Schoolboard members' involvement in school governance: A case of five schools in Omuthiya circuit, Oshikoto, Namibia

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Abstract
School board members are facing numerous challenges in their delivery process right across Namibia. The challenges being faced in these boards are affecting schools in various ways. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by school board members in Omuthiya circuit in service delivery processes. The study adopted a qualitative research strategy to collect data from 14 participants who were selected through the purposive sampling strategy. The study set to achieve the following objectives: (a) To investigate the role of the school boards in the administration of the schools in Omuthiya circuit. (b) To determine the challenges faced by School Board Members in the administration of schools in Omuthiya Circuit. (c) To make some recommendations on how the challenges faced by the school board members can be mitigated in the circuit in order to improve their administration. The findings of the study indicated that the school board members had a major role to play in deciding who should teach and who should not, by recommending appointments of teachers, recommend dismissal of staff members, manage school finances and manage the discipline of both teachers and learners. The study also found that the roles of school boards in management of schools had challenges that included irregular meeting attendance, lack of finances, blamed for failures and lack of knowledge of school governance and lack of cooperation between members. Based on these findings, the study recommended for the school board members training before resuming their duties. The study further recommended for increased involvement of school boards in school responsibilities. In addition, it was also recommended that there is a need to encourage team work among school board members.

Keywords: *school boards, challenges, school governance, administration, mitigation*

Introduction

Before Namibia became independent in 1990 the colonial education system was split in ethnic and racial grounds for the purpose of benefiting some tribes at the expense of others. This ended up creating a discontinuity in the way tribes would access education since some tribes were thought to be more superior to others (Hailombe, 2011). There was unequal sharing of resources and power in schools. For this reason, the participation of the blacks in education was very minimal since the education system favoured the white minority at the expense of the black majority. Of the few parents whose children had access to education, they had very little to do in the management of their children's education since they were not literate, and their roles in the organisation of the schools were not clearly defined by the system during the colonial era (Mendelsohn, 1997). The colonial system did not also consider that parents had a role to play in the teaching and learning processes in the schools and the colonial system of that time undermined their role to an extent that if learners had problems in learning, only the school teachers and management were in a position to assist and not the parent (Namibia Ministry Education and Culture, 1993).

The attainment of Namibian independence gave rise to several reforms in the education system of modern Namibia. Some of the main goals of education were to attain equality and improve the quality of education, enhancing democracy and bringing forth the anticipated developmental standards (Naidoo, 2005). This change brought about various expectations such as the shifting of the management focus form, the then authoritarian

to the democratic ruling for the purpose of bringing forth tolerant citizens' representations and undivided participation, ensuring that the education system is sustainable, transparent, accountable and effective (Naidoo, 2005) .

For this reformation to be realized, the Namibian government had to implement policies that were geared towards changing the educational oppressions which the black majority suffered. This was meant to help the policy reform process in the Namibian Education system. Such policies like the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 which is derived from the Namibian Constitution, and puts emphasis on the narrative that educational training should be centred around the elements of democratic and agency participation in the education reformation process. Part 5, subsection 16 of the Constitution states that: "All state funded schools must have a panel that is meant to oversee the running of the school and all the modalities of the school and should further work on the element of fairness of the learners and fair treatment of the teachers who are the main participants in the learning and teaching processes; and that the Minister of Education should collaborate with the Minister of Finance to avail finances which will be used to manage the schools and these finances need to be audited regularly and reports need to be sent to the auditor general on how such finances were spent."

The Namibian Education Act recommends that the schools be managed and run by the school management, the teachers and the entire community in which the school is operating (Naidoo, 2005). This means that a school is an organisation that must not be run like someone's home but like a corporate entity or organisation which has respect for all its stakeholders. This entails that the school management or school principals should not claim that they own the school but, are rather partners in the school formation and makeup (Alan, 2014). Effective running of the schools should be done through the establishment of the school board which has the overall say over the running of the schools. Schoolboard members are selected by the school principal, the community and all the other stakeholders of the school (Abwala, 2014). The idea of schoolboard suggests that these stakeholders contribute in the policymaking and education

of the school and take office in the general school authority and governance (Aklmao, 2016). The National Standard Pointers and the National Curriculum for Basic Education encourage stakeholder representation in the children's education, comprising the decision-making process and in general school authority activities. What is contentious in the function of the School Board as the decision-making body, which comprises of the staff, Learner Representative Council (LRC) and parents, is the division of the responsibilities and duties.

The primary problem connected with school control is that, the correctness of the members sometimes is merely held to certain members of the staff. Whereby if some members like parents do not actually see what is anticipated from them, it becomes very challenging to reach knowledgeable conclusions. For example, some of the decisions involved demands understanding of a specific policy than that of a chairperson and only the school principal or the instructors who are part of the school board can understand better or able to construe such policy documents. In other words, the level of education of some members of the school board might affect the decision-making procedure of how the school house should be run which may bear on the educational activity and learning process in the end. The involvement of the researchers to undertake this work comes from their own professional experiences. The schoolhouse where the principal is, it is in a deep rural school and most of the parents, including the school board members are "illiterate" and are from a very poor social background. This means that they are not motivated and willing to take part in school activities. On the other hand, the researchers were also interested in knowing if the demographic position of the school has any effect on the participation of the parents. This has inspired them to carry out this work.

Since one of the researchers is a school principal, and an automatic member of the school board, had encountered and experienced situations whereby schoolboard members making decisions that sometimes need thorough debate during meetings, however due to the fact that, some members of the board might not be in the position to understand the context of the agenda, it may probably limit

their participation in the discussion. The problem is rather complex and complicated in its nature, although these members were eligible and legally elected during a special parents' meeting in accordance with the Education Act 16 of 2001 section 19. There were no criteria of who to be elected to the board, for instance, looking at their level of education or area of expertise. As a result, even parents who were less educated were elected as schoolboard members because they might be influential in their community. The strength of their participation or even voting may not inevitably imply they get involved or understood whatever is being agreed upon. Unless otherwise a certain issue has been directly explained to them, for example decision to be decided by the board regarding the curriculum implementation whereby the school has to admit over-age learners, repeaters or a case that involves learners who happened to have committed misconducts and the school board has been mandated to overrule the previous decision to expel that specific learner. Although the school board is steered by the Education Act and the Constitution, the chance is higher that some panel members might not even understand or have read the Act together with the Constitution. This problem might affect teaching and learning processes in the sense that whenever a decision is to be implemented after being made by the board, the board is not often able to set clear direction to the teachers. For example, if the parents of the expelled child approach the office of the examiner or the director and such office may in return refer them back to the schoolhouse. The panel has to meet to overrule the determination. Wong and Shen (2005) in Ford (2013) elaborate on how policy debates in large urban shopping malls across the country have been informed by Wong and Shen's conclusions that boards can be a hindrance to learning. Also, here in Namibia whenever there is curriculum reform, it is customary the school board gathers input from both its members and the parents, who form part of the school board. At times, such inputs are not forthcoming as desired and as a result, parents are not given the opportunity to give their input or simply do not take such opportunities very seriously.

The studies did not highlight more on the credentials that are expected from the parents, such as their highest qualification. This often hinders governance process at the highest decision-making level of the school. Taking cognizance of the fact that the reviewed studies did not provide the best plan of attack on how to resolve disagreements, this study explored the involvement of school board members in the administration of the schoolhouse and the challenges experienced. Some of the challenges were conflicts and parents' point of instruction and interpreting their functions as school board members together with responsibilities.

Literature review
Theoretical framework
Theoretical framework that inspires the thinking and understanding of school governance issues is a theory on democracy by Guttmann's Theory of Democratic Education (Fisher, 2004). This theory identifies School Boards as the decision-making bodies in schools. This theory further suggests that:

> A democracy is thoughtful to the amount that citizens and their accountable governments offer one another ethically sound reasons for mutually binding laws in a progressive process of mutual consent (Fisher, 2004, p. 16).

To recognize the concept of equality in schools, the theory elaborates that education should be predictable in mounting the necessary negotiation skills among citizens. It progresses that the rights over education must be distributed equally among teachers, parents, communities (Fisher, 2004). Guttmann's democratic theory of education holds that teaching should endure inside the collective agency of the country, parents and teachers. Guttmann further elaborate that this model is democratic because of the following causes:

> Democratic inhabitants are persons partially instituted by subcommittee (such as their family, their work, play, civic, and religious groups), yet free to elect a way of life, suitable for their larger communal identity because no single sub-community commands absolute authority over their education,

unless the larger community has equipped them to do so (Fisher, 2004, p.17).

With this concept in mind, the study sought to address the gap in the studies already carried out so that the new body of literature would be able to assist many schools to revamp the school board with effort to close gaps and help with what need to be done as access, equity, democracy, quality and competence in the education delivery are concerned.

The school governance system in Namibia
Post-independence, schools in Namibia were managed by committees which were dominated by principals who reported directly to the government (Khama, 2014). Subsequently, this did not give a voice to both parents and learners to take part in the decision-making processes at school. The idea of how the schools should be administered from the perspective of parents and learners were overlooked. Khama (2014) points out that Namibia has been undergoing a process of change from a segregated system to a more inclusive and democratic education system. The school governance system was formalized and gazetted into a country with the Education Act 16 of 2001. Prior to that, the government developed the plan to decentralize most of the functions and power. The government at first established a decentralization policy which grants powers and authorities to all ministries and agencies to decentralize their functions to the regional levels (Dittmar, Mendelsohn, & Ward, 2002).

The Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2002,) indicates on decentralization in a planning document that: "states that the Ministry will evaluate its accountability for policy groundwork, superiority willpower and background measures. And the relevant regional education offices are to be fully combined into the new organizational constructions of the 13 regional councils" (p. 31). Furthermore, by making certain that the decentralization serves its purpose, the ministry has also entered upon another program which is called School Cluster (SC) in Namibia, established in 1996. The clusters provide a more coherent framework for planning other regional

services, including water provision, transport and electricity (Dittmar, Mendelsohn, & Ward, 2002). In addition, with the establishment of the Education Act, the ministry has been able to incorporate access, equality, quality, inclusivity and efficiency at the school level which was not the case prior to the implementation of the Education Act. By then, Dittmar, Mendelsohn, and Ward (2002) were able to present a forecast of how the Education Act, 16 of 2001 was being effected suggesting that the Act will among other things clearly spell out the rights and duties of school boards, regional recommended committees, regional exercise environments and associated bodies. The persistence of school boards in promoting and ensuring parental involvement is particularly commendable, and clusters encourage this by getting people composed to enhance communication in local residential areas" (p. 32).

Role of school boards in the governance of schools
A participatory approach to dealing with education matters adjudicated by the school boards can occur as follows: Firstly, one of the main roles of school boards is planning. A study by Morris (2015) in Jamaica revealed that school boards were involved in the planning, administration and financial management of schools for the purpose of promoting effective teaching and learning processes.

Secondly, education policy makers created school boards to ensure that management of schools becomes effective and, in the process, produce useful citizens (WSSDA, 2011). Similar to the arguments stated above, research in the USA showed that school boards set policies and created conditions conducive for effective management of schools by distributing resources and learning materials to schools within their jurisdiction (WSSDA, 2011).

Thirdly, the study conducted in Venezuela by UNICEF (2017) revealed that school boards were used as legal local school decision-making entity. This means that school boards decide on all operations, which suggests that they have the power to govern schools. Beckham and Wills (2018) found that local school boards work within the confines of state

rules and regulations which make them a legal agency of the state.

Fourthly, In the African context, the role of school boards is to develop the school vision, mission and strategies that generally improve teaching and learning (Iilonga, 2016). Moreover, Gentzel (2015) in a study conducted in Egypt found that school boards played a very important role in education. According to Gentzel (2015) school boards planning of the education agenda includes the whole community in creating a vision for learner achievement, adopt the vision, and create goals and policies to promote the vision, and communicate it and make use of it in all decision-making processes pertaining to schools.

Finally, in Namibia, school boards administer the affairs and development of the school as well as promote the education of the learners at the school as mandated by the Education Act 16 of 2001 (GRN, 2001). As such, the school board is an advisory and governing body at the school that represents parents, teachers, learners and the community committee that ensures that the school is effective in its teaching and learning activities.

The challenges experienced by Schoolboard Members in the management of the schools

Different publications outline numerous challenges faced by school boards (Iilonga, 2016; Kumalo, 2009; Onderi & Makori, 2013; Gentzel, 2015). Moreover, Iilonga (2016) postulates that the roles of school boards seem simple but are very difficult in reality because there are challenges that school boards face in executing their duties. Firstly, it has been found that there is a lack of knowledge and competence among school board members (Niitembu, 2006; Mestry, 2006; Kumalo, 2009; Chindanya, 2011; Iilonga, 2016). This low level of literacy hampers parents' democratic participation in decision-making, particularly in rural schools where they leave everything to the teachers, which goes against the fundamental role of school boards (Niitembu, 2006). This implies that some parents in school boards have no knowledge of Public Service Acts and regulations which make them to be always in disagreement with teachers who have knowledge of such statutes or to be always accepting everything proposed by

school administration without understanding its implications, which makes school board members ineffective and unable to exercise their powers to develop and implement school policies (GRN, 2001).

Secondly, there is a lack of unity and sense of shared responsibility among parents in school boards, and this makes some of them feel powerless while some teachers feel superior. In such a scenario, co-operation becomes a challenge in itself (Niitembu, 2006; Mokoena, 2011; Iilonga, 2016). In an empirical study by Mokoena (2011) in South Africa, it was found that the teachers' superiority complex had negative effects on parents' participation in school board activities which hindered co-operation and collaboration between the two groups.

Thirdly, it is believed that school boards are not sure of the roles that they must play in the management of schools. According to Carpenter (2011) school boards confuse school governance and school management. The two concepts differ in that school governance has policy formulation and implementation tasks while school management refers to activities that promote teaching and learning (Niitembu, 2006). This becomes a challenge due to the fact that there are likely to be role conflicts since it is not clear to school boards on who does what and when. Duma et al. (2011) maintains that school boards formulate school policies and enforce the implementation thereof while the school administration implements policies and organizes teaching and learning using what has been approved by the school boards. This again goes to show that school governance and school management are not the same, but are strongly linked.

Finally, researchers found that school boards in rural areas are not adequately trained yet they need some form of training because of the extended responsibilities that they are expected to shoulder (Niitembu, 2006; Kumalo, 2009; Baruth, 2013). The aforementioned challenges such as lack of knowledge and collaboration, and poorly designed roles and responsibilities coupled with lack of training make school board tasks extremely difficult, especially in disadvantaged rural areas where there are huge skill gaps, low literacy and poor educational background.

Strategies to improve the school board management of schools

With a host of challenges previously discussed, it shows that there must be strategies put in place to ensure that school governance is improved. Without improved and effective school governance, the idea of school boards will soon be water under the bridge. A number of strategies have been publicized by different writers and researchers. Among them are the following: Firstly, according to Baruth (2013) there must be a School Board evaluation instrument to assess school board's performance. The school board evaluation instrument should be designed in such a way that it measures the expected roles of each school board member to come up with the general performance of the whole school board. It must include meeting attendance, participation in meetings, control of discipline, planning abilities, staffing participation and financial management abilities (Baruth, 2013). Such an instrument is likely to motivate school boards to perform better.

Secondly, researchers agree that school boards have to be trained to give them adequate information on their roles and responsibilities (Niitembu, 2006; Kumalo, 2009; Amunyela, 2012; Baruth, 2013; Iilonga, 2016). Training of school board members can be at the beginning or can be through workshops and in-service training organised at the school level to make member conscious of their roles (Amunyela, 2012).

Thirdly, according to Khumalo (2009) school board members need recognition for their efforts and time spent doing school board duties. This suggests that there must be some sort of remuneration given to school boards. This could be in the form of sitting allowance or subsistence and travelling allowances or a wage of some sort. This is likely to encourage school board members to work hard in order to achieve school goals and objectives.

Fourthly, team work is considered as one of the most effective human resource management tools used to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of employees in any organisation (Onderi & Makori, 2012). Team work refers to a shared purpose and collective responsibility among members of the school board in order to achieve goal setting and to enable effective monitoring of progress, which improves school governance (Iilonga, 2016).

Fifthly, Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2006) and WSSDA (2011) pointed out that school boards that desire to improve must have a shared vision that is translated to strategic goals which will be used as success indicators. Such a strategic instrument with success indicators helps school board to continually check whether their vision orientated goals are driving every aspect of the school's programs. In line with this, Thatcher (2018) believed that establishment of school goals that are monitored consequently lead to the development of a school policy that guides school operations.

Finally, Iilonga (2016) maintained that the effectiveness of school boards is mainly determined by school board members' relationship with the principal. This is supported by Mokoena (2011) who emphasized that school board success is guaranteed if there is constant communication between school board members and the principal to share information, ideas, thoughts and feelings. This reduces disagreements in meetings. It also reduces school board domination by the principal and other barriers to school board management of schools. In such a scenario, there would be mutual respect and support from both parties who would start seeing each other as partners in education.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology in the form of a case study to collect data from the teachers. The qualitative methodology sought to elicit subjective diverse opinions of the participants in the study as it is used to gain an understanding of the main reasons and subjective opinions of the participant (Albert, 2010). Qualitative research methodology is too exploited to discover trends, beliefs and impressions (Baker, 2017). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2015), a case study design is a design that requires the researcher to understand a unique phenomenon that presents itself with an outstanding outlook. The study utilized the interpretative paradigm and was purely guided by the narrative approach. An interpretive paradigm guided by a narrative approach was used. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), an interpretative

paradigm has the strength that the researcher studies the participants in their natural settings and makes interpretations of what he or she sees. The population for the study comprised 90 parents, 60 instructors and 500 learners, giving a total of 650 people who were members of School Boards of the two selected Schools in the Oshikoto region. In this regard, 14 School Board members from five schools in Omuthiya circuit were selected. The researcher conducted semi structured interviews with participants out of the total population. A purposively selected sample of 14 participants who included (five headmasters, five learners who had recently served on the school board committee (currently or previously) and four teachers were selected. The researcher selected only those participants whom she knew would provide the needed information, because of

their involvements in dealings with the challenges of school governance through the board which is the highest decision-making body at the schools in Oshikoto region in the Omuthiya circuit.

The audiotaped data from the interviews was transcribed verbatim and was grouped into themes and categories which were aligned to answer the research questions of the study. These consisted of direct quotations from people about their perspectives, experiences, thoughts, beliefs and knowledge about school administration. The taped data and handwritten notes from the participants were analysed using categories and checking for regular cases and themes (Cohen, Manion, & Marrison, 2018) that were used to address the research objectives. Table 1 shows the themes and sub-themes.

Table 1: Themes that emerged from collected data

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Role played by school boards in the management of schools in Omuthiya circuit.	**Sub-Theme1.1**: Consultations and collaborations
	Sub-Theme1.2: Motivation of teachers and learners
	Sub-Theme 1.3: School development.
	Sub-Theme 1.4: Staffing processes
	Sub-Theme 1.5: School governance.
	Sub-Theme 1.6: Management of school finance.
	Sub-Theme 1.7: Management of discipline.
Theme 2: Challenges school boards face in the management of schools.	**Sub-Theme 2.1**: Irregular meeting attendance.
	Sub-Theme 2.2: Lack of finance.
	Sub-Theme 2.3: Blamed for failures.
	Sub-Theme 2.4: Lack of knowledge.
	Sub-Theme 2.5: Lack of Cooperation.
Theme 3: Strategies to improve school board members' role in the management of schools.	**Sub-Theme 3.1**: Increased involvement.
	Sub-Theme 3.2: Team work.
	Sub-Theme 3.3: Training and development.
	Sub-Theme3.4: Rewards for teachers and learners
	Sub-Theme3.5: Good relationships with principal.

Results

Participants' biographic information

The researchers found it necessary to collect demographic information of the participants because these were useful in the interpretation of the results and for determining if these characteristics had a relationship with how the participants responded. The analysis of the characteristics of the participants showed that

the research was worth conducting and could show what was transpiring in schoolboards in the Omuthiya circuit. Table 2 shows the biographic characteristics of the participants to give the readers a clear understanding of the people who supplied information presented in this chapter.

Table 2: Biographic information of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age of Participant	School Board Experience	School Name	Level of Education
1	Male	45 years	Principal	A	Master degree
2	Female	15 years	Learner	B	Learner grade 11
3	Female	50 years	Teacher	D	NSSCO
4	Male	30 years	Teacher	B	Bachelor degree
5	Female	18 years	Learner	A	Learner grade 12
6	Female	50 years	Principal	B	NSSCO
7	Male	34 years	B/member	A	Diploma
8	Male	14 years	Learner	A	Grade 9
9	Male	45 years	HOD	D	Bachelor degree
10	Female	38 years	HOD	C	NSSCO
11	Female	40 years	Principal	C	Bachelor Degree
12	Female	29 years	HOD	E	Bachelor degree
13	Female	40 years	Principal	D	Bachelor Degree
14	Male	56 years	B/member	E	Diploma

Roles of school Boards in the management of schools

School boards were seen as an integral part of the education system in Omuthiya circuit. They scored a number of successes in the management of teaching and learning as evidenced by the standards and quality of education in the area compared to that of other rural areas. The school Boards act as motivational force, local education inspectorate, guidance and counselling providers and suppliers of educational material to promote teaching and learning. Finding information of such magnitude about school boards showed that the main objective of the research was achieved.

The involvement of school boards in the education of children in Omuthiya agrees with the literature review. Know (2014) maintains that parental involvement in the education of children has tremendous influence on academic achievement and behaviour than when parents are excluded. The findings showed that the parents in Omuthiya circuit worked together with teachers to promote teaching and learning. This explains why the participants revealed that there was marked improvement in learners' attitudes towards school as well as improvements in learners' discipline. This is also echoed by Pagelio (2010), who believed that home is the first school – home partnership promoted information sharing that enables children to get the best out of a school.

Similarly, WSSDA (2011) supports the role of school boards in the management of teaching and learning, adding that school boards were established in many countries with the aim of promoting student achievement. Therefore, school boards are crucial. Without them, management of teaching and learning at local level would be jeopardised. School boards in Omuthiya perform a variety of functions. They are involved in staffing directly and indirectly. They act as the school advisory committee by their involvement in decision making processes when they participated in meetings. School boards manage school finances through budgeting, procurement and accounting responsibilities. They reduce misconduct among school learners' as well as among their teachers' by being involved in indiscipline deliberations. Above all, school boards in Omuthiya participated in school development programs. This showed that the researchers managed to gather functions of school boards which made the objective of the research to be achieved.

The findings revealed that the school boards were involved in a number of activities at the school, which made them an important integral part of school governance. This is supported by Beckham and Wills (2018) who stated that school boards control operations of schools, including school culture, school layout plan, school finance, procurement of resources and extra-curricular activities among others.

This is in line with Ranson and Crouch's (2009) community model, which focuses on the participation of communities in school governance to ensure that community interests are taken into account. It was found that school boards in Omuthiya circuit actively participated in school governance in different capacities to ensure that the needs of people who elected them were prioritized. This is also supported by Kurt Lewin's participative management theory that emphasises the importance of stakeholder participation in the management of institutions. This is similar to what is happening in Omuthiya, where parents, teachers and learners work together to enhance teaching and learning, which leads to the establishment of better schools. However, the findings in this study indicated that school boards were not necessarily involved in policy formulation. This is contrary to GRN (2001), which states that school principals use the views and opinions of school boards to create school policies. This shows that some policies guiding the operation of school boards were not implemented and interpreted as they should be. The following citations from participants support these claims:

"School boards encourage teachers as well as leaners' to work hard and always visit the school to ensure that this happens" (Participant 8)

"School boards ensure that there is active teaching and always motivate teachers and students to perform better" (Participant 9)

"School boards go for training to empower them to develop schools as part of their mandate according to the Education Act number 16 of 2001" (Participant 1)

"We recommend the appointment of teachers and staff members and even decide who should be expelled from the school" (Participant 3)

"Advise the school administration on the needs of the school. They make sure that the goals of the school are achieved" (Participant 6)

"Urge parents' to pay fees and manage the school finances. They are involved in the allocation of funds" (Participant 2)

"We involved in the deliberations of any misconduct by learners' and teachers' at the school" (Participant 5)

Challenges faced by school boards in the management of schools

The challenges faced by the school boards are many. Generally, school board members do not have knowledge of the roles of school boards due to lack of training and lack of commitment to the acquisition of knowledge about their responsibilities. Members fail to attend meetings for a variety of reasons. School board members do not receive any allowances for the work that they do which affects their commitment to duty. From the findings, there seemed to be lack of team work in school boards, which were dominated by educating members who were usually the school administrators. It was also found that school board members representing the parents did not have adequate knowledge of school board operations. They also did not show any interest in acquiring the necessary knowledge. This shows that identification of challenges faced by school boards in the management of schools was successful.

It was also found that school boards faced with challenges which agree with Iilonga (2016) who stated that the roles of school boards seem simple but were very difficult in reality because there were many challenges that impeded their work. The school boards in Omuthiya lacked proper orientation to their roles and poor meeting attendance. This is similar to Khumalo's (2009) findings, which indicated that the challenges faced by school boards included lack of school board operations knowledge, poor meeting attendance and poor communication systems.

Ways of improving school management boards

The study identified the best ways to improve school board management of teaching and learning. The participants made the following recommendations. Firstly, there must be training and education of all newly elected SBMs before their assumption of duty so that they would be able to conduct their duties efficiently and effectively. After such training the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture had to make follow up inspections to see if the

school boards were performing as they were mandated to do. If this did not work, then the selection criteria of SBMs should consider academic qualifications so that elected members had basic knowledge of secondary school operations.

Secondly, school boards should be allowed to be directly involved in the supervision of teaching and learning, by observing lessons and inspecting learners' books as well as other classroom activities. Their involvement enables them to effectively motivate the teaching and learning in the schools. Others suggested that school boards must even be allowed to have access to teachers' preparation files to convince themselves that the teachers are really doing their work and even write comments where possible. This might push teachers to be always up to date with their work.

Thirdly, even if SBMs were regarded as volunteers, their roles must be appreciated. The participants suggested that there must be an S & T for SBMs whenever they reported for meetings at the school so that they would be able to pay for transport and lunch. Others suggested that the government must budget for a little salary to be given to SBMs on a quarterly basis to motivate them to perform their duties. The school may even just provide refreshments and lunch if they seriously wanted maximum attendance of school board meetings.

Fourthly, there must be training and development for SBMs at the onset on their responsibilities as part of in-service training. The training and development for SBMs enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. It also imparts the skills necessary in their execution of duties. Findings showed that training and development of school boards is the pre-requisite of the school board chairperson and the principal.

Fifth, there must be a school board assessment instrument that might be used to assess the effectiveness of school boards so that school boards are motivated to do their roles without supervision.

The findings are in both agreement and disagreement with the literature review. Interviewees revealed that there is a need for training of school board members. This was in agreement with Iilonga (2016) who maintains that training of school board members at the beginning through workshops and in-service training at the school level was essential. Moreover, Cowell (2011) emphasises that training and development of school boards were one of the best strategies for improving school board performance, which is in agreement with the results of this study. Interviewees suggested that there must be a sitting allowance for SBMs at each meeting. According to Iilonga (2016), SBMs need recognition for their efforts and time spent doing school board duties. From the investigations, it was found that school boards were heavily involved in promoting teaching and learning in schools in Omuthiya Education circuit. This is in line with Gentzel (2015) who believed that school board effectiveness can be increased by focusing on student achievement. However, the school board's operations in Omuthiya were not monitored because they did not have a monitoring or supervision instrument as suggested by Baruth (2013). If school boards were assessed, then all challenges they face were likely to disappear. The following citations from participants support these claims:

"Financial problems make it difficult for school boards to attend meetings" (Participant 14)

"school boards' lack of finance is further compounded by the fact that school boards' work is done on a voluntary basis, there is no sitting allowance that they could use for subsistence and transport" (Participant 1)

"School boards are blamed when the school is not performing" (Participant 13)

"School board members have weaknesses educationally and mentally because of their backgrounds which make them to experience financial management challenges and school administration incapability" (Participant 1)

"There is no team work in school boards" (Participant 4)

"Schoolboard must show a lot of interest in teaching and learning so that learners' take their studies seriously" (Participant 9)

"Democratic decision making within the school boards and the board members must work as a team" (Participant 12)

"There must be collective decision making in the school boards meetings" (Participant 7)

"Training must be provided to school boards so that they develop proper skills of school governance" (Participant 8)

"School board lack of finance is further compounded by the fact that school board work is done on a voluntary basis, there is no sitting allowance that they could use for subsistence and transport" (Participant 1)

"Days when the principal is friendly, school board work are enjoyable" (Participant 6)

Areas for further research

The study was conducted to investigate the roles of school boards in the management of schools in the Omuthiya circuit only. This means similar studies should be conducted in other circuits in Oshikoto and other regions to compare findings and to find out what other school boards do in the management of schools. There is also need to clarify roles played by the principals in the management of schools to avoid role conflicts with other school management bodies such as Schoolboards. Again, other factors that affect SBM's involvement in schools such as accessibility of training materials, like computer equipment and strengthening the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the board members in schools should also be looked into. Additional research should be carried out to explore the effects of well trained, board members towards effective and efficient governance of the administration in the school.

Conclusion

The study has the following research-based conclusions: school boards in Omuthiya need to be trained so that they improve their efficiency and effectiveness. There is

overwhelming parental involvement in the education of their children, which isbearing fruits as there was evident seriousness in the teaching and learning. Without problems, school boards in Omuthiya were capable of recording the best school board practices in the Namibian education sector. The recommendations below suggest ways that could be used to eradicate the challenges faced by Omuthiya school boards in order to revamp the school board concept within the circuit. The major weakness identified is school boards know very well that they should be actively involved in policy making and financial management, but the level of education of the majority of members incapacitate them which makes school boards to be dominated by school administrators as a result.

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