Challenges faced by Namibian school principals and heads of departments in the professional development of school teachers

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Abstract

School leadership members play an important role in influencing teacher practices through teacher professional development. However, school leaders often face challenges in their efforts to successfully develop teachers professionally. Therefore, the purpose of this article was to present the challenges faced by the Namibian principals and heads of departments in their quest to support their teachers' professional development for improved subject knowledge and pedagogy. The findings presented in this article were obtained during the qualitative phase of a mixed method study conducted in the Otjiwarongo's education circuit of the Otjozondjupa region in Namibia. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants comprising school principals and heads of departments. The findings revealed that Namibian principals and heads of departments faced challenges such as inadequate resources; lack of or insufficient time; multiple responsibilities; resistance from teachers; lack of or poor governmental support; and poor subject knowledge and pedagogies. To address the challenges of inadequate resources and poor governmental support, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture increases funding and logistical support for professional development programs. To combat the issue of insufficient time and multiple responsibilities, it is recommended that schools should integrate dedicated professional development periods into the regular school schedule. This would ensure that teachers had consistent and focused time for professional growth, minimizing conflicts with their teaching and administrative duties.

Keywords: *Namibia, school leaders, challenges, school principals, heads of department*

Introduction and background

Researchers agree that for increased efficacy among teachers, school leaders should assume full responsibility towards the development of teachers' professional competencies (Gutierez & Kim, 2018; Li etal., 2016; Louws et al., 2016; Pambudi & Gunawan, 2019; Postholm & Wæge, 2015). In the Namibian context, the quest to improve the quality of teaching practice is long over-due (University of Namibia, 2014). Therefore, over the past decade several policies have been advanced concerning the need to engage Namibian teachers in the avenues of professional development (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2016; Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2017). These policies are aimed at human capacity development in schools (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2017) through interventions to improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes.

According to the Human Resource Development Plan and Implementation Strategy, the promotion of on-going professional development should be prioritised in the basic education sector (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2017). In addition, the study of the relevant policy frameworks shows that the intent of professional development for Namibian teachers is focused on improved instructional and subject knowledge while enhancing classroom practice (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2017).

Furthermore, it appears that the Namibian education human resource development institutions such as the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and the University of Namibia have been at the fore-front of implementing policy guidelines and provisions as evident in their institutional publications (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2016; University of Namibia, 2014). For example, NIED conducted about 17 professional development services mainly in form of workshops all intended to improve subject and pedagogical knowledge between 2015 and 2016 (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2016). The University of Namibia through its Continuing Professional Development Unit implemented a decentralised professional development model in 2011 across all schools (University of Namibia, 2014).

However, the successes of this model and workshops are undocumented in literature. On that note, the search through the relevant literature also revealed limited research efforts on understanding the challenges faced by school leadership members in implementing these national initiatives geared towards developing teachers professionally.

Problem statement

Providing professional learning opportunities that are relevant and responsive to the perceived needs of teachers can be challenging (Hennessy et al., 2015), often undermining the achievement of intended outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Consequently, school leaders' intentions to support Teacher Professional Development (TPD) are also not immune to such challenges (Chua et al., 2020; Stevenson et al., 2016). Hence, it is important to understand the challenges experienced by the Namibian school principals and HoDs in their effort to support TPD initiatives for improved subject knowledge and pedagogical practices.

Literature review

Job descriptions of school principals in Namibia

Principals in Namibia are expected to carry out multiple roles (Naundobe, 2015) as it is argued that the fulfilment of Namibian schools' core mandate requires the adoption of a flexible leadership approach by all principals (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2016). Hence, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture describes the duties and responsibilities of a principal's job as being ''individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the particular school'' (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 1), which include, but are not limited to the following: "accountability; promoting a positive school climate; creating an effective learning environment; leading and managing the staff; effective deployment of staff and resources; interaction with stakeholders and administration'' (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 1-3).

Principals are also responsible for providing leadership and management support for the effective functioning of schools. They should strengthen teaching and learning activities for maximum educational outcomes. Consequently, they should supervise the administrative, social and academic functions of the school (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2017). This concurs with the argument that the Namibian principals need the competency of delegation to achieve smooth administration and management (Chombo & Mohapi, 2020), while being vigilant all over the school premises to monitor classroom activities (Tjivikua, 2006). In addition, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016) states that school principals should provide leadership and show the ability to manage various school functions. This implies that they should ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legal frameworks and regulations as prescribed (Ministry of Education, 2008). Hence, they play a key role in directing school functions for the achievement of educational goals and purposes (Chombo & Mohapi, 2020) and report on successes and drawbacks encountered (Ministry of Education, 2008). They should do this in compliance to the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020, which directs principals to report to the education regional directors on the affairs of the school by submitting an annual principal's report.

Furthermore, the National Standards and Performance Indicators require Namibian principals to teach 25% of the total number of periods (Ministry of Education, 2009). In that regard, research has revealed that sampled principals in a qualitative study were zealous about creating quality classroom experiences during their lessons (Tjivikua, 2006). Therefore, they are responsible for contributing to quality teaching practices by creating conducive environment where both teachers and learners thrive (Chombo & Mohapi, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2013). Other functions outlined in the Basic Education Act 3 of 2020 include the principal's role in assisting the school board members with the management of school finances and that they should ensure necessary measures are in place to promote transparency in their schools' financial administration (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2020). They should also constantly engage with relevant stakeholders of the school such as parents, learners, regional education leadership and other social actors (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Lastly, the principal is expected to create communication channels, such as parent meetings, to engage stakeholders on the academic and social progress of the school (Ministry of Education, 2016) and to appropriately respond to the needs of stakeholders. The job description also states that principals are legally and morally responsible for staff development through internal and external initiatives (Ministry of Education,

2009). According to Chombo and Mohapi (2020), principals are responsible for the professional management of all human resources assigned to the school. They should therefore delegate tasks but provide support needed to execute such tasks (Aja-Okorie & Oko, 2021). Hence, they are responsible for the professional development of teachers and should consequently create an enabling school climate where teachers' well-being and progress are taken care of (Chombo & Mohapi, 2020). Additionally, researchers contend that principals must champion for teamwork for teachers to succeed in their individual areas of influence (Johari et al., 2021). It is also argued that the principals' responsibility towards teachers' functions is affected by their ability to influence how such functions are carried out (Goden et al., 2016; Komalasari et al., 2020; Yasin & Mustafa, 2020). However, much still needs to be learnt about the possible challenges affecting these responsibilities of the Namibian principals.

Job descriptions of heads of department (HoDs) in Namibia

According to Naundobe (2015), the functions of HoDs are over-arching and stretch beyond their classroom, department, the school as a whole and its boundaries. Although the roles and responsibilities enacted by Namibian HoDs are under-researched, the Ministry of Education have detailed what is expected of HoDs in Namibian schools (Ministry of Education, 2008). In accordance with the Ministry's job description, the expected roles and responsibilities of HoDs mainly point to the administration and management of their department and minimal reference is made to the leadership roles of HoDs (Ministry of Education, 2008).

According to the National Standards and Performance Indicators for schools in Namibia, HoDs are responsible for but not limited to: "managing their department successfully; influence and enhance the academic performance of teachers and learners; establish effective communication within individual subjects; conduct regular departmental and subject meetings; foster good interpersonal relations and teamwork among staff members; give advice, guide and support teachers on subject matters'' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 31). Furthermore, the job description stipulates that HoDs are responsible for assisting the principal in the management of a variety of school functions, to contribute to the successful completion of school administration and to be involved in classroom teaching and effective implementation of all co-curricular activities (Ministry of Education, 2008).

It is important to mention that HoDs are expected to take full responsibility for the professional development of teachers at their school. This implies that HoDs must conduct performance appraisals and expose departmental staff to opportunities that will keep them abreast of new and advanced teaching practices and pedagogies (Ministry of Education, 2008). In spite of these ministerial provisions, it is yet to be established whether the Namibian heads of departments face challenges in their quest to support the professional development of teachers in their departments and what those challenges are.

School leaders and teacher professional development

Previously, some researchers have reported on the multiple roles played by local school leaders in transforming teachers into reflective practitioners (Bredeson, 2000). According to Bredeson (2000, p. 391) the functions of principals include; functioning as ''stewards'', ''models'', ''experts'' and ''instructional leaders''. More recent studies by Ozmusul (2015) and Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) have concurred with the above categories by arguing the importance of role modelling on teachers' attainment of set teaching and learning goals. Literature indicates that contemporary scholarly work has focused on the analysis of various professional development models, while the influential responsibilities of local school leaders have been a rare case of research interest (Ismail et al., 2018). It has to be acknowledged that authors of Western literature have revealed that good leadership and administrative support are key to effective enhancement of teachers' professional competencies (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015).

Recent research by Ismail et al. (2018) focused on school leaders as having the core duty through instructional leadership to improve teachers' operational competencies. These researchers further argue the importance of leadership to engage ways to provide teacher development for improved pedagogical efficiency (Ismail et al., 2018). Similarly, it is argued that school leaders have the duty to engage experts from outside to help provide capacity development for the teachers, thereby promoting teacher learning (Ozmusul, 2015). Another dimension is added by Mehdinezhad

and Mansouri (2016) who argue that there is a need for leaders to provide structures for their subordinates to grow in their profession. In this regard, findings from a study with departmental heads in South Africa showed that leadership support created an enabling climate at schools where professional development took place (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018). However, schools where poor leadership support was experienced by the participants, there was no meaningful teacher development observed (Du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018).

In addition, Ozmusul (2015) suggests that principals should initiate seminars and institutional practices that motivate teachers to develop their ability to innovate while also helping to create an enabling environment for professional growth. School leaders' role in developing teacher effectiveness is another theme that dominated contemporary literature (Calik et al., 2012; Ismail et al., 2018) however their roles are not immune to challenges. These challenges include insufficient resources, teacher resistance, leaders' multiple roles, limited time, bureaucracy and lack of training.

Challenges in supporting teacher professional development

International literature indicates that lack resources such as appropriate physical infrastructure and funding are seen as hampering school leaders' efforts towards improving teachers instructional practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wang, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). This literature points to a well-documented barrier in educational improvement efforts, highlighting the critical need for adequate infrastructure and funding to support effective teaching and learning. Similarly, African scholars concur that school leaders from developing nations also indicated poor infrastructure and inadequate funding as some of the factors affecting their roles in instructional supervision and support (Botha, 2019; Bekere, 2021; Haßler et al., 2015; Oluremi, 2013). Teacher resistance and lack of interest is another challenge identified by researchers (Cremin & Arthur, 2014; Maass & Engeln, 2006).

In a qualitative study with HoDs, teachers and deputy principals from the South African, Gauteng province, Botha (2019) reported that teachers' resistance towards participating in the professional development activities was one of the challenges affecting school leaders. Similar findings were reported by Malaysian principals' who identified teachers' timidity as one of the

challenges in achieving desired outcomes of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in that country (Chua, Thien, Lim, Tan, & Guan, 2020). Another challenge, according to literature is the leaders' innumerable roles (Bekere, 2021; Haiyan & Allan, 2020; Mestry, 2013; Olurotimi & Ekere, 2017). Olurotimi and Ekere (2017) found that Nigerian HoDs identified this challenge as affecting their efforts towards supporting teacher effectiveness. Additionally, studies by Bekere (2021) and Naidoo (2019) also stated that Ethiopian and South African principals could not attend to activities aimed at supporting teacher efficacy due to ever-increasing administrative workload. Likewise, Haiyan and Allan (2020) found that principals' multiple roles in supporting activities to improve learner performance reduced their time spent on initiating and supporting PLC's.

Insufficient time is also seen as another challenge affecting school leaders' roles in supporting teachers' professional development (Meesuk et al., 2020; Botha, 2019). According to research literature (Botha, 2019; Meesuk et al., 2020), insufficient time has been identified by principals' as affecting their leadership roles in supporting and improving teachers' instructional practices. The heads of departments from Kuwait also identified limited time as a challenge in their quest to support pre-service teachers' professional growth through peer coaching (Alsaleh, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, some studies revealed inadequate subject knowledge and obsolete pedagogical knowledge of school leaders among the challenges in developing teachers professionally (Mestry, 2013; van Wyk, 2020). Olurotimi and Ekere's (2017) study also indicated that Nigerian HoDs indicated facing a similar challenge that hampered their instructional supervision roles aimed at improving teacher effectiveness.

Theoretical framework

This study was framed by a blend of functional, instructional and distributed leadership theories, something that might be referred to as *functional-distributed-instructional leadership*. This blended model of school leadership, underlining the dynamic nature of leadership roles in schools, provides a theoretical framework to explore the challenges facing the Namibian principals and HoDs in their efforts to support the professional development of their teachers. Functional-distributed-instructional leadership acknowledges that principals and

HoDs are tasked with the functions of supporting teacher professional development (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019), but such functions require multiple actors (Spillane, 2005). Hence, the distribution of leadership to provide instructional leadership for improved teaching practice (Costello, 2015; Day & Sammons, 2020).

The functional leadership theory is a relevant ingredient to the blend of leadership theories underpinning this study as it helps to explain that the functions of school principals and HoDs are not devoid of several challenges. The study was also framed by the distributed leadership framework which contributes to teacher efficacy when aligned with teacher professional development (Crespo, 2016). Distributed leadership assumes that all members of an organisation have unique skills and expertise and therefore they have influential abilities for the success of organisational processes (Gumus et al., 2018). While remaining cognisant of that assumption, the study attempted to gain insight into counter-factors that principals and HoDs experienced daily and that affected school leaders' abilities to provide or facilitate professional development activities for teachers in schools.

The adopted blend of theories also included the instructional leadership theory. The theory indicates that instructional leaders should concern themselves with managing and supervising teaching and learning processes (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Mestry, 2013). Therefore, instructional leaders are expected to take action to promote excellence in teaching and learning (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). Based on this understanding, the study attempted to understand the factors that hinder these actions and most particularly the instructional supervisory responsibilities of principals and HoDs aimed at developing teachers professionally.

Research methodology and design
The study on which this article is reported used the mixed-methods. The mixed-methods approach was implemented using sequential explanatory design in the study that led to the findings reported in this article. As contented by Creswell and Clark (2017) and Creswell and Creswell (2017), the utilisation of the sequential explanatory design is defined by two major models, namely the follow-up explanations model and the participant selection model. For the purpose of obtaining rich detailed knowledge on the research topic, the study used a follow-up explanation model which enabled me to gather qualitative data that best explained the variables being investigated. However, the findings reported in this article emanated from the qualitative phase of the study only.

Profiles of the participants
In the sample, eight (8) of the 14 participants were female, making them the majority. At the time of the interviews the participating principals and HoDs had between 2 and 23 years of experience in their current positions. Furthermore, of the 14 participants, 6 (43%) indicated that they had completed an honours degree, 3 (21%) a diploma and 3 (21%) a master's degree. Hence, the assumption was that the participants had a relatively high intellectual capacity and extensive experiential knowledge. The profiles of the participants are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Profiles of the participants

Category of participants: Principals				
Code	**Gender**	**Age**	**Years of experience in the position**	**Qualification**
Principal 1	Male	41	2	Master's
Principal 2	Male	46	3	Master's
Principal 3	Female	43	6	Bachelor
Principal 4	Male	41	3	Bachelor
Principal 5	Female	56	16	Honours
Principal 6	Male	54	23	Honours
Category of participants: HoDs				
Code	**Gender**	**Age**	**Years of experience in the position**	**Qualification**
HoD 1	Female	28	2	Honours
HoD 2	Female	36	4	Diploma
HoD 3	Male	33	6	Honours
HoD 4	Female	35	6	Masters
HoD 5	Female	41	8	Diploma

HoD 6	Male	48	2	Diploma
HoD 7	Female	52	12	Honours
HoD 8	Female	48	8	Honours

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected by means of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with six principals, and eight HoDs that were more in the form of dialogues, as opposed to question and answer (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). These interviews were aimed at mining the viewpoints and lived experiences of participants related to the phenomenon being studied (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). All the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed. Inductive data analysis was used as individual ideas in the collected data were combined to generate a broader and more comprehensive description of the research topic (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Ethical considerations

Firstly, an application was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria for ethical clearance, and it was successfully granted. Secondly, a request was submitted to the director of the Otjozondjupa Regional Directorate of Education, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in Namibia to obtain permission to collect data at the selected schools within the Otjiwarongo circuit. Initially all the prospective participants were provided with letters in which their rights and responsibilities were explained. They were required to sign a consent form in which they acknowledged that they were informed of their rights and responsibilities and possible consequences of their participation.

Limitations of the study

The study could have included the broader Namibian context by sampling respondents from across all 14 (fourteen) education regions of the country, but logistically it were not feasible. Hence, the study only gathered data from respondents and participants in the Otjiwarongo education circuit. This presented a contextual limitation as challenges experiences of school leaders in other regions might be different depending on their prevailing contextual and situational context. Therefore, the study on which the article reports adopted the triangulation approach, which helped to improve the credibility of the research findings.

Findings and discussions

The interview data from the principals and HoDs show that there were numerous challenges experienced by school leaders that affected their efforts in supporting TPD programs at their schools and beyond. The major challenges that emanated from the data were: lack of or inadequate resources; lack of or insufficient time; leaders' multiple responsibilities; resistance from teachers; lack of or poor governmental support; and school leaders poor subject knowledge and pedagogies. Most of these challenges revealed by the data were consistent with those reported in the extant literature (Botha, 2019; Haßler, 2015; Louws et al., 2016; Maass & Engeln, 2018). Each of these challenges are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Inadequate or lack of resources

There is an abundance of studies that revealed that inadequate or the lack of resource provision was one of the challenges experienced in the support of TPD activities and their successful implementation (Bekere, 2021; Botha, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kafu, 2014). According to some of these studies, physical, financial and human resources are primary commodities for success in any educational space and therefore their non-availability or inadequacy present challenges to any educational leader (Bekere, 2021).

Similarly, the participants in this study also identified and narrated inadequacy or the lack of resources as one of the challenges that school leaders experienced in their efforts to develop their teachers professionally. The following extracts illustrate the participants' frustrations: *"Funding, when there are not resources. As principals and HODs we sometimes come up with so many ideas, but at times the activities require finances, and in the absence of financial resources some activities will not be executed. And the issue of time, we are just loaded with too much admin"* (Principal 1). *"Sometimes we do prioritise CPD activities, but there is a lack of funds. Even if there are funds, there are other pressing issues like the copying cost is really increasing"* (HoD 2). *"Lack of resources at our school such as fast internet and computers for teachers to work on in the afternoon and to improve themselves"* (Principal 2). *"Funds that the ministry gives us are sometimes not available or enough to buy the materials needed by teachers to implement*

ideas they have learnt at workshops or from other colleagues" (HoD 4).

It is further evident from the findings that much needed facilities such as reliable internet and other needed hardware and teaching equipment were often lacking due to inadequate and insufficient funding from the government. Some participants also narrated that it was impossible to use the limited funds allocated to teacher development programs while the operational costs of the schools kept increasing. These findings are supported by Haßler et al. (2015) who found that the lack of relevant infrastructure and insufficient school resources challenged school-based professional development programs in Zambian primary schools. Similarly, Oluremi (2013) also found that insufficient funding and ever-decreasing financial resources challenged Nigerian principals' efforts to implement learning improvement programs.

A study conducted in China also identified poor financial support as one of the factors that weakened the success of PLCs in that country (Zhang et al., 2017). Botha's (2019) study conducted in the Ekurhuleni district of the Gauteng province in South Africa also found that funds allocated for teachers' knowledge and skills development were transferred to areas with essential needs at schools.

Lack of or insufficient time

Consistent with the findings by Meesuk et al. (2010) and Alsaleh et al. (2017), the findings of this study revealed that lack of or insufficient time was another challenge that affected the school leaders' efforts towards supporting the professional growth of teachers. For example, three of the HoDs who participated in the study had this to say: *"Time is a big challenge. As a HoD, I want to help all my teachers, but I have my own teaching and I do struggle to reach out to everyone"* (HoD 6). *"Unfortunately, we don't have enough time because remember we are also teachers having classes and time for class visits and control is a problem"* (HoD 3). *"There are so many interfering programs that the teachers and I must also attend to. Afternoons are filled with extra-mural activities and school hours are for teaching, so that means no time to organise workshops"* (HoD 1).

The data seem to indicate that although school leaders perceived TPD as a positive practice, they did not have sufficient time to implement the much needed instructional support. The participants indicated that they did not have enough time to effectively evaluate, monitor and devise individualised support to every teacher. In line with this finding, researchers argue that sufficient time is a determining factor that can hinder or stimulate the successful implementation of the TPD activities (Gaikhorst et al., 2019). Another study also revealed time as an inhibitor towards teacher participation in professional development programs as facilitated by the school management members (Botha, 2019).

Leaders' multiple responsibilities

Several research studies attest that principals' roles and responsibilities are multi-faceted, ranging from managing human relations, financial resources, school improvement plans to administrative functions of handling daily correspondences with education authorities and learner discipline (Mestry, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2016). These roles and responsibilities of contemporary school leaders are becoming increasingly complex with new ones emerging with policy changes (Bekere, 2021; Chua et al., 2020; Olurotimi & Ekere, 2017).

The participants in this study revealed that the numerous roles and responsibilities they were expected to carry out daily were another challenge that limited their efforts in supporting their teachers to improve in subject knowledge and pedagogy. This was illustrated in the following extracts from the participants' responses: *"With so many daily activities at school, the whole issue of professional development is consumed within the activities of the school and professional development is set aside"* (Principal 5). *"Sometimes as principals and HoDs, we have a lot of work to do especially administrative work…. We are expected to teach and at the same time do administrative work, we spent too much time on our own teaching"* (HoD 2). *"Another challenge is just to help and develop teachers who are adults is really a difficult task, I must also do good in my own class, facilitate sports, fundraising programs, seriously we already have too much to take care of"* (HoD 8). *"You know the administration we have to do as educators, and do class visits, plan training programs, help novice or struggling teachers. It is too much but anyway we are trying"* (HoD 5).

It appears from the above responses that the administration of the activities geared towards improving teachers' practices was a mammoth task and added to the already loaded administrative duties carried out by the

principals and HoDs. Olurotimi and Ekere (2017) argue that multiple school activities already exert greater responsibilities on school principals, thereby making it a challenge for them to be active instructional supervisors. Furthermore, it also agrees with Bekere (2021) who states that school principals' workload never reduces as the daily challenges of running a school keep escalating, thereby limiting the time to focus on improving teachers' efficacy. The findings further support evidence from a study by Haiyan and Allan (2020) that the demand for increased academic performance also expects school leaders to focus on supervising and monitoring assessment activities and less energy is spent on creating and supporting PLC friendly school environment. Similarly, O'Brien et al. (2016) also established that school leaders are challenged with multiple roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, in a South African study, increased administrative workload of principals was ranked as the second highest factor that hinders principals' active roles in PLC (Naidoo, 2019). Based on these findings it is important for school leaders to embrace and adopt distributed leadership practices by sharing the leadership roles with other members of the school community with much needed and varied competencies.

Resistance from teachers
The majority of the participants expressed their frustrations regarding teachers' resistance and unwillingness towards the support provided to them to improve their teaching practice. In this regard, eleven (11) out of fourteen (14) participants echoed this as a challenge that affected their efforts in contributing to the professional development of their teachers.

Consistent with the findings of Naidoo (2019), this study revealed that the Namibian principals and HoDs were challenged by teachers' resistance to embrace professional learning support provided to them and that they were often hesitant to implement new knowledge and practices in their teaching. This was evidenced in the following extracts: *"...teaching staff not open and available enough for professional development opportunities, the response from teachers, and the dismal response to what is planned from the teachers. Teachers' availability to whatever program is offered..."* (Principal 8). *"Sometimes you really just have the staff that is not co-operating"* (HoD 1). *"Some teachers,*

especially the senior teachers, think they know it all and sometimes they are not willing to change or learn new methods or skills and do not make time for these things because they think it's not important" (HoD 3). *"Lack of commitment from teachers, even when there are opportunities"* (Principal 2). *"The challenge is some of the teachers are just reluctant, some teachers don't want to be helped. You explain something to them, you give them an example and the next time they give in their lesson plan or their activities you find out that [the] person hasn't followed the method. Later on, it starts to become a fight between you and them"* (HoD 4). *"The other challenge is the unwillingness of teachers to co-operate at the school. They sometimes do not see me as the HoD, and they go to the principal just to hear the same thing"* (HoD 5).

The responses showed that teachers and their responses to the professional development support presented itself as a challenge to the principals and HoDs. The participants also revealed that some teachers did not prioritise activities that their principals and HoDs planned and implemented to help them improve their weaknesses and support them for better instructional processes. This finding lends support to the results of a study conducted by Botha (2019) who also found teachers' unwillingness towards their professional development due to their poor understanding of its value in their teaching practice. Additionally, Chua and colleagues (2020) found that teacher reluctance and know-it all attitude were identified by school administrators as challenges that affected the implementation of PLC. In their study, Maass and Engeln (2018) also found that teachers were not open to adopt inquiry-based learning in their practice, citing lack of relevant resources such as computers and internet facilities as reasons.

Furthermore, researchers also argue that teachers' attitudes and willingness toward their professional development were greatly affected by their temperaments and future career outlooks (Cremin & Arthur, 2006). According to the researchers, these challenges prevent teachers from accepting their weaknesses and seeking advice from others (Chua et al., 2020; Maass & Engeln, 2018).

Lack of governmental support
The challenge of poor governmental support identified in this study lends support to the findings by Naidoo (2019) who found that support from district offices in South Africa was

perceived to be one of the drawbacks that affect principals' leadership roles. The participants' views related to lack of or poor governmental support as a challenge are given in the following extracts: *"Support system, from the supervisor, if there is a need to build the capacity of teachers, there should be somebody monitoring that to ensure it is done"* (Principal 1). *"When teachers go on professional development such as studies, government is also not opting to cater for the relieve teachers"* (HoD 4). *"All of us want our teachers to study and implement new knowledge and skills, but for a teacher to study, study leave is an issue. Regional offices do not want to approve and pay substitute teachers"* (Principal 6). *"The issue is HoDs and principals are expected to do so much with teachers, while the advisory teachers [at the regional office] are just there idling in their offices or they go for principal posts and there is not enough experts to help"* (HoD 7).

These extracts show that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture with its established professional divisions were somewhat failing on the continuous development of teacher professional competencies and skills, hence the absence of specific policies. Researchers argue that the lack of relevant policies that support and enforce professional development in schools affects teachers' zeal and motivation to embrace the efforts provided by their leaders (Louws et al., 2016). Similarly, in a qualitative study in Kuwait, HoDs recommended that the ministerial policy frameworks should champion peer coaching, thereby enabling HoDs to effectively supervise teaching (Alsaleh et al., 2017). Chua and colleagues (2020) also attest that without regular support from major administrative offices, the impact of PLCs will remain a mere dream and teacher involvement will cease.

The responses further indicated poor governmental support because the regional directorate of education seemed not to have sufficient staff compliment dedicated to TPD and the subsequent monitoring thereof. This finding is similar to that of Olurotimi and Ekere (2017) who attributed poor instructional supervision from the area education office (AEO) officials in Nigeria to understaffing issues. The data also revealed that school leaders' efforts to promote continuous learning for teachers were further crippled as the education authorities were very hesitant to approve and cater for paid study leave. This corresponds to findings by Botha (2019) who reported that the South African Department of

Basic Education provides inadequate support to schools with regards to TPD. This can be attributed to the non-existence of effective communication between the schools and the Department of Basic Education on aspects of teacher development (Botha, 2019).

Poor subject knowledge and pedagogies

Recent studies by Naidoo (2019), van Wyk (2020), Olurotimi, and Ekere (2017) and Mestry (2017) have established that school leaders need to have professional competencies inclusive of contemporary subject knowledge and pedagogical practices. It was further revealed in prior studies that HoDs are challenged with issues of sub-standard subject knowledge attributing it to poor teacher training programs (Mestry, 2017).

In support of the literature, the data revealed that the principals and HoDs of the participating schools in this study were challenged with outdated subject knowledge and pedagogies. This was demonstrated by the following comments by the participants: *"Principals and HoDs have obsolete subject knowledge and teaching methods, some principals and HoDs themselves are not up to date with subject knowledge of the new curriculum and new ways of teaching"* (Principal 1). *"Another challenge is lack of knowledge. As I said, you can only mentor someone if you are fully equipped with knowledge and skills"* (HoD 2). *"You see this is the problem I am sitting with seeing that my master subject is Biology. So, I have 30 years past knowledge of Physics, Maths, Chemistry, but definitely not now at the point that I would see a mistake you have made in your Physics or in your Chemistry"* (HoD 7). *"We are from the old school, so that in itself is a challenge because my knowledge of subjects has aged and I really do not know these new ways of teaching, using projectors and PowerPoint things. So, it's really a challenge. How do I help teachers that know better than me?"* (Principal 5).

This finding is similar to the findings by van Wyk (2020) who reported that poor curricular and instructional support from school leaders occurred because of inadequate levels of subject knowledge proficiency. van Wyk (2020) further revealed that as instructional leaders, principals needed sufficient subject knowledge to facilitate teacher support programs. Naidoo (2019) argues that aspiring and practicing principals need up to date instructional competencies. This corresponds with the findings by Olurotimi and Ekere (2017) who

point out that heads of departments' instructional supervision was challenged by lack of relevant skills and knowledge in some subjects. The findings of this study also concurred with those by Bekere (2021) who also points out that school principals require up to date and relevant knowledge and skills in order to carry out their leadership responsibilities.

The theoretical framework of this study recognises school principals and HoDs as functional leaders who devise specific actions to fulfil the individual needs of teachers, thereby achieving team success. However, the assumption of the functional leadership theory that leaders' functions can be crippled by external forces aligns with the findings as discussed above as the instructional roles and responsibilities of school leaders toward supporting teacher professional development were challenged by multiple factors. Furthermore, as instructional leaders, they were responsible for managing the instructional programs as highlighted in the Weber's instructional leadership framework (Kgatla, 2014).

Conclusion

School leaders' efforts to develop their teachers professionally are indeed not spared of challenges that limit school leaders' efforts. These challenges included: inadequate or lack of resources, lack of or insufficient time, leaders' multiple responsibilities, resistance from teachers, lack of or poor government support and leaders' poor subject knowledge and pedagogies. The participants argued that these challenges made it more difficult for principals and HoDs to enact leadership roles to support their TPD. Addressing these issues is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of TPD initiatives, thereby improving the overall educational outcomes. For meaningful progress, it is crucial for stakeholders, including the government, educational authorities and school communities to collaborate and provide the necessary support and resources to schools and its leaders to overcome these challenges.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommends the following:
- The head office of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture together with the Regional Directorates of Education need to prioritize the allocation of resources such as an increased ring-fenced budget allocation and logistical support to schools to ensure that school leaders have sufficient funds to support TPD initiatives.
- The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in collaboration with the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) or other state training institutions need to provide in-service training to school principals and HoDs on school leadership, administration and change management for them to be equipped on handling multiple responsibilities.
- In consultation with the Ministries Inspectorate, school leaders need to integrate dedicated professional development periods into the regular school schedule to combat the issue of insufficient time. Additionally, Regional Directorates must avoid scheduling teacher professional development activities during school hours but during school holidays and mid-term breaks. This would ensure that teachers have consistent and focused time for professional growth, minimizing conflicts with their teaching and administrative duties.
- The Programs and Quality Assurance (PQA) division at the head office needs to collaborate with Institutions of Higher Learning and develop subject specific short courses that will equip school leaders with subject content and pedagogy relevant to the new syllabuses. That will help school leaders stay current with subject specific best practices and effective instructional supervision strategies.

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