (school board members) can add them.

Furthermore, NSBET4 revealed that all staff members, including institutional workers, were requested to write down all their school needs to be included in the annual school budget of the next financial year. She (NSBET4) said:

At our school, people who used to draft the school budget are all staff members, including teachers and some are school board members. Before the budget was drafted, our SMT used to request us to write our needs. All staff members used to give their needs. Later, those who drafted the budget used to consult us (staff members) to confirm if all our school needs are included, and later, they reported to us.

In addition, SP1 explained that after all staff members provided their school needs, the SMT used to combine them and compile a preliminary school budget. This preliminary budget used to be presented in the staff meeting to make sure that all school needs were in the budget draft or whether some needs were omitted. He (SP1) added that:

If all proposed needs were reflected in the drafted budget, then the school principal and school treasurer used to take that budget to a school board meeting for discussion and approval. In most cases, school board members prefer to get the drafted or preliminary budget earlier before their meeting day.

According to SP1, during the preliminary budget discussion, school board members were permitted to make some changes to the budget. Some of these changes were to omit or add some items and to minimise or increase the amount allocated to certain items. Later, school board members had to make recommendations on whether to approve or disapprove a proposed budget. This point was supported by SBC3, who clarified that:

In this meeting, our school principal and treasurer distributed copies of the preliminary budget to all school board members, for those who can read to go through. They (school principal and treasurer) also used to read the preliminary budget to us (school board members) and then we discussed it.

Most participants' responses revealed that the preliminary budget did not end with school board members' approval, but during their meeting, it went to the parents and guardians of learners enrolled at the school for acceptance. During the budget presentation in the parents' meeting, parents could ask questions freely, give their inputs, and decide whether to accept it or not. If the budget happened to be accepted by all or most of the parents and guardians in their meeting, the school board chairperson and school principal had to endorse it on behalf of other stakeholders. NSBET1 commented that:

After the preliminary budget's approval by school board members, the school principal and the treasurer read and discuss it with all parents during their meeting. If parents are happy with it, they will approve it and vice versa.

All participants in this study were asked whether parent school board members were involved in the process of drawing up their school budgets. In an effort to answer this question, most of the

participants indicated that it was only SMTs' and teachers' duty to draw up school budgets. Parent school board members were not involved at the onset. SBC1 explained that:

We (parent school board members) are not involved in budgeting, neither in purchasing the school needs, because we do not know what teachers need in their classrooms. Teachers are in the right place of budgeting because they know their school needs very well.

Furthermore, most of the school board chairpersons agreed that parent school board members were not involved in the process of drawing up school budgets. According to SBS2, although school budget entails planning on how to use the SDF to cater for all school needs, some school board members, such as parents, were not involved because they were not aware of all school needs like teachers and other staff members were. He (SBS2) explained that:

School board members are involved, but could not be fully involved in terms of school needs. Remember, budgets are done in conjunction of school needs and school income, and you know the primarily aspects of school budgets are curriculum aspects. Now, with parent school board members on the side-line of curricular activities, you don't expect that much of their involvement; however, you cannot implement it without their decision.

According to SP4, parents' involvement in school budgets was only at the last stage when they were asked to approve and endorse budgets. He (SP4) said:

Parent school board members were not involved in budgeting due to their lack of understanding and to save time, but their counterparts (teachers) were representing them in the process of drafting budgets.

In contrast, SBC2 believed that parents were fully involved in budgeting at their level. He (SBC2) believed that:

Parent school board members are not just involved in writing and putting numbers on paper, but looking at school needs proposed by staff members and school board members' discussions to approve budgets, they are already involved at their level.

Responding to a question on whether parent school board members were involved in school budgeting, SP2 had this to say:

It might be a 'yes' or 'no', because not all of parent school board members are well educated. So, they are involved in such a way that they recommend before they approve the budget.

Furthermore, most of participants' responses revealed that learner school board members were not involved at all in managing and controlling their SDF. This was confirmed by SP3, who did not seem sure if learners were supposed to be involved in drafting school budgets and managing and controlling their SDF. He (SP3) indicated that they (SMT and school board members) did not involve learners in budgeting at their school, because they did not know that learners should be involved.

So, the broad idea was that school board members were partly involved in the process of drawing up their school budget. School principals and teacher school board members were fully involved, parent school board members were partly involved, while learner school board members were not involved in budgeting at any of the selected schools.

4.3.2.3.2 School board members' involvement in purchasing school needs

It emerged from participants' responses that school board members were not involved in purchasing school needs. Most participants' answers revealed that this function was delegated to school financial committees. According to IoE2, school financial committees only consisted of teachers and a school principal as an automatic member to represent other school board members. SBC1 mentioned that:

We (parent school board members) are not involved in purchasing school materials because we do not know them; we only know a few of the school needs. Only teachers used to go buy those things.

Most of the participants' responses revealed that school board members were ensuring that their schools bought quality teaching and learning materials. According to SBS1, school board members at their school made sure that the school financial committee and the SMT purchased all relevant materials, like text books and exercise books, to support quality education. Similarly, all school board chairpersons' responses revealed that parent and learner school board members were not involved in purchasing school materials as it was the responsibility of their school financial committees. SBS1 explained that:

If there are needs to be bought at our school, our principal used to call the chairperson and they would discuss, then the school financial committee members went to buy those

needs. After all needs had been bought, our school principal used to call some teacher school board members to check and confirm with receipts what were bought.

All participants were asked whether parent school board members were involved in purchasing school needs. Most of the participants indicated that school board members were not involved, as this responsibility was delegated to the school financial committee. SP3 clarified that:

No, they are not involved in buying school needs, except for their signatures. Sometimes we only use them for signatures, but we don't make them part of those who used to purchase school needs. We trusted this responsibility in the hands of the financial committee as per policy.

Responding to a question on whether parent school board members were involved in purchasing school needs, both IoEs indicated that parent school board members' involvement in purchasing school needs was only when they were signing cheques. IoE1 said:

When it comes to the SDF, our parent school board members are consulted, especially the school board chairperson, to authorise and sign cheques, but I am not sure whether they are performing this function effectively.

Most of the school board chairpersons' responses indicated they were signing and authorising school cheques, which means that school board chairpersons' signatures were required before the schools purchased their school needs. This point was reinforced by SP2, who explained that:

When it came to buying school needs, school board members were not involved. It was only the school financial committee's responsibility, although they (school financial committee members) had to consult the school treasurer and the school board chairperson to authorise and sign cheques.

According to SBC2, whenever there were school needs to be bought, school principals first discussed it with school board chairpersons. School board chairpersons afterwards invited all other school board members via school board secretaries to hold discussions and to make recommendations, especially regarding school needs which were not budgeted for. He (SBC2) clarified that:

There is no need for calling all school board members to discuss and approve school needs that were budgeted for. However, it is the school principal's duty to call the school board chairperson and other signatories to approve and sign cheques before school needs are purchased.

SBC3 also mentioned that parent school board members' involvement in purchasing school needs were only when they were signing cheques for the SDF to be used.

Most of the participants' responses indicated that parent school board members were not fully involved in purchasing school needs, except when signing cheques to be used. All participants were asked whether learner school board members were involved in purchasing school needs. Most of the participants' responses revealed that learners were not actively involved. However, according to SBS1, learner school board members at their school were involved when purchasing sport equipment. She (SBS1) explained that when it comes to sport things their school financial committee members used to go with the head boy and head girl after school to buy sport things.

This implies that parent school board members were involved in managing and controlling their schools' finances, but not to the extent that one can say they were fully involved. According to IoE2, parent school board members were just consulted to sign cheques. He (IoE2) emphasised that:

Sometimes the poor parent school board members were just signing cheques, although they were not sure of what and how the cheques will be utilised because they were not part of staff members who used to buy school needs.

Participants' responses revealed that parent, learner and some teacher school board members were not part of school financial committees that used to purchase school needs. All school board committees of selected schools always identified professional auditors with adequate knowledge of bookkeeping to audit their financial books annually and report the findings to them.

4.4 THEME 2: HUMAN ACTIONS, INTERACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

This section will present the data of participants' perceptions on how school board members interact with others when performing their functions in supporting quality education. It commences with participants' perceptions on how school board members trust and respect each other, and how they co-operate when executing their functions. Furthermore, power-sharing and how effective communication and relationships were among school board members, will also be discussed. Lastly,

this section will shed light on school board members' competencies to perform their functions in support of quality education.

4.4.1 Trust, respect and co-operation

All participants were asked about the trust, respect and co-operation among school board members when performing their functions in supporting quality education.

4.4.1.1 Trust

It emerged from most of the participants' responses that there was trust among school board members. SP2 regards trust as a mutual human characteristic that can bring change into schools. SP1 explained that in their first school board meetings, they (school principal and school board chairperson) always address the issue of trust and confidentiality among school board members.

Similarly, SP3 added that:

We (school principals) together with the school board chairperson clearly explain to our newly elected school board members that, we are trusted by other stakeholders to run the school affairs. Therefore, we should show trust among ourselves and our discussion should be kept confidential.

Furthermore, SBS2 confirmed that soon after school board elections, all elected members used to take an oath, where they signed that they would keep school board discussions confidential. In addition, SP2 highlighted that there can only be trust when school board members ensure that their school principals and SMTs are implementing the ministerial and school internal policies that they (school board members) develop. SP2 explained by giving an example:

If school principals and teachers are following proper procedures, like the school budget, which was approved by all stakeholders, then there will be trust; but if the school board members happen to recommend teacher A to be appointed, but in the end, they see a different teacher was appointed, then there will be no trust.

Similarly, this point was supported by most of the school board chairpersons. SBC2 indicated that there was mutual trust among school board members at their school; hence, there were no confidential issues being discussed outside of their school board meetings. On a similar note, SBC3 indicated that there were no disagreements, conflicts and fighting among school board members at

their school. He further added that whenever problems arose, they (school board members) used to solve them (problems) amicably.

In an effort to answer the question on whether there was trust among school board members, SBS1 responded that:

Yes, there is mutual trust among us. Our school board members are trustful (*“ove na onhulo”*¹). We always get a solution, even if we disagree on a certain issue.

SBS1 further emphasised that at their school they did not hear of any information that was disclosed. She (SBS1) said:

Yes, there was trust, because even when we discussed something, even problems at school, we did not hear them outside.

This implies that school board members were confidential about matters that were not supposed to be spread. According to SBS2, parent school board members were equally trusted by other school board members. He explained that:

If parent school board members were tasked to come to school and address learners or other parents on a certain issue, they were always at ease to come. They were always at our disposal when they were needed.

The same opinion was maintained by NSBET4, who gave an example:

At our school, there were teachers who had a serious problem. Our principal called in the school board members. They discussed and solved the issue amicably. We (staff members) did not hear what they discussed. We just saw concerned teachers started talking to each other and working together.

There was tension among the IoEs who participated in this study: they had different views regarding trust among school board members. IoE1 felt that there was mutual trust among school board

¹ *Ove na onhulo* means school board members are trustful.

members as they were attending meetings and partaking in interviews and other school programmes. He (IoE1) said:

I can say yes, with 98%, there is trust among our school board members – that is why they are fully participating in school activities as they trust that the outcome is going to be good.

On the other hand, IoE2 doubted whether school board members trusted each other, since he believed that trust was a broad term. He argued that although school board members had been warned to keep their discussions and decisions made behind closed doors confidential, some of their discussions were leaked. He further added that this might cause distrust among school board members and they might be afraid to give their inputs. IoE2 gave an example:

Let me say, school board members interviewed teachers and recommended those to be appointed. We (IoEs) normally used to hear from outside people saying, 'I went for an interview and I heard I was in number one, but I am not appointed'. Although it was not formally reported to my office things of that nature are happening.

Responding to a question on whether school boards' confidential discussions were being discussed outside of their meetings, SP4 agreed that most of the school board discussions were leaking. He emphasised that:

Human beings are just human beings. Trust is something that you cannot instil in people. So, some school board members are releasing confidential information. They are not perfect, even some SMT members are releasing confidential discussions.

Similarly, NSBET1 observed some teacher school board members at their school gossiping to other school board members concerning their board discussions. The general feeling, according to most of the participants' responses, were that there was trust among school board members, although a few schools' confidential discussions were leaking.

Most participants' responses disclosed that the main reason why school board members turned to trust each other, was because they knew it was in the interest of their children who they send to the school. If parent school board members and other community parents do not trust teachers and teachers do not trust parents, there will be no respect.

4.4.1.2 Respect

All participants' responses indicated that there was respect among school board members. According to SP2, trust and respect are interconnected. He said:

Respect is earned. It cannot be created, crafted or built. So, whenever school board members were performing their functions correctly and accurately, other staff members and stakeholders began trusting them.

Responding to a question on whether there was respect among school board members, SBC3 had this to say:

Naturally, you cannot talk about respect without trust. So, there was respect among our school board members, since we trusted each other. We were not in groups, did not debate unnecessarily and did not fight each other. We always worked together.

SBC3 further explained that whenever school board members were executing their functions, they made sure that there was transparency to show other stakeholders that they were performing their functions effectively. According to SP2:

In the process of school board members performing their functions in a transparent way, they would earn trust and respect from other members and all stakeholders.

This similar point was reinforced by SBS1, who further stated that their previous school board chairperson was very old, but they respected her. Whenever they (school board members) were in meetings, discussions and during interviews, they respected each other.

Furthermore, NSBET4 indicated that there was respect among school board members and respect between school board members and staff members. She said:

Whenever parent school board members come here (schools), they greet us with respect. Whenever they come into our classes, they talk to us with respect and we all (teachers and learners) respect them too.

According to SBS2, respect is regarded as two-way traffic. He explained that if school principals and school board chairpersons respect other school board members, they will respect them in return.

SBS2 further added that if school board teachers respect school board parents, it will also be vice versa. He believed that:

If you do not respect somebody, then do not expect that person to respect you. However, here, teacher school board members respect parent school board members and parent school board members respect the whole school.

Both IoEs agreed that there was respect among school board members. According to IoE1, in most cases, when they attended school board meetings, they observed that school board meetings were being conducted in a respectful, professional and matured manner. IoE1 further explained that:

Even the way questions were being asked in school board meetings and during interview sessions – it implies that there is respect among school board members. Even though there were burning questions, they were asked in a respectful way.

Furthermore, IoE2 gave an example where he attended a school board meeting and parent school board members were asking burning questions on an issue of teacher-learner relationships. He said:

There was a topic under discussion concerning an issue of the love-relationship between teachers and learners, but while school board members were discussing and posing questions concerning that issue, you could see that there was respect among them.

All participants' responses concluded that there was respect among school board members. According to SP2, school board members were in the right position to trust and respect each other, and therefore they built a strong board with co-operation and equal participation.

4.4.1.3 Co-operation

It emerged from participants' responses that there was co-operation among school board members, irrespective of their educational differences, categories and portfolios. SBS2 indicated that whenever school board members were invited for their meetings, the majority used to attend, no matter how urgent or late invitations were sent.

In an effort to answer the question on whether there was co-operation among school board members, SP4 confirmed that there was good co-operation among their school board members. He clarified that:

They (school board members) really co-operate as they are from the same community and they know each other. I did not experience any problem among them. They attended meetings, parental or school board meetings, very well, and when there was a problem at school, they would come if you invited them.

According to SBC1, co-operation was presented in the way school board members were involved and participating in school activities. Furthermore, SBS2 stated that when school board members were invited to their meetings, the majority used to attend, no matter how urgent or late the invitation were sent. Moreover, SP2 viewed co-operation as a two-way mechanism. He explained that:

Co-operation has to do with the way school principals and school board chairpersons approach other school board members: the way they tabled their proposals and suggestions, and the way they listened to them.

He (SP2) further highlighted that trust, respect and co-operation are interrelated. He said:

Co-operation is built when people trust and respect each other. Otherwise, if the school principal or school board chairperson cannot listen to other school board members when there is an issue, then it would definitely affect their co-operation.

Responding to a question on whether there was co-operation among school board members, SBC1 had this to say:

I have been a school board chairperson for many years now and there has been trust, respect and co-operation among us. We always work together and trust each other, although (*“omunhu iha yela nge”*), direct translation: *“a person cannot be clean like an egg”*, which means *“nobody is perfect”*.

Similarly, in an effort to answer a question on whether there was co-operation among school board members, SBS3 also explained that trust, respect and co-operation were interconnected. He (SBS3) explained that at schools where school board members happened to trust and respect each other, they turned to effectively co-operate when executing their functions in supporting quality education.

This point was further supported by SBC3, who mentioned that:

There is co-operation among us (school board members), although nobody is perfect. Even if the chairperson of school board is a parent and some school board members are teachers who are educated, we always co-operate.

According to SBC2, all school board members were equal in their discussions and they always co-operated while performing their functions. NSBET4 maintained that parent school board members were actively taking part in school programmes, events and extramural activities. NSBET4 further gave an example that indicates that most of the parent school board members were taking part in school events, such as fundraisers, award ceremonies, cultural festivals and entrepreneurship day, which take place every year. She said:

During our entrepreneurship days and cultural festivals, parent school board members used to attend. They brought traditional foods to show learners and sell them to teachers and other parents. Some (parents) used to help us (teachers) to train learners on cultural activities.

Most of the participants alleged that school board members were helping schools (teachers and learners) to organise school events. This implies that there were trust, respect and effective co-operation among school board members.

4.4.2 Power-sharing

All participants were asked how power was being shared among school board members. Most of participants' responses exposed that power had been shared equally among school board members. All principals who took part in this study revealed that decisions were taken collectively by all school board members. Few participants' answers revealed that there was no power-sharing among school board members due to differences in their level of education, abilities and competencies.

According to IoE2:

The NEA as well as the Ministry of Education want all school board members to participate in and contribute equally to all school activities to support quality education; however, parent and learner school board members were not actively involved in school activities.

All school board chairpersons felt that school board functions and responsibilities were well distributed among school board members as prescribed by the NEA. A similar point was also raised

by SBS3, who stated that some school board members were given particular tasks and other board members respect the authority given to those specific individuals.

SBC3 further gave an example of three important portfolios in the school board which were assigned to and occupied by three school board members from different components. He explained that:

Our school board chairperson is a parent and there are no criteria on whether that parents must be educated or not, as long as that parent has a child at that school and is not working or married to a staff member at that school.

This opinion was reinforced by SP1, who clarified that it is a must in the Namibian education system that a school board chairperson must be a parent. In an effort to respond to a question on whether there was power-sharing among school board members, SP1 further explained that there was power-sharing among school board members, whenever school board members were in meetings, the chairperson of their school board, who is a parent, is the one who used to chair their meetings.

According to SP3, their school board chairperson led the drafting of the school board meetings' agenda and facilitated the whole process. He (SP3) added that their school board chairperson used to give opportunities to participants to view their ideas and allows all members to bring forth items to be discussed.

In addition, SBC2 emphasised that school board chairpersons are empowered by the NEA to deny chances when certain items are not permitted to be discussed or when discussions exhaust the time allocated to a particular topic on the agenda. Furthermore, SBC3 revealed that there is one portfolio for the school board secretary, which was occupied by a teacher school board member, who was in a position of taking minutes for all school board meetings. Another responsibility of the school board secretary is to invite other school board members to their meetings. SBC2 clarified that school board secretaries are always elected from the teacher component, because they are capable of writing English faster and accurately.

Another portfolio, as mentioned by SP2, was for a treasurer who was dealing with the SDF. According to SP2, this portfolio could be occupied by any knowledgeable and skilful school board member, a teacher or a parent. However, the data revealed that all treasurers' portfolios at the selected schools were occupied by teachers.

Responding to a question on why the treasurers' portfolios were held by teachers, only SBC1 indicated that the reason behind this was that teachers were good at recording and they were always on their school premises. She said:

It is because teachers are good in mathematics and recording things. The other reason is that teachers are always at school, so there will be no need to call a parent to come every day when needs arise.

Furthermore, SBS2 clarified that aside from the three portfolios prescribed by the NEA, no other tasks were assigned to specific school board members. He explained that when tasks had to be carried out, all school board members worked together as a team. Similarly, according to SBS1, all school board members were regarded as full participants in education, despite having a school board chairperson, secretary and treasurer. All other school board members were automatically considered as vital representatives of other stakeholders. SBS2 indicated that:

With the distribution of labour, school board members could not really distribute powers among themselves, nonetheless specific portfolios which were already there from the MEAC.

According to SBC3, there were extra committees that had to deal with different issues at schools, and each committee was being supervised and chaired by a school board member. He explained that:

Some of these committees are dealing with school academic affairs: looking after learners' behaviours and controlling school finances, frequently checking financial books to see how the SDF was used, how learners were paying, and how the school money was audited.

Some participants' answers disclosed that at some schools, school board meetings were being chaired by their school principals and teacher school board members. This was done due to some parent school board members' educational levels. According to SP4 illiterate and undereducated school board chairpersons found it difficult to lead school board meetings' agendas.

Although school board discussions at all selected schools were being conducted in their vernacular language (i.e. Oshiwambo), SP4 explained that if documents under discussion were written in English, parent school board members found it difficult to participate in the discussions. Responding

to a question on whether power was equally shared among school board members, SP4 disagreed. SP4 believed that there was no equal power-sharing in school boards due to the following reasons:

Due to the parent school board members' educational level and the level of teacher school board members, parents see themselves as inferior, not superior like teachers. But we (teachers) used to motivate them to contribute freely during discussions, because there, we are all equal.

Similarly, IoE2 denied that power was equally shared among school board members, although every school board member had something to contribute during their meetings and other activities. He (IoE2) said:

School board members are not contributing equally due to their age, educational levels and competencies. For example, whenever schools are preparing school events, old age parent school board members are helpful in influencing other parents to bring traditional foods and chickens, while young parent school board members can go to town along with teachers and buy things for the event.

In addition, IoE2 further argued that:

When it came to curriculum issues, most of the parent school board members could not equally share power or contribute equally to teachers due to their education level and skills.

This therefore indicates that there was power-sharing among school board members, but not equal power-sharing due to some school board members' level of education, experiences, abilities and competence.

4.4.2.1 Parents' involvement in decision-making

All participants were asked whether parent school board members were equally involved in decision-making concerning their schools. Most of the participants pointed out that parents were not equally involved in all decisions, although they were consulted for collective decisions to be taken.

According to school principals' responses, parent school board members were actively involved in decision-making processes, but their contributions were not equal to teacher school board members' inputs. SP3 indicated that:

When school board members were discussing things that are written in English, most parent school board members used to rely on teachers to translate and explain things to them.

IoE1 further clarified that:

In most cases, some parent school board members used to be physically present in their meeting, but they were just quiet. They were not participating in their discussions because they did not want to contribute, but it was due to language barrier. Sometimes, documents under discussion used to be written in English.

According to SBS3, when documents or circulars to be discussed were written in English, it required that school principals and teacher school board members translate the documents or circulars from English to the parents' vernacular. However, the translations were sometimes not effective. SBS3 indicated that translations could not make parent school board members understand things and sometimes school principals find it difficult to translate everything.

IoE1 therefore advised that all documents to be used by school board members, like the NEA, be written in parent school board members' vernacular so that they can understand and contribute actively during discussions. On a similar note, SP3 emphasised that in most cases, parent school board members used to be discouraged when documents were written in English and they could not actively participate in decision-making processes. SP2 argued that:

For a collective decision to be taken, all three groups – teachers, parents and learners – must reach the consensus. They need to compromise, because if only teachers decide, it is not a shared decision.

Responding to a question on whether parent school board members were involved in decision-making processes, SBCs agreed and they felt that parent school board members were fully involved. SBC3 mentioned that:

In the past, parent school board members were influenced by teacher school board members when it came to school board discussions and decision-making processes, but now we are fully involved. Decisions are taken by all school board members; not just the principal or school board chairperson.

Moreover, SBC2 affirmed that all school board members were free to suggest topics and points that had to be discussed during their meetings. He (SBC2) said:

When school board members hear or notice something wrong at school, they always report it to the school principal or school board chairperson. Then they call an urgent meeting to discuss that issue and to come up with a solution.

According to NSBET3, parent school board members were involved in decision-making and they put up policies on how to solve problems at their respective schools. Some of the policies were on learners' late-coming, and cell phone usage at school by teachers and learners. She stated that:

Our school board decided that if a learner comes to school with a cell phone, teachers must take it, keep it and just give it back to that learner's parents at the end of the year.

In contrast, IoE1 was opposed to other participants' views on parent school board members' involvement in decision-making. He explained that:

Most of our parent school board members are illiterate. It is difficult for them to understand the educational policies written in English. So, they used to sit in on meetings and only a few parents contributed, while others were quiet. They are not quiet because they do not want to contribute, but they do not understand.

This implies that parent school board members were faced with the challenges of an official language, which is English. Otherwise, if documents were written in their vernacular, they could understand things and could participate equally in decision-making. So, the power was not equally shared by all school board members due to the level of education of some parent school board members.

4.4.2.2 Learners' involvement in decision-making

It emerged from most participants' responses that learner school board members were not equally involved in school boards' decision-making processes, except in those that concerned them. According to SBS3, learner school board members at their school were not involved in school board discussions at all and were also not invited to school board meetings. He further indicated that there were learner school board members at their school, but they are not involved in school board discussions.

This point was reinforced by SP4, who maintained that learner school board members were not attending school board meetings. He explained that:

Learner school board members are elected, but they are not invited for interviews and when there are problems to be solved concerning staff members. We only called them once there were cases concerning other learners.

There was an emphasis on school board chairpersons' views concerning learner school board members' involvements in decision-making. According to SBC2, learner school board members at their school were only invited to attend the school board's general meetings. On a similar note, SBC3 stated that learner school board members were participating freely and equally during school board discussions when they were invited, although SBS2 indicated that learner school board members at their school were not involved in school board discussions at all and were also not invited for school board meetings.

SBC2 alleged that learner school board members were not participating freely and equally like other school board members due to their cultural beliefs. He claimed that in Oshiwambo culture people believed that:

Traditionally, a child who speaks freely, confidently and fearlessly among the elders is not brought up well.

This point correlated with SBC1, who maintained that learner school board members were not free to give their inputs, and were not involved in some decisions due to the parent and teacher school board members' traditional backgrounds, cultural beliefs and values. SBC1 emphasised that:

We (school board) are not involving learner school board members in staff interviews and disciplinary hearings because we believe that culturally, it is not good to discipline elders in the presence of children. It will promote disrespect.

Furthermore, according to IoE2, some school board members believed that children were immature and that their hearts were not that strong to keep secrets like elders do. On a similar point, NSBET3 disclosed that school board members feared that learner school board members' involvement in teachers' disciplinary hearings might cause disrespect of teachers by the learners. Therefore, they (school board) only involved teacher and parent school board members in staff members' disciplinary hearings. SBS2 indicated that:

It depends on the nature and severity of cases. If the case is very serious, we do not include learners as it has negative connotations on teachers. We turned to undermine learners' rights of being school board members there to protect the image and rights of individuals (staff members) because learners cannot be trusted like parents.

Responding to a question on whether learner school board members were involved in policy development, SBC3 indicated that learner school board members were not involved; only parents and teachers were involved. He (SBC3) further clarified that:

Learner school board members were just informed together with other learners when drafted policies were already approved by other school board members and adopted by the community parents.

It emerged from participants' responses that learner school board members were not involved in the process of shortlisting and interviewing staff members to be recommended for appointment by the PS.

All participants were asked why learners were not involved in some of the school boards' discussions and decision-making processes. Some of the reasons, as indicated by SBS2, were as follows:

Interviews for staff members to be recruited used to be conducted in the morning while learners were attending lessons. So, it is not good for a learner to sit in for interviews while others are being taught.

Another reason was that most of the school board meetings and disciplinary hearings used to take place during the afternoon when learners were studying. SBS4 had this to say:

Learner school board members are just there by name in black and white, but in reality, they are not involved in any discussions and decision-making processes because school board meetings and interviews used to take place when they were attending lessons.

In addition, SBS2 indicated fear and a lack of experience as some of the contributing factors that caused learner school board members not to actively participate in school board discussions like teachers and parents. According to NSBET3, learner school board members were not aware of some matters that were being discussed at school board meetings; however, they were urged to contribute. SBS2 explained that:

When it comes to decision-making, learner school board members are automatically forced by the NEA to take part. So, they are asked by the chairperson of school board how they feel.

As a result, SBS3 explained that learner school board members are required to express their views, but they were only participating actively when topics under discussion were concerning them.

Most of the participants indicated that learner school board members were not involved in decision-making processes, such as school policy development, budgeting and the purchasing of teaching and learning materials. Furthermore, they were not invited to sit in on or attend staff members' disciplinary hearings, although they were attending other learners' hearings. However, at some schools, learner school board members were not permitted to attend other learners' disciplinary hearings. This opinion was raised by NSBET3, who stated that:

There are learner school board members at our school, but they are not invited to attend any of the school board meetings, discussions and hearings, neither for teachers nor for other learners because they might protect other learners.

It emerged from participants' answers that the MEAC's main aim was to bring in all stakeholders, including learners, in whatever decision were to be taken in schools to support quality education. According to IoE2, many schools were not inviting learner school board members to staff members' disciplinary hearings because some cases were very sensitive to the learners. Teacher and parent school board members feared that learners might fail to keep those sensitive issues confidential, even though they have taken an oath. IoE2 said:

Some cases are sensitive to the learners. For example, when a teacher impregnates a learner or a staff member went to school drunk.

According to participants' responses, the NEA entrusts school board members to create mutual trust and equal power-sharing among stakeholders and between the government and parent community. Few participants indicated that learners were actively participating during meetings when they were invited. They were not fully involved in all school board discussions as some cases turned out to be serious and sensitive due to their culture. Moreover, all participants indicated that if there were trust, respect, co-operation and power-sharing, there would be a good working relationship among school board members despite their differences.

4.4.3 Effective communication and a good relationship

It emerged from participants' responses that there were effective communication and a good relationship among school board members. This was confirmed by most of the participants. Responding to a question on whether there was effective communication among school board members, SBC2 said:

Whenever there was an urgent issue in schools that would require school board members to meet, school principals consulted school board chairpersons first, then they would agree on the meeting date, time and venue.

SBC2 further added that from there, school board chairpersons informed the school board secretaries to send invitation letters to all board members on time. Both IoEs confirmed that school board discussions at all schools were held in their vernacular (Oshiwambo). IoE1 clarified that all school board discussions were conducted in Oshiwambo to make it easy for all school board members to participate freely and actively.

According to school board chairpersons' responses, there was effective communication among school board members and it supported the provision of quality education at their schools. SBC3 specified that effective communication did not only occur among the school board members, but among all stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, learners and the whole community. SBC3 indicated that the good relationship that existed among all stakeholders at their school, contributed positively to their learners' performance.

Similarly, SBC2 indicated that there were no disagreements, conflicts, discriminations and complaints among school board members. They had a good relationship.

It emerged from participants' responses that effective communication and a good relationship were the most important things needed among school board members. SP2 asserted that for the school board members to perform their functions effectively, they need proper communication between the school principal, the SMT and the school board chairperson. He stated that:

When the SMT recommend things to be approved by the school board, such as renovation and maintenance, through proper channels of communication and good relationship, the school board approved it.

In an effort to answer a question on whether there were effective communication and a good relationship among school board members, SBS4 gave the following example:

During our grade 10 final examination, the learners used to camp at school to avoid walking long distance to and from schools. During camping, parent school board members together with other community parents used to cook for them and supervised them during evening study. Parents divided themselves into groups and a school board member acted as a group supervisor in each group. Some parents used to sleep at school to take care of the learners at night. They even provided food and cooking utensils that could be used by the schools.

In the same vein, SP1 indicated that their school board members' good communication and relationship assisted their school to control the absentees and late-coming among learners.

In addition, SBC1 explained that:

We (school board members) organised meetings with learners and talked to them, and discussed with their parents to wake learners early. We also met with teachers and encouraged them to come to school early so that learners could take a good example from them.

This point was supported by NSBET3 and SP1. SP1 indicated that:

Our parent school board members divided themselves into groups whereby they went into villages to the houses identified where there were children who used to be absent or who went to school late and discussed it with parents.

According to SP3, when parent school board members heard certain information concerning their schools, they always informed their school principals. He said:

Parent school board members are always in touch with the school principal's office and with teachers in the absence of the principal. We have a positive relationship at our school, which has a very positive impact on our school performance. Even our grade 10 result last year – our learners performed very well in the region.

In addition, NSBET1 indicated that according to her observation, when school board members came to their meetings, there was good communication among them. She added that when school board members addressed other parents and teachers during the parent and teacher meetings, they spoke peacefully.

According to SBC4, there were effective communication and relationships among the school board, and for that reason, some of the former members were re-elected. This correlated with the opinions of SBC1, who agreed that:

There was a good communication among us (school board members), even though nobody is perfect. Although we were criticised by the community for working hard on voluntarily basis, we did not give up.

Responding to a question on whether there was effective communication among school board members, loE1 had this to say:

There are some specific schools in our circuit that identified certain projects to carry out. Then they (school board members) delegated tasks among themselves, and all those tasks were done accordingly.

According to loE1, this indicated that there was good communication among school board members as well as the entire community. He (loE1) further gave an example:

When some schools were planning to build extra classes, some school board members were tasked to get quotations. Others were tasked to look for transport and all delegated tasks usually used to be done according to what and how they agreed.

A similar point was reinforced by most of the participants, who revealed that there was effective communication among school board members. SP1 gave an example:

Previously, there had been a low attendance of our community parents to their meetings because we (SMT) were the ones who used to invite them. Then we (school board) revised it, now our school board chairperson is the one who goes on radio to invite other parents. This helped us and now parents are attending their meetings in large numbers. In most cases, the school board chairperson and other parent school board members were the ones who used to address other parents. We (SMT) present only few topics

during parent and teacher meetings.

4.4.3.1 School board meetings

It emerged from participants' responses that all selected schools were holding two or more meetings per term, although the NEA prescribes school boards to meet once per term. This was caused by different situations in which schools found themselves, such as staff members' recruitment, school projects, disciplinary hearings, and so forth. SBC3 said:

According to our NEA, school board members are supposed to have a minimum of one meeting per term; however, many schools went beyond that policy as the need arose.

Furthermore, participants' responses revealed that at some schools, school board members were meeting twice per term – at the start and end of each term. SP1 indicated that:

Our school board always meets at the beginning of every trimester. There we meet to review and analyse the previous results on how learners have performed and for parent school board members' demands to be given the school statistics.

Another school's board meetings used to be held at the end of each term for them to set up a road map on the examination and to discuss the financial reports. SBS2 explained:

From that meeting, parent school board members usually talk to teachers and learners before they start with the examination. They also come to discuss the financial report at the end of each term and to wish one another a better holiday.

In a similar point, participants' responses revealed that school board members also met occasionally to discuss the vacant posts at school and events, like the school award ceremony. This point was raised by SBS2, who further explained:

There are years where there are too many teachers taking leave, sick leave and maternity leave. So, school board members are required to come for the interviews.

The general understanding here was that school board members met regularly when school needs arose. Moreover, according to SBS2, due to staff members' leave of absence, all vacant posts

required school board members to go to school and to discuss the advertisement of vacant posts and the interviewing of candidates.

4.4.3.2 School board invitations to their meetings

Most of the participants' responses revealed that school board members' invitations to their meetings were sent through different modes of communication. In an effort to respond to a question on how school board members were invited to their meetings, IoE2 explained that writing letters and sending it to the school board members via their children was the common method of communication that was used by school board secretaries. Aside from letters, participants' responses revealed that there were also other methods, such as using cell phones to send messages or to call the school board members. According to SP4, some school principals announced their school board meetings at morning devotions so that learners could tell the parent school board members. IoE2 said:

Many schools used to announce on the radio and in churches, while others used their councillors to announce school board meetings during their morning programme on the radio.

According to SBCs' views, all selected schools were using their school board secretaries to invite other members to their meetings. Fewer participants in this study indicated that school board members were invited by their school principals and HODs to attend their meetings. SBS3 indicated that:

For normal school board meetings, we (school board secretaries) used to write letters, while for urgent meetings, we used to call parent school board members telephonically or announce in churches and on the radio.

According to SP4, school board chairpersons, secretaries and principals kept all parent school board members' cell phone numbers to call them for emergency meetings and cases. SBS1 indicated that if some parent school board members' telephones are not going through, they (school board secretary and school principal) send school board members' children or neighbouring children, who are schooling at their school to inform them.

On a similar point, SBS3 maintained that:

All parent school board members have kids in schools they are representing. Sometimes we sent neighbouring children or just drove to their houses, because we could not

convene a meeting without the parent majority.

According to SBC2, at normal board meetings, school board secretaries invited the school board members with letters and sent the meeting agendas. This was done so that school board members could be aware of and prepare themselves for what they would be coming to discuss during their meeting. In contrast, the SBC3 disagreed by saying, first school board secretaries just sent the invitations to all school board members. Agendas used to be drawn up during meetings by all board members.

So, the general understanding here is that most schools were using the same methods to invite school board members to their meetings, although one school was sending meetings' agendas, while the other three were not sending meetings' agendas.

4.4.3.3 School boards' attendance to their meetings

It arose from participants' responses that the school board members' attendance to their meetings was good, but not excellent. Most participants' responses indicated that teacher school board members were attending their meetings. Similarly, most parent school board members attended their meetings, although it was rare to find all of them present. SP4 indicated that all teacher school board members attended these meetings very well. On some occasions, only parents did not meet the quorum, but in most cases, they used to meet it.

Furthermore, SBC1 maintained that school board members were attending their board meetings regularly. She said:

All school board members came peacefully and attended their meetings very well. We all played the role there by asking questions and contributed actively during discussions.

In addition, SBS2 indicated that although school board members' attendance had been quite well, sometimes parent school board members found themselves not being able to attend due to reasons that were beyond their control. Some of those reasons included members who had a job far from home, cultivation time, looking after animals, and sickness or death in the family. This point was supported by most of the participants in this study. SBS3 clarified that when parent school board members had to cultivate their fields, and had to look after their animals, their attendance used to be low.

SBS4 explained that:

Sometimes parent school board members used to give excuses that, 'I am not going to attend the meeting because there is no one to look after my animals and my children are at school.'

This point was confirmed by SBC3, who complained that sometimes parent school board members had to pay neighbours to look after their animals while they were going to school board meetings. He said:

Sometimes I must pay someone to look after my cattle and goats while I am going to attend school board meetings or interviews for the whole day at school. But now, sometimes the principal brings letters and cheques to be signed at home.

Responding to a question on the school boards' attendance to their meetings, loE2 had this to say:

It depends on how motivated school board members are and on the society. We have so many things happening, sickness, funerals, drought for people and animals. In most cases, parent school board members are not attending due to some of those reasons.

It emerged from participants' responses that learner school board members were not invited to attend school board meetings, which hindered the school board members' attendance to their meetings. SBS2 asserted that:

Usually, we don't invite learner school board members to our meetings, because sometimes they are attending classes or in study and we don't want to disturb their lessons.

All participants' responses revealed that school board members used to register apologies to school board chairpersons, school principals or to school board secretaries for not being able attend their meetings. SBC3 said all school board members used to come and those who were not going to attend, used to inform the school board chairperson and give reason too.

4.4.4 School board competencies to perform their functions

Participants' responses revealed that some school board members were not trained whereas some were trained, but received insufficient training. This was confirmed by all the participants. They

indicated that school board members were trained at the school, cluster and circuit levels. SBC2 said:

All school board members at our school were trained. The training did not discriminate; although there was some training where only the chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers and school principals were invited.

According to SBS3, the duration of school board training was very brief, and the language used during the training was English, despite the fact that some parent school board members could not speak English. He said:

I am fully supporting the idea of school board training, but the problem is that it took only two days. In my view, this training was supposed to be at least a week so that we can really get what we are supposed to get. Besides that, this training was done in English and most of the parent school board members cannot even understand any single words in English.

Although there were translators, SBS3 further complained that trainers were supposed to train parent school board members in their vernacular because translation is not always effective.

Responding to the question on whether school board members at their school were trained, SBC3 confirmed that all their school board members were trained. He further revealed that all documents and materials used during school board training were written in English, which could not be read by some parent school board members. According to SBS1, the school board training was done for a few days in the afternoon after classes. She argued that the school board training was done after classes; which was not conducive and beneficial to teachers and learners as they were tired after schoolwork.

In an effort to respond to the question on their views toward the school board training, SBS2 had this to say:

The school board training really brought some results. Now school board members really understand where to start and where to end. There they were empowered and now they know their roles, responsibilities and their rights. So, it is always good when somebody knows what to do and what not to do.

A similar point was supported by all school board chairpersons. SBC1 indicated that the school board training was helpful and changed them (school board members) from level one to level two. On a different note, SBC3 added that the training was all about motivating parent school board members to perform their duties for their children's benefit.

Participants' responses revealed that school board training was helpful. According to SP1, school board members who were trained, especially parents, used to participate effectively in their discussions because they were directed on how to do it. This point was supported by IoE2, who stressed that school board members who were trained knew what to do, how to do it, and what they were expected to do.

In an effort to respond to a question on their views towards the school board training, SP3 said:

The training made everything easy for all school board members to participate in the discussions, and decision-making processes, to share their ideas, and to bring forth their suggestions.

Responding to a similar question, NSBET4 said:

This training was good as it assisted parent school board members to take part in the Namibian child's education. At our school, the previous school board members were trained and performed their duties effectively.

Participants' responses exposed that aside from the school board training which was done at schools, clusters and circuits, one school received the training at the regional level under the Social Accountability and School Governance Project. This project was led by an organisation called *Rossing Foundation*, which trained a few selected schools in the Ohangwena Region.

According to SP1, the training lasted for the whole week, and all their teacher, parent and learner school board members were trained and received the full basic training on what their functions and limitations were. He explained that:

Our school was fortunate to be included in what we refer to as the "Social Accountability and School Governance Project" in the region, where only few schools were chosen to become part of this project by the region and all school board members at our school were trained through this project.

SP1 further mentioned that after school board training had been conducted, they observed tremendous changes within school board members. IoE1 said that after school board training, parent school board members were visiting schools without being invited:

After training parent school board were now visiting schools on a voluntarily basis, going into classrooms to see how the teaching and learning process was taking place, although they could not speak English.

This point was supported by SP1, who clarified that:

In one meeting, I asked parent school board members that I used to see, 'you're coming to our lessons, but you don't speak English. What exactly are you learning there?', and they indicated that, 'when teachers are teaching and learners are responding, we can see if learners are following or not. So, we (parent school board members) do not necessarily need to hear the language that is being used in your presentation'.

SP1 further indicated that:

Where the SMT and school principal went wrong, for instance, the SMT wanted to spend the SDF on unnecessary things that were not in the interest of learners. They can tell them (SMT) right away, 'you are following the wrong procedures', because they are empowered through their training.

Furthermore, school principals' responses exposed some issues concerning the school board training. They complained that school board training was being done once per three-year term. According to SP1, this was unfair to the learner school board members, since they only serve for a period of one year. He said:

Learners who were elected to serve on school boards for the first year, were the only ones who received the training, either at the circuit or cluster level or through the Social Accountability and School Governance Project. Other two groups that would be elected for the second and final years, were not being trained. So, it was now us (schools) who had to organise a one-day workshop to train those learners.

Responding to a question on their views toward the school board training, IoEs felt that school board training was an eye-opener for all the newly elected members. According to IoE1:

School board training enlightened school board members on their functions, what is expected from them, what it means to be a school board member, and the advantages and disadvantages of performing this function. It assisted parent school board members coming from the community with little information and knowledge to be able to perform their activities effectively.

In addition, all participants' responses revealed that school board training was important, since it trained school board members to be accountable and to be able to judge when principals or teachers were telling them to do wrong things.

According to IoE1:

The school board training made parent school board members aware of the importance of education. It also enabled them to control the way their SDF is used in schools, where it should be used and where it should not be used.

Both IoEs were asked whether all school board members in their circuits were trained; however, they differed regarding school board training. IoE2 felt that school board members were trained whereas IoE1 indicated that they were not trained. IoE2 said:

Workshops were conducted at circuit level, funded by the region. All school board members were trained on their functions and on what is expected of them. Even now, as I am speaking, there are workshops going on, and this time, they are being trained at cluster level.

In contrast, IoE1 had this to say:

I can say no, school board member in our circuit were not trained because only a few of them received the training; the majority were not trained. Only three members were trained per school in our circuit, including school board chairpersons. I think they were trained in such a way that they will go back to train others.

Furthermore, participants' responses revealed that the school board members who were trained received training on their functions, what is expected of them, who qualified to be elected as a school board member, and where, when and how to conduct the school board elections.

According to SBC3, school board members were trained on how to communicate with other board members and stakeholders. SBC2 indicated that the school board training touched on many issues, like how to conduct interviews and keep discussions confidential. He (SBC2) added that:

We received training on learners' admission and promotion requirements, learner discipline, and how to expel learners. In addition, we were also trained how to control the school funds and to generate money to substitute our SDF.

So, the overall idea was that school board members were trained, but not all of them. Those who were trained did not receive sufficient training. Furthermore, some of the school board members were not trained at all, including learners who were elected to serve as school board members in the second and final years of their school board term.

4.5 THEME 3: CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

All participants in this study agreed that school board members were faced with numerous challenges when performing their functions to support quality education. SBC2 stressed that school board members' challenges were divided into two categories: personal and social challenges. He explained personal challenges as difficulties that faced school board members from their homes, work and family, for example, house chores, sickness, poverty, death in the family, job, financial problems, and so forth. According to SBC2, social challenges were other difficulties from either the school or community, for example, parent school board members who were being criticised, rejected, isolated and insulted by other community parents. Challenges that emerged from participants' responses will be presented next.

4.5.1 Remuneration as a token of appreciation and motivation

One of the main challenges that school board members was facing, was a lack of remuneration as a token of appreciation and motivation. Most of the school principals' responses indicated that parent school board members were not motivated to take their functions seriously as they felt they were not being paid for it. Similarly, all school board chairpersons' general understanding was that school board members were not executing their functions fully as prescribed by the NEA because they were not being compensated. According to SBC3, parent school board members merely performed this

function for the benefit of their own children. A similar opinion was shared by SP1, who indicated that:

I feel pity as a human being for the parent school board members. They do not get any form of compensation from either the school or government for doing this great job in schools. They used to come here (school) for the whole day on a voluntarily basis and they were not receiving anything as a token of appreciation.

On a similar note, SBC3 explained that some parent school board members were withdrawing from this function because they were not benefitting from it. He argued that:

In some situations, parent school board members were withdrawing. When we asked why they were withdrawing, they answered that they were just leaving their house-chores and were not being paid for what they were coming to do at schools.

The NSBET3 and SBC1 also indicated that the lack of remuneration was discouraging parent school board members to perform their functions actively. NSBET3 indicated that parent school board members were discouraged to work with teachers who used to get their monthly salaries, while they were volunteering.

In an effort to respond to the question on whether parent school board members were performing their functions effectively, SBC1 stated that parent school board members were not serious because they are not motivated. If they could be paid like teachers, they would be serious with their work.

NSBET4 was not happy with the issue of parent school board members being volunteers. She said:

This volunteering is not good. There was an old man who was a school board member at our school. During the school board training, he used to go to the circuit by foot every day and came back late in the evening. This is not good. It is only that we do not have power, but the Ministry of Education needs to compensate these parents.

In contrast, SP4 had different views on the issue of parent school board members' remuneration/compensation. He felt that:

I am happy because they know it is their nation, their children and their school. They must solve their own school problems without compensation. They understand it (deep

breath). It is not a problem to me. Once you pay them, they would want their term to be extended (laughing) and they will fight in the selection meeting. They will say, 'no, why I am not elected if I am wiser than that one?' Volunteering is good, and just to give them a cooldrink – they will go home.

Most participants felt that parent school board members need to be compensated and even need to be given a sitting allowance and refreshments after meetings.

4.5.2 Proper training for school board members

Another challenge that emerged from school board secretaries' responses was regarding the absence of proper training. They indicated that some school board members did not perform their functions effectively because they were not trained and did not understand their powers and functions. All participants supported this point. SP2 stressed that if school board members were not trained, they won't know where to start and where to end.

According to SBS1, the training given to school board members was insufficient due to the brief period of training time. She complained that parent school board members did not acquire everything presented in three days. The training was supposed to take at least a month.

In addition, SBC3 further indicated that the school board training was done in English and most parent school board members do not understand English. This point was supported by IoE1, who disagreed that school board members were trained, since not all of them received the training. He (IoE1) said:

I could not say school board members in my circuit were trained as the training was not given to each and every school board member. Only three school board members per school, including chairpersons. They were trained in such a way that they will train other members at their respective schools, which is not easy.

4.5.3 School board members' serving terms

Some participants complained about school board members' serving term. The school board members' serving terms were very short, especially three years for teachers and parents. This point was raised by SBS1. However, all participants indicated that one year for the learner school board members was fine. SBS1 argued that:

Three years for teacher and parent school board members are very few. It is not enough. The term is too short. I am suggesting that parent and teacher school board members have a five-year term, but one year for the learners is enough.

In contrast, most of the participants were opposed to the concern of school board serving terms being extended. SP2 felt that:

I don't have a problem with school board members' term in the office. If you say, 'let it be 2–3 years for learners', what if that learner was in the final grade when elected? I think 1 year is okay for learners, and 3 years for other members.

Both IoEs disagreed with the extension of school board members' serving term. IoE1 said:

I don't have any objection against the three-year term, because sometimes if you think of how many years a learner is supposed to be at a combined school, it's only three (grades 8–10). So, three years for their parents are enough to avoid the school to become stagnant. If you keep them longer and they are not performing well, the school will go down.

Responding to a question on how he felt about the learner school board members' serving term, IoE1 clearly explained that:

One year for the learners is fine to avoid having an election every year. I don't have any objection for their one-year serving term to keep schools running and to avoid them from going down. It is even a good experience for other learners' and even parents' needs to have that routine, to share this function, and avoid schools to be stagnant or what you call static. We need schools to be dynamic.

4.5.4 Criticism of school board members

Another challenge raised by all school board chairpersons, namely criticism, was facing school board members when performing their functions. According to SBC1, parents school board members were being criticised and laughed at for having little understanding of their functions. NSBET3 confirmed that other parents and learners insulted and laughed at parent school board members for not understanding things and not being paid to perform this function. NSBET4 indicated that:

School board challenges that I observed are always from the community. Parent school board members are being insulted and criticised by other community parents that they are always coming to school and are not being paid. There are some teachers who also did the same, but our parent school board members used to ignore them and performed their duties.

This similar opinion was also raised by SBS2, who mentioned that:

We cannot ignore the scotch of criticism. Whenever one is doing a certain duty, he/she will always bear the challenges of being criticised for being too much on something.

Responding to the question on challenges facing school board members when performing their functions, SBC1 maintained that:

Undisciplined learners insulted parent school board members when they were chasing them to run to school in the morning when they were late. They (undisciplined learners) asked why parent school board members were chasing them to go to school if they were not being paid for that job.

A similar argument was supported by many participants. NSBET3 confirmed that parent school board members were criticised and insulted by other stakeholders. She said:

Sometimes learners were very rude to parent school board members. When learners were chased to run to school, they asked why parent school board members were chasing them to school to be educated, and why they became teachers and nurses if they (parents) were not educated.

When asked why community parents were insulting and criticising parent school board members, SP4 explained that:

I think criticism is caused by a lack of understanding among our community parents or maybe by jealousy. One parent perhaps wanted to be elected as a school board member, but was not elected. That's why they are criticising others.

On a similar point, NSBET4 highlighted that criticism was discouraging parents to serve as school board members. She said:

One parent refused to be elected as a school board member because she was afraid of being criticised by the community. But we explained to her that the main purpose of a school board is just to support the education of their children and to develop their community.

4.5.5 Fear, isolation and rejection of school board members

It emerged from non-school board experienced teachers' responses that school board members were faced with other challenges, like fear, isolation and rejection by other stakeholders. NSBET2 confirmed that school board members were being isolated and rejected by other stakeholders who they were representing.

In addition, SBS3 disclosed that teacher school board members were isolated and rejected by other teachers, while parent school board members were rejected by other parents, and learners were rejected by other learners. SP2 supported this notion by explaining that:

When parents, teachers and learners are elected as school board, in the long run, other stakeholders who elected them in that particular board will look at them (school board members) as if they are no longer part of them. Other stakeholders will end up labelling them that they are school board members and cannot discuss anything when school board members are around them.

According to SP3, school board members were isolated and rejected by other stakeholders because they were part of committees that used to come up with school rules and policies, among others. SP3 gave an example of a current issue at their school: the school board was trying to remove bars/liquor stores near the school, but parent school board members were not supporting the idea due to the fear of being isolated and rejected by the community. He (SP3) said:

Community parents feel parent school board members are one-sided with teachers. For example, when we were dealing with issues relating to the community, like those bars. The school board members feared to make decision as they are part of them. Some bars are owned by their relatives and they don't want to be exposed as the cause of the removal of bar.

In an effort to respond to a question on why school board members were being rejected by other stakeholders, SBS3 indicated that parent school board members were being rejected because they used to be part of committees that used to sit in at both the staff's and learners' disciplinary hearings. He (SBS3) said:

Some teachers fear to express themselves during the school board meetings and disciplinary hearings. Even if they have valuable contributions, sometimes they keep quiet because of the fear of being rejected.

School board members were also feared, isolated and rejected because they were the ones who used to do class visits. According to SBC4, if school board members find out that some teachers are not doing their school work properly and bring them in for discipline, it will cause rejection. Moreover, if school board members sit in on the disciplinary hearings for both learners and staff members whenever they commit serious offences, it will lead to isolation and rejection. SBC4 said:

Challenges will always be there, especially when one is elected by the community to serve in a committee where you must come up with decisions. Even with teachers – as we will be walking around to see how they are teaching, if I find one not teaching, maybe he is always sitting in the class, I will bring it for discussion and then it will cause problems between us. Even if we happen to discipline children, when they go home and tell their parents, it will cause problems too. Not all the people will be happy with us and our functions.

The abovementioned were some of the reasons why school board members were feared, rejected and isolated by other stakeholders. These reasons are also challenges as school board members feared participating in decision-making processes concerning their schools.

4.5.6 Parent school board members' educational level

The educational level of some parent school board members was another main challenge that participants highlighted. According to SBS3, parent school board members who did not go to school or who were not educated found it boring and difficult to perform some of their functions, even if they were trained. This situation forced some parent school board members to withdraw from participating in school activities and contributing during school board meetings. This point was supported SBC1, who mentioned that:

Many of the parent school board members are not educated and rely on teachers who are educated and know much more than them. For example, during interviews, things used to be done in English and some parents don't understand English. Only teachers used to explain to them.

According to IoE2, the educational level of some parent school board members was one of the biggest challenges, although the situation was changing for the better. He (IoE2) indicated that:

Some parent school board members do not understand English and it is difficult for them to interpret the policies. That's why some principals are taking the advantage of these parents: to either misuse the SDF or to suspend learners unlawfully.

4.5.7 Distance

It emerged from the school board chairpersons' responses that distance was also a challenge. According to SBC3, parent school board members were walking long distances from their houses to schools whenever they were called to attend school meetings and activities. SBC2 complained that:

We (parent school board members) used to go to schools by foot if we are staying nearby the school. Parents who are far from schools used to hike without being refunded.

This point was supported by both IoEs. IoE2 said:

One of the school board members' stumbling blocks in performing their functions, is distance. Parents are travelling long distances with their own money when going to attend school board meetings, and this prevent them from performing their duties as effectively as expected.

In addition, IoE1 maintained that:

Whenever parent school board members were called to schools, they used their own resources and this is the reason why the quorum from parent school board members' side used to be a bit low. If a parent does not have money for a taxi, then there is no way that person can reach the school.

4.5.8 Old age

Old age was also one of the challenges that arose from participants' responses. SP3 revealed that young community parents were not willing to be elected as school board members. They gave excuses, for example, that they might get job far from the school. According to IoE2, young community parents were the ones who had kids in schools and had brilliant ideas that were at the standard of the world of technology. NSBET2 stressed that young community parents refused to be elected as members of the school board because there was no benefit (remuneration or even sitting allowance).

In an effort to respond to a question on challenges facing school board members in supporting quality education, IoE1 affirmed that schools were forced to elect the old age parents, who were always sick and unenergetic, since young community parents were not willing to be elected. According to SP3, this was also another challenge on executing the functions, since age wise they were not able to travel to and from school twice a week. He (SP3) said:

Parent school board members are doing this task on a voluntarily basis, there is nothing to motivate them, and this is the reason why young parents are not willing to be elected as school board members, because there is no benefit.

In addition, IoE2 felt that due to some old age parent school board members' experiences, knowledge and skills, they were also in the right position to be elected and to serve in school board committees.

4.5.9 Personal challenges

Their jobs and other commitments were other challenges facing the school board members. According to SBC2, if school board members happened to be employed far from their houses and schools, it would be difficult for them to attend all school activities every time. He also indicated that they (school board members) will not have the time to visit schools as expected and attend all school board meetings. SP1 said:

Some of our parent school board members have other work that they do in the community, like pastors. They are not employees of the Ministry of Education. There are times when we invite them to the meetings, but they have other commitments.

Other challenges that were faced by school board members, according to SBC2, were sickness and death in the family. When parent school board members had to take care of an ill family member or

when one of their family members had passed away, their quorum in meetings and interviews declined, which was also a challenge. SBC2 explained that:

Some of school board challenges can be avoided. Some cannot be avoided because they are natural and we cannot overcome them, like when a person gets a new job far away, sickness and death in the family. So, we just need to accept them.

4.5.10 School board members' attendance to their meetings

It emerged from the participants' responses that school board members' attendance to their meetings was also a challenge. According to SBC3, some parent school board members were not attending their school board meetings regularly because there was no remuneration or sitting allowance. NSBET2 emphasised that there were no refreshments at some schools, and even in the school budgets no provision was made for refreshments for the school board. SBC3 had this to say:

Some parent school board members are not coming on time; they are always late. They normally complain about school board refreshment, which used to be budgeted for, but they don't get it. This forced some members not to attend meetings.

On a similar point, SBS2 blamed the SMT for not providing parent school board members with refreshments during interviews and school board meetings. He (SBS2) said:

Sometimes the school management used to be reluctant enough to give poor parent school board members the refreshment after interviews or meetings, although it is not stipulated in the NEA that they must be given food or drinks.

The participants felt that parent school board members were not motivated to take their function seriously because they were not being compensated.

4.5.11 School management teams' (SMTs) support

It emerged from participants' answers that SMTs' support was also a challenge. This point was raised by SBS2, who indicated that the SMT was sometimes reluctant when it came to refreshments for parent school board members. According to IoE2, the SMT could prevent school board members from performing their functions effectively if they are not giving them full support. IoE2 argued that:

You will find the school principal as a SMT member calling a parent school board member, for example a signatory, to come and sign a cheque without explaining what that cheque will be used for. A parent might refuse to sign if educated or might just sign due to fear.

4.5.12 School board election

Another challenge that was revealed by participants' responses, was created by the way school board elections were conducted. According to loE2, some community parents were not willing to be elected, although they had children receiving schooling at those specific schools. He further explained that this happened because parents were not well-informed on the importance of parent participations in their children's education.

On the other hand, loE2 indicated that sometimes the way some school principals regarded parent school board members, discouraged other community parents to be elected in school boards. Some school principals regarded parent school board members as uneducated and they (parents) began to downgrade themselves. This was supported by SP3, who explained that:

Some parents feel why should they be elected to be school board member if they will just be there as a passenger, as people know that they were not educated. They feel they will not be respected by teachers.

4.5.13 Education Act

It emerged from the participants' responses that some of their challenges were caused by the Education Act itself. According to SP2, the Education Act is not categorically clear in regard to power demarcation between school principals and the school board committee, and between school principals and school board chairpersons. Furthermore, SBS1 indicated that the NEA does not provide the job description for the school board members to know what to do and what not to do. This point was supported by loE2, who said:

I think the power is not clear there on who has more power if it is the principal or the school board? You will find the school principal is saying 'this is my school' and school board members are saying 'we are the school board'.

A similar point was raised by SP2, who gave a scenario of one school in their circuit where there was a sort of infighting between the principal and school board chairperson: He said:

I think there was no clear demarcation of power. So, each of them felt they had more power than the other and they could not even listen to one another. So, the problem started.

Therefore, power demarcation needs to be cleared in this issue.

4.5.14 Learner school board members' fears and threats

Although learner school board members were regarded as children, it arose from participants' responses that learners were faced with many challenges. According to IoE2, some of these challenges were fear and threats from other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents and other learners. According to SBC1, if learner school board members happen to see that a certain teacher is not attending his/her lessons and report him/her to the school principal, that teacher might intimidate them and they will be scared. Even parents in the community might threaten them if they report their children to the school principal. IoE2 said:

Teachers might frighten learners if they report them that they are not attending their classes, while parents might say those LRCs are just reporting our children there. Even from their school principals, when they want to interfere in the school issues like learners' disciplinary cases.

According to SBC1, learners were not included in the school board discussions and decision-making process at their school. SBC1 indicated that it might cause disrespect for teachers by learners. She said:

We think the candidates to be interviewed might be their brothers or sisters and people are not the same ("*omitima ha dimwe*"). In case of staff disciplinary hearings, we don't include learners because this will cause disrespect ("*odino*"). Learners will no longer respect that teacher, and in our culture, it is not allowed to discipline an elder in front of kids.

Another challenge of learner school board members, which was raised by IoE1, had to do with SDFs. He said:

If LRC needs money to organise their social evening or Valentine's day, and they are not given (money) or they want to go on tour, but they are not supported, it might cause

problems.

On a different note, SP2 claimed that:

It might be a challenge when learners are elected as a school board member because it demands more time. They should attend training and meetings, which normally used to take place during lessons. So, they are forced to leave their lessons for some days, and in the process, they might be left out and fail.

In contrast, a few participants' responses indicated that school board members were not faced with any challenges. According to SBS1, school board members at their school were not experiencing any problem. She said:

They used to attend school board meetings, visiting teachers and learners in their classroom and they were not complaining. They even used to call themselves 'volunteers'.

On a similar note, SP4 shared the same sentiment that was expressed by SBS1. He said:

When it comes to the learners, there is no problem. At school, there is no disagreement between school board members and teachers. Our school is lucky to be in rural areas as problems occur in urban areas, where educated people are.

In conclusion, all school board members were faced with challenges when performing their functions to support quality education in their respective schools.

4.6 THEME 4: WAYS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Participants' responses revealed several challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education. They also suggested possible ways on how to overcome these challenges. Therefore, possible ways on how to address school board challenges will be presented below.

4.6.1 Remuneration as a token of appreciation and motivation

It emerged from most participants' responses that parent school board members should be given a sitting allowance like private companies' board members are receiving. According to NSBET3, the motive behind this suggestion is to appreciate what parent school board members are doing and to motivate them to take their functions very seriously. This point was supported by SP2, who alleged that:

If I had power or could give my suggestion, I could say parent school board members must be given a certain amount of money as taxi money at the end of each term or whenever they are called to serve.

On a similar note, SBS3 maintained that:

Although this is beyond our control, in future the Ministry of Education must do something; parent school board members are coming to school and working with teachers who are being paid, while they are not. Sometimes, they used to come for the whole day and they only got refreshment or transport money if they were from far. They may not come with happy hearts.

According to IoE2, the NEA was being reviewed and parent school board members were part of discussions, and they might be given sitting allowances in future. He said:

Now that the NEA is being reviewed, I hope school board sitting allowance will be included; but even if it is not included when schools are budgeting, at least school board members must be given something to eat and drink, but it must be budgeted for.

4.6.2 Proper training for school board members

Participants suggested that all school board members be trained soon after their election and before they commence their duties. According to SBCs' responses, they advised that the duration of school board training be a bit longer and be an ongoing programme. All school principals' responses proposed at least for school board members to be trained termly or even yearly. SP1 was concerned for some learner school board members who did not receive training. He complained and suggested that:

I think school board training must be an ongoing process, because learner school board

members only serve for one year. Learner school board members who used to receive this training are only those who were elected in the same year with teachers and parents. Other two groups that used to be elected for the second and final years, do not receive any training, either at circuit or cluster level. It is now schools that used to arrange a one-day workshop for them.

Furthermore, all school principals suggested that the school board members always be trained soon after their election, and be given a clear picture and understanding on how to perform their functions. SP2 proposed that the school board training be an ongoing process and perhaps to be done termly or even yearly. According to SBS3, if school board members are trained only for a period of three years, after two years they might forget. SP1 stated that:

In my view, the school board training is a crucial part as we all know that the training is the way of giving knowledge and skills. Remember that not all parent school board members understand the NEA, so they need to be trained. Otherwise, if they are just elected and you tell them go and start, it will be a problem in the process, because they may not know where to start and where to end.

All participants recommended that school board members be trained in their vernacular to be able to acquire all information.

4.6.3 School board members' serving term

All participants indicated that a one-year serving term for learner school board members is fine; however, some felt that three years for teachers and parents must be extended to five or six years. SBS1 stated that:

Three years are very few. It is not enough. I am suggesting that school board members serve for five years. Five years will be better, but one year for learners is enough.

Responding to the question on how he felt about school board members' serving terms, loE1 disagreed on the extension of school board members' terms, as suggested by other participants. He (loE1) said:

One year for learner school board members is fine to avoid election every year. Three years for their parents and teachers are also enough to avoid schools becoming stagnant. If you keep them longer and they are not performing well, schools will go down.

4.6.4 Criticism, isolation and rejection of school board members

It emerged from participants' responses that school board members were being criticised, isolated and rejected. To avoid school board members from being criticised, isolated and rejected by other stakeholders, most of the participants suggested that the community needs to be educated on the importance of school board members. In addition, school board members need to be trained and motivated to take their function seriously and to be able to overcome their challenges. SBC2 suggested that:

I think we just need to educate our people on the importance of the school board, especially our community parents during parent and teacher meetings. Some parents are not aware of the significance of parents' involvement in education or the importance of school board members at school.

NSBET4 mentioned how they explained the significance of parents' participation in school governance to a parent who refused to be elected as a school board member. She said:

One parent refused to be elected as a school board member, because she was afraid of being criticised by the community. But we explained to her that the main purpose of the school board is just to support the education of their children and to develop their community.

All participants felt community education might be the solution for school board members who are being criticised, isolated and rejected by other stakeholders.

4.6.5 Educational level of parent school board members

It emerged from participants' responses that some parent school board members were undereducated and could not speak and read English. Most participants suggested that school board members be trained in their vernacular. SBC3 suggested that all school board training materials be written in their vernacular, and that training be conducted in parents' vernacular. He said:

School board training is good, but I think they were supposed to be done in Oshiwambo for all members to understand. Even the materials used were supposed to be in Oshiwambo, the language that all parents can read and understand.

In addition, it arose from the IoEs' responses that parent school board members must be educated through continuous training to avoid that they forget their functions. They also indicated that parent school board members need to be educated to have a sense of belonging – that they are serving their own schools. IoE2 said:

Our parent school board members need to be educated so that even if they find a thief breaking in school through the window, they will know and will be able to report him. We, school principals and teachers, need to empower them to have that sense of belonging.

According to participants' responses, if parent school board members are trained adequately, they will be empowered to take their functions seriously.

4.6.6 Distance and school board members' attendance to their meetings

The participants' responses exposed that sometimes parent school board members were absent from their meetings because they could not afford to pay for transport to and from schools. All participants suggested that school principals and SMTs ensure that school boards' transport and refreshments are budgeted for when they are called for meetings and interviews. They further advised all school principals to make sure that school board members are provided with transport money to attend school activities. SP1 said:

What we are doing now as a school to help our parent school board members, although it is not stipulated by the NEA, but we have communicated it with the regional office. We give money to serve as taxi fees as a compensation to parent school board members who use transports to school.

4.6.7 Old age

It emerged from participants' responses that young community parents were not willing to be elected as school board members because there was no remuneration to motivate them. All participants proposed that the MoE introduces a school board members' sitting allowance as a token of appreciation and to motivate young parents to serve as the school board because they are energetic. IoE2 said:

If school boards' sitting allowance happen to be approved by the new NEA, I think it will attract and encourage young parents to be part of the school board, and I think these young parents also need to be motivated to join the school board.

According to IoE2, old age parent school board members were also needed to serve on school board committees due to their experience. He clarified that some old age parent school board members had previously been teachers, principals, lawyers, and that their experience would be valuable. SP3 further added:

Parent school board members are doing this task on voluntarily basis. There is nothing to motivate them. This is the reason why young parents were not willing to be elected, because there is no benefit.

4.6.8 Personal challenges

It arose from participants' responses that many of the personal challenges that were facing school board members were natural and could not be addressed. Some of these challenges included jobs, other commitments in the community, sickness and death in the family. According to SP1, other personal challenges were when one school board member happened to get job far from home; however, in this situation, the participants suggested that the school board member must be replaced, as stipulated in the NEA. SP2 explained clearly that the NEA makes it clear that if a school board member happens to be absent for three consecutive times or more without a valid reason, then that person must be replaced.

4.6.9 School management team's (SMT's) support

It emerged from participants' answers that the SMT's support was one of the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education. In order to address this challenge, most participants suggested that the SMT and the school board members ensure that they have a good relationship. IoE2 argued:

There must be a good relationship between the school principals with school board members and SMTs. There should be proper communication, where school principals should communicate well with parent school board members, which would extend to the community.

4.6.10 School board members' election

Some participants' responses exposed that one of school board challenges was caused by the lack of a clear explanation during the school board election meeting. According to IoE1, some presiding officers had failed to explain the functions, advantages and disadvantages of being a school board member to the parents before they were elected. Some participants therefore suggested that

presiding officers always explain the importance of school board members in support of quality education clearly to parents during the school board election meeting and before the election starts. The participants further proposed that the school principals change their bad attitudes and lack of respect toward the parent members of the school board and not to regard them as uneducated. IoE1 said:

It could be better for presiding officer to make it clear at first, to start with the learners' benefits if parents take part in the school board. The duties of school board members must be explained before the election starts to make sure that parents understand and to expose them to the avenue.

4.6.11 The Education Act

It emerged from participants' responses that the NEA itself was also a challenge to school board members in efforts to support the provision of quality education. To overcome this challenge, school principals' responses proposed that the NEA be translated to their vernacular so that all stakeholders can understand it. Furthermore, most of the participants suggested that the NEA be reviewed and that the power demarcation between school principals and school boards, specifically school board chairpersons, be clarified. SP2 said:

I think the Education Act needs to be clear on power-demarcation, on who is falling under who, whether it's a principal or school board.

4.6.12 Learner school board members' challenges

Participants' responses revealed that learner school board members were experiencing numerous challenges to support quality education. To address these challenges, participants' responses suggested that the NEA be clear on the job description of all school board members, including learners.

According to SBS1, learner school board members need to be trained and motivated to overcome their challenges. Moreover, others stakeholders, like teachers, parents and their peers also need to be educated and informed on the importance and functions of learner school board members to avoid them from being threatened. In an effort to respond to the question on whether learner school board members were also faced with challenges, IoE2 had this to say:

Learner school board members should be involved, well empowered and should be told,

'This is your job. Do not be scared.'

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the data gathered from 18 participants through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The data presented school board and non-school board members' perceptions on functions performed well by school board members and the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in rural schools in Namibia. Furthermore, it suggested ways on how to address the challenges experienced by school board members in efforts to support quality education. Research findings were presented as four main themes, which will be discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the research was to answer the following research question: *What are the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia?* In Chapter 4, findings drawn from participants' views and perceptions on themes set for this study were presented.

This chapter will outline the discussion on the data that were presented in the previous chapter. From the data presented in chapter 4, various issues demanded extra discussion and clarification. Therefore, the researcher developed four themes, which will be discussed in this chapter. Data will be discussed through different lenses of related literature (as discussed in chapter 2) in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural combined schools in Namibia.

5.2 DATA INTERPRETATION

Mouton (2014) refers to data interpretation as connecting the empirical study results and findings to current theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and presenting whether these are supported or fabricated by the new interpretation. Mouton further emphasises that data interpretation involves the mixture and combination of one's data into larger coherent wholes by relating the results to the existing theoretical or conceptual framework. According to Nieuwenhuis (2014c), the interpretation of data entails taking into account opposing descriptions and clarifications of one's data, and showing what points of support the data provide for a desired understanding. In addition, Mouton (2014) indicates that qualitative data interpretation requires creativity, discipline and a systematic approach.

The interpretation of findings in this study mostly rely on the South African context due to limited research in the Namibian context, since there are similarities between the Namibian and South African Education Acts, such as developing a mission, vision, goals and objectives for schools, and advising SMTs on extramural curricula and the DoE on educational needs and the curriculum of schools. Further similarities are to make recommendations to the PS on the appointment of teachers and other staff members in schools, and to determine and allow the reasonable use of school facilities for community purposes.

In addition, other similarities are to consider any case of misconduct by a learner of the school to make sure that such misconduct is properly investigated, and to make recommendations to the PS on the appropriate disciplinary measure to be taken regarding the serious misconduct of a learner. The interpretation of this study will therefore rely more on the South African context.

5.3 THEMATIC INTERPRETATION

The findings of this study revealed that school board members face challenges when performing their functions to support quality education, which is also confirmed in the literature that was presented in chapter 2. Findings of the empirical study revealed that the main causes of school board members' challenges seem to be situated in prescribed powers and functions of school board members as stipulated by the NEA.

It was clear from raw data that several issues demanded extra discussion and clarification: firstly, the issue of trust, respect and co-operation among school board members; secondly, the presence of effective communication and a good relationship among school board members; thirdly, the issue of power-sharing among the school board members and learners' involvement in school governance; and lastly, school board members' competencies and abilities to perform their functions in support of quality education. The discussion of these themes will be followed by the interpretation.

5.3.1 Trust, respect and co-operation among school board members

It was indicated earlier that some school board committees in many schools were ineffective (§ 2.7.1). One of the reasons was due to a lack of trust, respect and co-operation among school board members. Another reason was a lack of trust, respect and co-operation between school principals and school board chairpersons (§ 1.4). Furthermore, the literature review indicated that there is an absence of trust, respect and co-operation between school board members and SMT members. This was also stated by Kumalo (2009), who claims that a lack of trust, respect and co-operation among school board members is one of the challenges that prevented school board members to support quality education at their schools.

However, the findings from this research project revealed that in most schools there seem to be trust, respect and co-operation among school board members when performing their functions to support quality education. This was also confirmed by SBC1, who indicated that:

Yes, there is mutual trust among us. Our school board members are trustful (“*ove na onhulo*”²). We always get a solution, even if we disagree on a certain issue.

The findings further revealed that due to some parent school board members’ low level of education, they turned to trust and relied more on each other. Parent school board members were relying more on their school principals, teachers and other educated parents when it came to policy development, curriculum assessment and financial management. One of the reasons was the language barrier: uneducated and undereducated parents found it difficult to participate in policy development, decision-making and problem-solving. This was indicated in § 2.7.1.1: trust, respect and co-operation are regarded as mutual human characteristics that can bring change in school governance.

Shumane (2009) stated that a lack of education and limited access to information and resources were some of barriers that hindered the ability of parent school board members to perform their functions as prescribed by the Education Act (§ 2.6). In addition, Heystek et al. (2008) argue that if there is trust, respect and co-operation among school board members, they will easily be able to draw up their own school policies, solve their problems, and make their own decisions. Heystek et al. (2008) further state that school board members who trusted, respected and co-operated were willing to go through difficult situations, through ups and downs, and through risks and potential loss as a team.

This study’s findings revealed that uneducated parent school board members are at the right position of trust, and respect and co-operate with other school board members who understand school governance policies and regulations. Heystek (2014) argues that although trust, respect and co-operation are difficult to measure, the desired manners and conduct of school board members differ from culture to culture (§ 2.7.1.1). Therefore, to maintain trust, respect and co-operation among school board members, their cultural differences and local contexts must be considered.

The findings from this research revealed that in some schools, school board members were leaking confidential discussions, which caused distrust and fear among other members. This was stated by SP4 who indicated that:

Human beings are just human beings. Trust is something that you cannot instil in people. So, some school board members are releasing confidential information. They are not

² *Ove na onhulo* means school board members are trustful.

perfect, even some SMT members are releasing confidential discussions.

According to the empirical findings, some school board members were afraid of giving their inputs during discussions due to the leakage of confidential discussions. The similar point is emphasised by Xaba (2011), who advises school board members to develop a trustful relationship among themselves when executing their functions to support quality education (§ 2.7.1.1). Xaba further advises school board members to act in good faith, but not to disclose confidential information, and not to conduct themselves in a way that may jeopardise the interests of their schools.

According to the MoE (2005) school board committees will only be active if its members trust each other and are free to express their opinion openly without fear of criticism and intimidation (§ 2.7.1.1). The MoE further adds that if school board members remain silent when there is a concern that needs to be discussed, they are betraying the trust of people who elected them.

Similarly, Harber and Mncube (2012) encourage school board members to stand in the right position of trust towards their schools (§ 2.7.1.1). According to Harber and Mncube (2012), trust in this sense means that there must be openness, respect, co-operation, effective communication, good relationship, active participation and accountability among school board members for them to work together in the interest of the learners. This is also highlighted by Joubert and Bray (2007), who emphasise that school board members must not conduct themselves in a way that may jeopardise the interests of their schools (§ 2.7.1.1).

Joubert and Bray (2007) claim that the supportive role of school board members must be that of trust, honesty, integrity and openness. School board members must also foster a sense of co-ownership and co-responsibility among other stakeholders regarding their school's welfare. On a similar note, Nong (2007) reinforces that:

Every citizen has a right and responsibilities. Therefore, members of SGB (school board members in the Namibian context) should have tolerance to one another and respect each other's views for effective coordination of its activities as well as team building (p. 70).

5.3.1.1 The Education Act

The research findings revealed that some of the challenges that were faced by school board members were caused by the Education Act (itself). It emerged from the data that some of the school boards' challenges seem located in their powers and functions as prescribed by the NEA. According

to participants' responses, the functions of school board members were not clearly explained at the onset before election. In addition, the NEA is written in English, which made it difficult for parent school board members to understand it.

This point is noted by Kumalo (2009), who stresses that if functions of school board members are well explained at the onset, it will help the newly elected members to know exactly what is expected of them (§ 2.6). Furthermore, Nong (2007) confirms that school board members who understand their powers and functions, turn out to influence their school's governance positively, which supports quality education effectively. Moreover, Harber and Mncube (2012) indicate that a democratic school culture is categorised by democratic relationships between a school principal and teachers, teachers and parents, and is built upon mutual trust, respect, co-operation and effective communication, which will result in the provision of quality education (§ 2.7.1.1).

School principals should, however, keep in mind that the newly elected parent school board members may possibly not be well-educated and may for that reason not be familiar with the Education Act, regulations, and relevant ministerial circulars and procedures (MoE, 2005). It is therefore the responsibility of school principals to guide and advise school board members on all school matters, and to establish co-operation in order to support quality education and to achieve their school visions.

5.3.2 Effective communication and a good relationship among school board members

The empirical findings revealed that parent school board members, who did not go to school and could not read, write and speak English, found it difficult to contribute to and participate during their discussions. This was supported by Shanyanana (2011), § 2.7.1.4), who claimed that in most cases, uneducated and unemployed stakeholders find it difficult to actively take part in educational discussions and to make contributions to decisions concerning their children's education. This is also mentioned by IoE1, who indicated that:

In most cases, some parent school board members used to be physically present in their meeting, but they were just quiet. They were not participating in their discussions because they did not want to contribute, but it was due to language barrier. Sometimes, documents under discussion used to be written in English.

Heystek (2014) states that trust, respect and co-operation can create effective communication and a good relationship if there is a balance of power among school board members (§ 2.7.1.3). He

further indicates that trust, respect and co-operation can also build a strong foundation between school board members and members of the SMT, who are responsible for the overall management of schools.

Moreover, Cunningham and Cordeiro (2009) claim that it is essential for school board members to have effective communication, since more effective interaction with other members will have a greater influence on the school's performance and in the provision of quality education (§ 2.7.1.3). Moreover, Harris (2014) affirms that effective communication among school board members integrates all characteristics of effective school governance, such as goal-setting, decision-making and problem-solving, and the delegation of responsibilities among stakeholders (§ 2.7.1.2). Hamutenya (2013) also concurs that effective communication between the school, parents and the community will assist them in noticing and categorising needed school resources and services from the community, such as information on traditional and cultural matters (§ 2.7.1.3).

5.3.2.1 School board meetings and remuneration as a token of motivation and appreciation

The research findings revealed that all selected schools were holding two or more meetings per term, instead of one meeting per term as prescribed by the NEA. According to the research findings, parent school board members' attendances to their meetings were not satisfactory due to some reasons, such as distance; other commitments; old age; personal issues, like sicknesses and death in the family; attending funerals; work; and a lack of motivation.

A similar point is stated by Hamutenya (2013), who revealed some of the barriers that prevent parent school board members to actively participate in school activities, such as distance between schools and their houses, illiteracy, unemployment, and a lack of understanding and knowledge about their functions (§ 2.6).

Hamutenya (2013) further points out that parents' socio-economic status, other parents and the communities' negative attitude towards them, and lack of confidence were other obstacles that were preventing school board members to execute their functions effectively as prescribed by the NEA.

According to the empirical findings, some parent school board members had to walk long distances to and from schools whenever they were called for meetings and other school functions, like interviews. At some schools, parent school board members who stayed far from schools used their own money for transport without being refunded whereas at other schools, they were given money for transport.

Findings showed that at some schools, parent school board members were given refreshments after attending meetings and interviews as a token of appreciation and motivation whereas at other schools, they were not given refreshments. Most participants therefore suggested that school board members make certain that their school budgets always make provision for transport and refreshments.

The findings indicated that parent school board members were not performing this function seriously because they were not being remunerated. Moreover, young parents in the community were not willing to be elected as school board members because they were not benefitted to motivate them. However, Nong (2007) states that school board members were prepared to assist in their school governance and education of their children without being remunerated.

In addition, the study findings revealed that elder parents also needed to be elected as members of the school boards due to their knowledge, skills and experiences that might benefit their schools. Nevertheless, according to the findings, most of the elder parent school board members were no longer energetic to walk to and from schools twice a week due to ill health and old age.

5.3.3 Power-sharing among school board members and learners' involvement in school governance

Deal and Peterson (2009) highlight that power-sharing is essential in the development of school vision, mission and policies to support decision-making, inspire improvement, strengthen commitment among school board members and to toughen teamwork (§ 2.7.1.2). Deal and Peterson affirm that a shared school mission, vision and policies shape and reflect on what schools anticipate to achieve.

The findings revealed that there was no clear demarcation of power between school board members, SMTs and school principals. According to the research findings, school principals and SMTs deal with the day-to-day management of their schools, while school board members focus on school governance. A similar point is noted by Nong (2007), who indicates in his findings that there must be a clear demarcation of power and functions between SMTs and school board members, which creates the opportunity for every individual to concentrate on their own functions.

The findings further indicated that power demarcation between school principals and school board members was a challenge because there was no clear demarcation on their hierarchy. This was clearly stated by one of the school principals (SP12), who indicated that:

There was a sort of infighting between the school principal and school board chairperson. I think there was no clear demarcation of power on who was under who. Each one felt that he had more power than the other, and wanted to dictate, especially during the meetings. No one wanted to listen to one another. So, we went there with the IoE to resolve the issue.

5.3.3.1 School board members' equal participation in decision-making

Although the NEA (2001) authorises all school board members to be involved in and play an active role in decision-making processes concerning their schools, the findings of this study revealed that parent and learner school board members were not fully and actively involved. As indicated by Mavuso and Duku (2014), school board members are empowered to create a favourable relationship among stakeholders at local level and between the government and the school community so that there will be shared decisions and responsibility in order to develop and maintain their schools.

The research findings revealed that parent school board members were not involved in the shortlisting process due to their low level of education; however, they trusted SMTs to carry out this function. Parent school board members were only involved during the selection process when candidates were invited for interviews. Due to some parent school board members' level of education, they trusted the SMT to serve as panellists along with some teacher school board members when it came to interviewing candidates.

Nong (2007) alludes that school board members come from different backgrounds; therefore, it is important for them to design a code of conduct that will guide them on how they should conduct themselves. This point is confirmed by SP3, who indicates that:

When school board members were discussing things that are written in English, most parent school board members used to rely on teachers to translate and explain things to them.

Nong (2007) further stresses that appointments and recommendations of qualified staff members at school, is one of the crucial tasks of the school board members in school governance. Therefore, in this regard, school board members should be aware of their functions as prescribed by the NEA.

5.3.3.2 School policy development

Deal and Peterson (2009) state that school board members are tasked with the development of the school vision, mission and policies to support decision-making, inspire improvement, strengthen

commitment among themselves and to toughen their teamwork (§ 2.7.1.2). Nong (2007), however, reports that school board members developed their school visions and missions, guided by a broader vision and mission of the MEAC. School board members also formulated policies in line with the national and regional policies and regulations.

The research findings indicated that parent school board members were not involved in policy development due to their low level of education. According to the empirical results, this function was entrusted to SMTs. School board members were just called in to approve and endorse school policies.

5.3.3.3 Curriculum assessment

The findings indicated that some parent school board members were not able to assess the teaching and learning process at all schools due to their level of education. However, some school board chairpersons were visiting schools and going into classes to see how teachers were teaching and how learners were learning; nonetheless, they did not perform this function effectively.

According to all school principals who participated in this study, although parent school board members were visiting schools and assessing the teaching and learning process, they could not perform this function effectively due to the language barrier (they cannot speak, read and write English). This is mentioned by Nyandoro et al. (2013), who indicate that parent school board members were not aware of their roles in school development. Some of the parent school board members were operating without the Education Act whereas others who had the Education Act, could not interpret it.

However, the research findings revealed that the NEA does not specify whether parent school board members are supposed to monitor the teaching and learning process or assess the curriculum. Some of the parent school board members who participated in this study disclosed that the NEA is written in English and that there are no job descriptions to guide the school board members.

5.3.3.4 The promotion of school welfare

In terms of the NEA (2001), school board members are empowered to consider any case of misconduct (§ 2.3.6) by learners or staff members at their respective schools to ensure that discipline is well maintained. All school principals who took part in this study agreed that school board members sat in on the disciplinary hearings of both learners and staff members, and where necessary, made recommendations to the PS of any action to be taken.

However, due to some parent school board members' low level of education and understanding on what the Education Act is stipulating about disciplinary procedures, this function was not performed effectively. Parent school board members trusted and relied on what their school principals and SMT members advised them to do. Chapman et al. (2010) clearly indicate that if school board members understood where the power came from, it would improve their capacity to act (§ 2.7.1.3). Therefore, according to Harris (2014), it is important for school board members to share values and beliefs on what their school desires to achieve (§ 2.7.1.2).

The empirical findings revealed that learners were not allowed to take part in decision-making due to cultural beliefs. According to the school board chairpersons, culturally, learners are not allowed to speak freely in the presence of elders. This was also noted by Nong (2007), who argues that there is a belief in society that since the beginning of democracy, learners have had too many rights that have resulted in them behaving in unacceptable manners.

In the South African context, the SASA empowers school governors to control and guide learners in a way that will make them responsible adults and citizens of their country. The SASA further emphasises that it is imperative for school board committees, as bodies that represent all stakeholders of the school community, to develop a code of conduct for their learner school board members.

5.3.3.5 School financial management

The study's findings revealed that parent school board members were not actively involved in their school financial management from the onset. Furthermore, when it came to budgeting, parent school board members were just called in to approve and to endorse budgets, which were already drafted by SMT members along with other staff members.

It was similarly noted by Chikoko (2008) that some of the decisions require school board members' equal participation to come up with collective and shared decisions, such as the financing of education and curriculum development. Other areas are the provision of human resources, school administration, and decisions about external relations. Nong (2007) indicates that:

One of the critical aspects that can cripple the objectives of the school is poor financial administration. It is therefore imperative that proper financial systems should be in place for smooth running of the school. The SGB should be held responsible for effective financial policy, which will lead to effective management practices (p. 63).

Findings also indicated that school board members were not involved in the process of purchasing school needs – they trusted school financial committee members to run this function. All participants agreed that apart from signing cheques, at some schools, school board members did not check school financial files and reports. On a similar note, Nong (2007, p. 63) indicates that:

SGB is accountable to all funds contributed to the school and is entitled to open a school banking account.

However, as the schools are in and belong to the community, it is imperative for the community to take part in all activities concerning their local schools (NEA, 2001). In addition, for the school communities to participate effectively in school programmes, it is essential for schools to clearly indicate all the tasks concerned they should be involved in, why and how (MBESC, 2004). Nong (2007) acknowledges the fact that although school principals deal with the day-to-day running of the school, it is the responsibility of SGBs to open a bank account and to deal with all financial matters of the school, and not principals' responsibility.

Therefore, the school community members must be informed on how SDFs are used, control how their school money will be utilised, and identify school needs on which the money will be spent (MoE, 2008).

5.3.3.6 Participation in the decision-making process

The empirical data revealed that parent school board members were not equally involved in the decision-making process. Learners were also not recognised as school board members at most of the schools. Although the NEA (2001) encourages active parent participation in their local school governance and decision-making processes, the data revealed that this was not happening in selected schools (§ 2.3.8). This opinion was raised by NSBET3, who stated that:

There are learner school board members at our school, but they are not invited to attend any of the school board meetings, discussions and hearings, neither for teachers nor for other learners because they might protect other learners.

Furthermore, as indicated in § 2.3.8, the NEA makes provision for learners, who are primary beneficiaries of education, to be partners in the school governance; however, the findings indicated that learners were not involved in school governance at any of the selected schools as recommended by the NEA. A similar point was raised by Shanyanana (2011), who stressed that the Namibian

education system found it difficult to implement the policy on equal participation on school governance. Shanyanana (2011) furthermore indicated that:

The Namibian education system is faced with the challenges of how to enable all stakeholders to participate fully and actively in policy development and decision making process, either at the national or local level (p. 111).

According to Heystek et al. (2008), Heystek (2014) and Sinalumbu (2013), parent school board members were not participating democratically in decision-making processes, while learners were not involved in the decision-making in sensitive matters concerning staff members' behaviours. This was caused by the education level of some parent school board members, as stated by Shumane (2009). According to Shumane, power-sharing, absenteeism of parents at the school board meetings, and a lack of training for the parent and learner members of the school board are some of the obstacles that prevent school board members from executing their functions in supporting quality education.

Shanyanana (2011) further indicates that people in democratic countries are treated equally. All citizens are required to be respected and protected, and the voices of all people, including learners who were regarded as voiceless in the past, are considered in discussions, and in problem-solving and decision-making processes (Shanyanana, 2011). However, one school board chairperson felt that parent school board members were fully involved. He (SBC3) said:

In the past, parent school board members were influenced by teacher school board members when it came to school board discussions and decision-making processes, but now we are fully involved. Decisions are taken by all school board members; not just the principal or school board chairperson.

The study findings revealed that learner school board members were not involved in the decision-making process due to cultural beliefs. This also correlates with Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) and Mncube (2012), who argued that learners were not actively involved in decision-making and problem-solving at their local schools due to cultural beliefs (§ 2.6).

The empirical findings also indicated that power was not shared equally among school board members. Although parent school board members were equally involved in the decision-making process, their participation and contribution were not at the same level. The MoE (2005) clearly

stipulates that there must be a sense of balance of power among school board members and school principals in order to provide quality education.

Furthermore, section 16 of the NEA (2001) authorises school board members in partnership with the SMT to plan and to monitor the school programmes. This act also permits the school board members to make sure that teachers and learners attend to their school tasks and responsibilities regularly and completely to support quality education.

5.3.4 School board members' competencies and abilities to perform their functions

According to Kumalo (2009), Sinalumbu (2013), Xaba (2011) and Khama (2014) some challenges that are faced by school board members are; a lack of training for new school board members before they assume their duties; school board members' unfamiliarity with their school board meeting procedures; problems with specialist language usage; and finding it difficult to manage the large capacity of papers (s 2.6).

The research findings showed that some of the challenges facing school board members were caused by their competencies and abilities to perform their functions in supporting quality education, which were caused by poor training and poor capacity building. It is clearly stated that school board members need to be trained before they assume their duties (§ 2.7.1.4).

MoE (2005) states that training will equip the school board with the skills and knowledge in terms of the regulations and legislation concerning school governance. Similarly, training will support the school board members to become full and active partners in school governance; as opposed by Chikoko (2008), who states that parent school board members are just mere providers and maintainers of physical infrastructure.

5.3.4.1 Training

The empirical findings revealed that school board members were given insufficient training and that the materials used during the school boards' training were presented in English. Furthermore, the training was done in English and some parent school board members could neither understand nor read English. This point was mentioned by Kumalo (2009) (§ 2.6), who pointed out some of the challenges that were facing school board members, such as poor understanding of their functions in supporting quality education, which were caused by poor training and poor capacity building. Kumalo (2009) also indicated that parent school board members' lack of knowledge and school governing skills were contributing factors to some of their challenges as school governance functions require special skills and knowledge in different areas.

It was clearly discussed in § 2.7.1.4 that the quality of school governance is more likely to be increased if all school board members are motivated through training to be involved and take part in their children's education (Hamutenya, 2013). Harber and Mncube (2012) suggest that all members need to be trained in democratic skills or capabilities for the school board to function effectively, such as: speaking skills and putting a case across; listening skills; chairing skills; organising and planning skills; assertiveness; and conflict resolution skills. Moreover, the school board training must be an ongoing activity that will take place during school board members' term of office.

Mncube (2012) also affirms that there must be empowerment programmes in the form of lectures, seminars and workshops in place for the proper functioning of the school boards. According to Xaba (2011), through training, school boards members will gain more knowledge and understanding, and will develop abilities that will help them to better define their functions and allow them to self-monitor their own actions.

Most participants in the research suggested that all school board members be trained soon after their election and before they commence their duties. In addition, participants recommended that the duration of the school board training be a bit longer and for such training to be an ongoing programme. They further proposed that school board members at least be trained termly or even yearly.

According to Nong (2007), since the establishment of new democratic governance in schools, school board members have been trained on their powers and functions as required by the Education Act. A similar suggestion was made by numerous researchers who have written about school governance. Kumalo (2009) suggests that school board members' training be an ongoing exercise and a regular task at school, cluster and regional level. In his findings, Xaba (2011) also highlights the necessity of continuous training of school board members, before and after election, in order to improve and develop the rural schools in accordance with the Education Act.

A similar point is maintained by most of the researchers, as discussed in § 2.7.1.4. Shinana (2013) stresses that all stakeholders, who are the backbone of their school, including school board members, need some form of guidance on how to perform their functions and how to conduct themselves towards the achievement of the school's objectives.

Chikoko (2008) concurs that the government alone cannot control all schools, but it shares its power with other stakeholders in education at the local level. However, this can only happen if participants in schools' governance are trained, empowered and capacitated to perform their functions and to decide on matters affecting their local schools.

Haines (2007) states that school board training is the cornerstone that supports the school board members to execute their functions effectively. Therefore, school board members must be trained to be able to raise their concerns openly with other stakeholders, without fear that other members will perceive their views as criticism. The school board members must be informed through the training sessions about changes that are to be implemented.

In conclusion, Mnube (2012) argues that as school boards comprise people with different beliefs, expectations, abilities and levels of education, the training is required to prepare them for shared and co-operative school governance (§ 2.7.1.4). With adequate and ongoing in-service training, the school board members can make collective and informed decisions.

5.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the issues related to the causes of school boards' challenges. Possible ways on how to address those challenges were also highlighted. Key findings of this study were that there is trust, respect and co-operation, effective communication and a good relationship among school board members. It was also discovered that there was no balanced power-sharing and equal participation among school board members. In addition, the study findings revealed that some parent school board members were not competent enough to perform their functions due to inadequate training. Also, learner school board members were not fully involved in school governance at selected schools as prescribed by the NEA (2001).

In the next chapter, the recommendations and conclusions of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide the conclusion about the main findings drawn from the themes that were discussed in the previous chapter. The researcher will also provide several recommendations on how to address the challenges faced by school board members in support of quality education in Ohangwena rural schools. In conclusion, the researcher will highlight areas for future research at regional and national levels.

6.2 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia. The main aim of this research was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in efforts to support quality education. The research findings revealed that school board members were faced with challenges, such as not knowing their powers and functions; not being able to understand the NEA due to the low level of education of parent members; and the inadequate training of school boards.

This study also revealed some factors were influencing school board members (especially some parent members' participation in school governance in support of quality education) negatively. Some of these factors included school board members not being informed about what to do in the beginning, a lack of knowledge and skills or incompetence, and a lack of understanding of the NEA.

In addition, poor attitudes of other stakeholders towards school board members and low self-esteem were also found to be factors that hindered school board members to support quality education effectively. Long distances from their houses to schools and a lack of remuneration as a token of motivation and appreciation were also preventing parent school board members to perform their functions as prescribed by the NEA in support of quality education.

Other challenges included the short serving periods of parent school board members, old age, and poor attendance of school board members at their meetings due to personal challenges, like other commitments, sicknesses and death in their families. Some of the challenges that were hindering school board members to perform their functions in support of quality education included the following: the absence of support from SMTs; criticism of school board members by their community; school board members' fear; and threats from other stakeholders because they were not competent enough, which led to isolation and rejection of school board members by their community.

Another aim of the study was to investigate functions performed effectively by school board members in accordance with the NEA in the provision of quality education at their schools. The findings revealed that school board members were performing some functions effectively, such as their involvement in the recruitment process of staff members and the development of school infrastructure.

According to the research findings, trust, respect and co-operation among school board members enabled effective participation in staff members' recruitment. Parents who are illiterate trusted teachers and other educated parents when it came to making crucial decisions, like recommending and appointing qualified staff members to be recruited. In addition, the functions of promoting schools' welfare and linking schools with parents and the community, were also performed effectively due to trust, respect and co-operation among school board members in supporting quality education.

Another aim of the study was to discover if school board members can perform the prescribed functions in supporting quality education at their respective schools. The research findings showed that school board members could perform some functions, such as recommending and appointing staff members; developing school infrastructure; and promoting school welfare and links with parents and the community. However, due to the low level of education of parent school board members, they trusted and relied on other members, like teachers and educated parents, when performing those functions.

On the contrary, some functions, such as developing school policies, curriculum assessment and financial management, were not performed effectively due to incompetence caused by inadequate training of the school board and the low level of education of parent school board members. Findings revealed that school board members had the most important influence in their local schools' governance to support quality education. However, the findings indicated that school board members were not able to perform all their prescribed functions effectively to support quality education in their schools.

The research revealed that parent school board members were attending their school board meetings; however, not all of them were attending due to other commitments, such as caring for sick family members; attending funerals; work and house chores; and other community commitments. This study further revealed that parent school board members were participating during their school board meetings and discussions, though not to the extent of their counterparts (i.e. teacher school board members). However, the findings indicated that parent school board members' participation in their local school governance was valuable in the support of quality education.

The findings further revealed that learner school board members were not involved in the decision-making concerning staff members and other learners because the NEA is not clear on the functions of learner school board members.

Finally, another aim was to find possible ways on how to address the challenges experienced by school board members to support quality education. The research findings highlighted the need for proper training of the newly elected school board members. According to the research findings, proper training is regarded as a well-planned training programme for all school board members, presented in the language that all school board members can understand. All materials to be used should also be presented in the school board members' vernacular. The study also revealed that both parent and learner school board members need to be trained so that they will be competent enough to perform their functions in support of quality education.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations were grouped into three categories: recommendations for the Ohangwena educational region; recommendations for the Ministry of Education Art and Culture (MEAC); and recommendations made for future researches.

6.3.1 Recommendations for the Ohangwena educational region

- It is recommended that the NEA be translated to local languages for parents who cannot read English so that they can understand. It is also recommended that presiding officers explain the powers and functions of school board members well during school board elections.
- The research recommends that parent school board members be remunerated as a token of motivation and appreciation for their effort to support quality education; however, this must be budgeted for. Recently, the Namibian education system has introduced an education grant for all pre-primary to grade 12 learners in state schools. If the MEAC makes provision for school boards' remuneration in their annual budget, school board members might perform their functions effectively.
- Research participants suggested that the community members be educated on the importance of school board members in school governance so that young community parents can take part in their local school boards. This community education can be done during parent-teacher meetings, community and church meetings, and through the media, such as radio programmes.
- It is further recommended that the NEA reinforces learners' participation, and that learner school board members' functions and powers be well-defined. All school board members need to be trained on the importance of learners' participation in school governance to make them aware of the real value and importance of learners.

- The research also suggests that all school board members always be trained soon after school board elections before they assume their duties. The MEAC and Regional Directors must identify knowledgeable individuals to train school board members in circuits and clusters. Inspectors of Education (IoEs) and Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs) must also organise follow-up or mini-workshops for school board members in their circuits and clusters. Training will empower and teach school boards their powers, rights and functions, and they will know what to do and what not to do. Furthermore, school principals should make sure that all school board members are provided with relevant documents, for example, *The work of the School Boards: A booklet for School Boards in Namibia and Guidelines for Namibian School Board Members*, which are translated to local languages that school board members can understand.

6.3.2 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC)

The study suggested that the MEAC reviews the NEA or policy on school governance, since parent and learner school board members need clear understanding on their powers and functions in support of quality education. It is recommended that the MEAC considers parent school board members' efforts in support of quality education by remunerating them with sitting allowances as a token of motivation and appreciation. The MEAC may provide school boards money per school, like the education grant for all learners in Namibia.

Moreover, the research participants suggested that the MEAC draw up a policy on learner school board members' functions and powers. Currently, the NEA only stipulates the roles and responsibilities of LRCs. However, not all LRCs are members of school boards: only two (the head boy or head girl, or sometimes both) are members of school boards, depending on the number of learners in the school. It is therefore important to clarify the functions and powers of learner school board members.

6.3.3 Recommendations for future researches

In conclusion, it is recommended that similar research be carried out at regional and national levels to establish the extent to which school board members are faced with challenges to perform their functions in support of quality education. It is also suggested that future research be carried out at regional and national levels to determine what cause the challenges experienced by school board members and to identify how those challenges can be addressed.

In addition, the researcher suggests the following topics for future researches:

- NEA policy on school governance;

- challenges of LRCs in school governance;
- the issue of trust among school board members;
- learners' involvement in school governance; and
- school board members' involvement in the management of school finances.

6.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, recommendations were made for future researches regarding the challenges faced by school board members in supporting quality education at regional and national levels. As stated by Heystek (2014), the legislative powers and functions of school board members do not provide enough clarity on their daily functions, which makes it difficult for school principals to manage schools effectively. Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher deliberated and proposed that school boards be trained in their local languages to assist all school board members to acquire knowledge and skills on how to perform their functions in supporting quality education.

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APPENDIX A

ETHICS CERTIFICATE



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: (018) 299-4900
Faks: (018) 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849
Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: Challenges of School Board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia.																																														
Project Leader:	Prof J Heystek																																													
Student:	T Kayumbu																																													
Ethics number:	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Project Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr><tr><td colspan="15">Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	1	6	7	-	1	5	-	A	2	Institution			Project Number					Year		Status					Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation														
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Approval date:	2015-06-18																																													
Expiry date:	2016-12-31																																													
Category	N/A																																													

Special conditions of the approval (if any): None

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- x The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project,
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
- x The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-IRERC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- x The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- x In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project; -withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-IRERC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately, -
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Linda du Plessis
DN: cn=Linda du Plessis, o=NWU, Digitally signed
by Linda du Plessis
ou=Vaal Triangle Campus,
email=linda.duplessis@nwu.ac.za, Date: 2015.10.14 11:37:28 +0200

Plessis
c=ZA
Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

APPENDIX B

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN OHANGWENA RURAL SCHOOLS



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu
North-West University
Potchefstroom campus
Faculty of Education Sciences
School of Education Studies (Edu-Lead)

The Director of Education
Ohangwena Education Directorate
Private Bag 88005
Eenhana
Republic of Namibia

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN OHANGWENA RURAL SCHOOLS

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu – a Master Degree student in Education Management and Leadership at North-West University in South Africa. As part of my study I am required to write a dissertation in Education Management and Leadership. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools.

My research topic is: Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural Schools in Namibia.

I hereby request for your permission to undertake research (for the purpose of writing my dissertation) in four rural combined schools in Ohangwena Educational region. I will interview the school board members: school principals, teachers, parents and Inspectors of education responsible for Circuits were selected schools fall.

The school board members that I will interview in each school include the principal, two teachers, and one parent. I will also interview two Inspectors of Education responsible for the circuits where selected schools fall. Four rural combined schools will be involved in this research - two schools with

high performance for five consecutive years and two schools that have been underperforming for five consecutive years in the region.

The participants will take part on a voluntary basis and I will explain to them that there will be no remuneration for participation. The issue of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any stage of the study will be clearly explained to them and participants will be requested to complete and sign the consents form before engaging in the research process.

Interviews will be used in this study to collect data from the participants and the interviews will not interrupt with the school activities. The data will be used for the purpose of the study only and I undertake to ensure that the participants and the schools' identity will not be made public in my final report.

The information to be gathered from this study will contribute towards the improvement of the role played by school board members in the provision of quality education in Ohangwena rural combined schools. The research findings will be disseminated to the Ministry of Education in Ohangwena region and schools that participated in the study.

If you have questions regarding this research subject, contact: Prof. J. Heystek

Cell no.: 084 722 9136,
Work tel. no.: 018 2991906
E-mail: jan.heystek@nwu.ac.za
Work Address: North-West University
Faculty of Education Sciences
School of Education Studies

Yours Faithfully

Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu (Student No: 26740613)

Date: 08/06/2015

E-mail: teopowakayumbu@gmail.com

Tel: +27712205588 or 0812707190

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



OHANGWENA REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

1st Floor Greenwell Complex Private Bag 88005 Eenhana Tel: 065 – 290 201 Fax: 065 -290 224

Enquiries: Magano Gaoses
Email: mcnotto@yahoo.com
Ref: 12/3/10/1

19 May 2015

Ms. Teopolina Kayumbu
North West University
Potchefstroom Campus
Faculty of Education Services
School of Education Studies

Subject: Approval granted to conduct research in Ohangwena Rural Schools.

1. Receipt of your letter dated 22 April 2015 on the above subject matter, is hereby acknowledged.
2. The Ohangwena of Education, Arts and Culture indeed supports and herewith grants approval to you to carry out the envisaged research: The challenges faced by the School Board members in performing their functions to provide quality education Ohangwena Rural Schools.
3. Your case study is most certainly welcomed as it will be done with a specific focus on improving the situations that school boards face at rural schools and what can be done about this situation. You might, through this process, come across new ideas, strategies or create new knowledge that might enhance the skills of our school boards across Ohangwena Region and this will be a great benefit to the Region and the Education sector as a whole.
4. Kindly liaise with the staff members concerned for proper arrangements do be done and please see to it that the normal teaching and learning process is not disturbed while doing your research

We wish you all the best with your research.

Yours Sincerely,

Sanet L Steenkamp
19/05/2015
Sanet L Steenkamp
Director: MEAC
Ohangwena Region



APPENDIX D

LETTER OF CONSENT



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu
North-West University
Potchefstroom campus
Faculty of Education Sciences
School of Education Studies (Edu-Lead)

Consent: For all participants

1. Research title:

Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural schools in Namibia

2. Purpose of the study

The overall aim of this study is to understand how trust, respect and co-operation as well as power-sharing, communication and school board members' competencies as a conceptual framework help to understand the challenges of school board members in supporting quality education.

The objectives are:

- To investigate the functions of the school board members in accordance with Education Act in supporting quality education at their schools.
- To examine the challenges that the school board members in supporting quality education at their respective schools.
- To find possible ways on how to address the challenges experienced by the school board members in efforts to support quality education.

3. Participant

- I will conduct an individual interview with you.

4. Permission

I am here to ask for your permission to take part in the research. I am also requesting for your permission to audio-record the interview. If you agree, I am humbly requesting you to sign at the end of this letter.

5. Dates and time

The interview dates will be confirmed with the participants and the interviews are expected to last about 40 minutes.

6. Location

At participants' venues: I will arrange with the school principals, Inspectors of Education, teachers and parents for conducive venues in order to conduct the interviews. For example: the school principals and Inspectors of Education will be interviewed in their offices. Teachers will be interviewed after school hours in convenient rooms conducive for the interview, while the parents will be interviewed at an agreed venue, since they are staying far from schools. The interviews duration will be less than 40 minutes (approximately).

7. Potential risks and discomforts

I do not foresee any possible risks or discomforts during participation in this study.

7.1. Potential benefits to subjects and/or to society

There will be no direct personal benefits to the participants. However, the potential benefits expected from the research are:

- It may possibly enhance the school board functions in support of quality education at your school, because the information from the interviews will give information about potential fields which need improvement.
- The schools will receive the final report to enable the school board members to use the information for their own school development.

8. Payment for participation

Participation in this study will be voluntary. There will be no remuneration for participation in this study.

9. Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymity of all participants. The information obtained, will be stored in a safe place to

which only the researcher and her supervisors have access to. After seven years of the successful completion of the study, all information will be destroyed.

The interviews will be audiotaped with the consent of the participant. The participant has the right to edit it at any time before the completion of the study. All information will be erased after seven years of successful completion of the research. Names of participants and places will be replaced with pseudonyms (Teacher 1, Principal 1, School A, School B, etc.). At no stage will the true identity of the participants be revealed.

- 9.1. At no stage will your true identity or that of your school or circuit be used. Participants in the study will be referred to as Principal 1, Teacher 1, etc. Schools will be referred to as School 1 and School 2, etc.
- 9.2. Any comments made by the participants will be incorporated into the research in the form of a narrative.
- 9.3. I would like to have your consent to use an audio-recording device, which will help me to analyse the data gathered at a later stage. These recordings will only be used to extracting the necessary data from our interview. No other person will have access to the recordings.
- 9.4. You can decline to answer any question(s) at any time or request that the interview be stopped.
- 9.5. If necessary, a follow-up interview will be scheduled once the audio recordings have been transcribed. This will enable you to look at the transcripts to ensure that you agree with it, and will enable the researcher to clarify any statements that might not be clear.
- 9.6. The final research outputs will be available from Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu (081 270 7190).

10. Participation and withdrawal

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

11. Rights of research subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, **contact:**

Prof. J. Heystek

Cell no: 084 722 9136

Work tel. no.: 018 2991906

E mail: jan.heystek@nwu.ac.za

Work Address: North-West University
Faculty of Education Sciences
School of Education Studies

Signature of research subject

The information above was described to *me* by Mrs Teopolina Kayumbu in *Oshikwanyama / English* and *I am in* command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to *me*. *I* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *my* satisfaction.

I hereby consent to participate voluntarily in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Name of researcher

Signature of researcher

Date

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ALL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

**Interview questions for all school board member participants
(school principals, school board chairpersons and school board secretaries)**

Research title:

Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural school in Namibia

1. What are the most important activities of the school board members in supporting quality education at your school?
2. How are trust, respect and cooperation practiced among the school board members in supporting quality education at your school?
3. How is power shared/ distributed within the school board members in the provision of quality education?
4. How has the communication and relationship among the school board members helped in supporting quality education at your school?
5. What are your views regarding school board members training on how to perform their functions in supporting quality education at your school?
6. How are the school board members involved in the budgeting and purchasing of the school needs in supporting quality education at your school? Explain?
7. What types of challenges are faced by the school board members when performing their functions in supporting quality education at your school?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INSPECTORS OF EDUCATION

Research title:

Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural school in Namibia

1. What are the most important functions that you expect of the school board members in supporting quality education in schools in your area?
2. Are trust, respect and cooperation practiced among the school board members in supporting quality education in your area? Explain
3. Are all school board members contributing equally during school board meetings in supporting quality education in your area? Explain?
4. How is the communication and relationship among the school board members in supporting quality education in your area?
5. What are your views regarding school board members training on how to perform their functions in supporting quality education in your area?
6. Are you aware of how the school board members carry out the budgeting and purchasing of school needs in supporting quality education in your area?
7. What types of challenges are faced by the school board members when performing their functions in supporting quality education in your area?
8. Do you think the School boards really make an effective contribution to the improvement of quality education?
9. What will you recommend with regard to the role of the school board to improve quality education in schools?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

Research title:

Challenges of school board members in supporting quality education in Ohangwena rural school in Namibia

1. What are the most important activities of the school board members in supporting quality education in your school?
2. Are trust, respect and cooperation practiced among the school board members in supporting quality education in your school? Explain?
3. Are all school board members contributing equally during school board meetings in supporting quality education in your school? Explain?
4. How is the communication and relationship among the school board members in supporting quality education in your school?
5. What are your views regarding school board members training on how to perform their functions in supporting quality education in your school?
6. Are you aware of how the school board members carry out the budgeting and purchasing of school needs in supporting quality education in your school?
7. What types of challenges are faced by the school board members when performing their functions in supporting quality education in your school?