Dr Stanley C. Chombo

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Exploring The Roles And Responsibilities Of Principals In School Governance In Zambezi Region, Namibia

Dr Stanley C. Chombo[1*], Dr Gerald Kela[2], Dr Evans K Simasiku[3]

[1*]Faculty of Education and Human Sciences School of Education Department of Applied Educational Sciences (DAES) University of Namibia Katima Mulilo Campus schombo@unam.na
[2]Faculty of Education and Human Sciences School of Education Department of Intermediate and Vocational Education (DIVE) University of Namibia Katima Mulilo Campus gkela@unam.na
[3]Department of Wildlife Management and Tourism Studies University of Namibia Katima Mulilo Campus esimasiku@unam.na

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. A qualitative research approach was employed. To solve the problem in this study, the researchers narrowed the population so that only principals from the Zambezi region formed part of the study. Purposive sampling was employed in this study. The researchers made choices regarding which participants or groups to include in the sample and selected five principals to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. The researchers utilized interviews as data collection technique in this study. A qualitative data analysis (QDA) was employed in this study. It was established from the findings that principals' roles and responsibilities in school governance were immense. They had to ensure that the curriculum and day-to-day activities of the school were implemented. It, furthermore, states that the principal has to implement the school curriculum and ministerial policies. It was revealed that principals maintained discipline at the school for both teachers and learners. It was also their responsibility to ensure that the infrastructure was maintained.

Keywords: School Governance, Roles, Responsibilities, Principals

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016:22-23) states that every principal must show leadership and be able to manage a school. The school leadership requires a principal to give direction to the school so that the function and purpose of the school can be fulfilled. It is, however, important to note that the principal's relationship with the school board is influenced by the school's values and mission, as well as by the school board's constitution. As a key institution for effective governance and support of the school, the school board is at the disposal of the principal. In addition, the principal is morally and legally obliged to cooperate with the school board in the best interest of the school.

Furthermore, the principal is an important person in the school community and is accountable to parents, learners, the committees and the school community at large. The principal is a representative of the Ministry of Education and, therefore, must lead by example and set high standards for him-/herself (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2016:23). Xaba and Nhlapo (2014:425) affirm that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the school. In matters of school governance, the principal is answerable to his/her employer by assisting the school board with the performance of its functions and responsibilities in terms of policy and legislation.

Research objective

To explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia

Literature review

Role of the principals

Balyer (2014:25) states that the functions of the principal include issues, such as organizational development, managing decision making, systemic planning, designing a safe atmosphere and environment, managing the curriculum, preparing the school schedule, supporting teachers' professional development and financial school activities. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016:23) and Mestry (2017:258) posit that the work of the principal involves overseeing the day-to-day administration and supervision of all the aspects of the school. He/she has to implement the school curriculum and the Ministry's policies. In addition, the principal is responsible for delegating responsibility to ensure effective administration

and management. Equally, the principal should encourage the professional and personal development of teaching and non-teaching staff. Similarly, the principal is responsible for finding solutions to problems experienced, as well as ensuring the overall welfare of all at the school. Furthermore, the principal is responsible for creating an atmosphere conducive to the learners' personal development, a sense of responsibility and self-discipline. Besides this, principals can improve the teaching and learning environment by creating conditions conducive to improved curriculum management. They are responsible for creating a positive school climate, motivating teachers and learners, as well as to manage resources effectively to enhance best instructional practices. They play an important role in the development and maintenance of academic standards, which include the knowledge and skills that learners are expected to learn in a subject and in each Grade. Important to mention is that the principal is responsible for reporting to parents through the school board and parent meetings and inviting parents to meetings. Moreover, the principal deals with disciplinary matters involving learners and teachers. Lastly, the principal is responsible for attending meetings and seeking support for his school from various people and authorities.

Nzoka and Orodho (2014:89) affirm that the role of the principal should be that of an advisor to students, teachers and the community. They state that the principal should be in a position to identify possible threats against retention rates and reverse the situation. In addition, the principal needs to act as a counsellor to not only the students but also parents and teachers because this could assist all parties interested in the educational life of the learners in order for them to appreciate the need to be educated. The principal should endeavor to provide the best school climate to entice students to complete their schooling by making school free from violence, threats, intimidation, hatred and witch-hunting. He/she should develop a rich co-curriculum and remedial interventions for slow learners in order to avoid repetition, frustration and dropout. Naidoo, Mncube and Potokri (2015:319) point out that the principal should be seen as a fundamental agent of transformation, creating space for deliberation and dialogue so that all stakeholders are actively involved in the school governing body. They stress that training or capacity building for all representatives of stakeholders on the SGB is recommended.

In its report, the Wallace foundation (2013:6-15) and Krasnoff (2015:3-7) advocates the five functions of principals, which include:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all learners based on high standards.

Although they say it in different ways, researchers who have studied educational leadership come to an agreement that effective principals are responsible for establishing a school's vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all learners. In addition, the principal should ensure that the concept of academic success for all is picked as a school learning improvement agenda that focuses on goals for learner progress.

- Creating a climate welcoming to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.

Principals should ensure that their schools allow both adults and children to put learning at the center of their daily activities.

- Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school's vision.

A broad and longstanding consensus in leadership theory holds that leaders in all occupations and all kinds of organizations, public and private schools need to depend on others to realize the group's purpose, and need to encourage the development of leadership across the organization.

- Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and learners to learn at their utmost.

Principals work persistently to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction and help define and promote high expectations, attack teacher isolation and fragmented efforts and connect directly with teachers and the classroom.

- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

Schools may be relatively small but their leadership challenges are far from small or simple. To get the job done at a school, principals need to make good use of the resources at hand.

The roles of the principal relate to one another. It is hard to carry out a vision of learner success if the school climate is characterized by learner disengagement or teachers who do not know which instructional methods work best for their learners (Wallace Foundation, 2013:7).

Research Methodology

This research is located within the interpretive paradigm. Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 25) state that, originally, the social sciences, such as Sociology, Psychology and Education, employed the same research approach as in the natural and physical sciences, namely a scientific method. It is important to mention that from the 1950s onwards, the assumption that the research approach employed for the description of the natural world

could be utilized unchanged for the social world was increasingly challenged. The challenge was that the subjects of research in the social sciences were people (individuals or groups), while the subjects of research in the natural and physical sciences were elements of the natural world, such as plants, animals, birds, insects, chemicals, atoms and the like. In this study, the participants in the research were principals in the Zambezi region. The way in which principals responded in this study depended largely on their experiences and circumstances, as well as their contexts. According to an interpretive paradigm, principals in this study constructed and merged their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interacted with the world around them (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015, p. 400). This paradigm was applied successfully in this study to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia.

A qualitative research approach was employed. Mills and Gay (2016, p. 25) define a qualitative research approach as "the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e. non-numerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest". An effort to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia was made by entering the research participants' setting to interview them and give meaning. This process included continuous engagement with principals to the point of data saturation.

A qualitative case study approach was employed. According to Yin (2014, p. 16), a case study is an empirical inquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the case and the context may not be clearly evident. Best and Kahn (2014, p. 265) posit that a case study examines a social unit as a whole. Given the nature of the study, the researchers employed a case study approach to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. A case study approach was appropriate in this study because it answered descriptive and explanatory questions (Mills and Gay, 2016, p. 419).

To solve the problem in this study, the researchers narrowed the population so that only principals from the Zambezi region formed part of the study. To be more specific, the researchers worked with principals of primary, combined and secondary schools in the Zambezi region.

Okeke and van Wyk (2015, p. 226) define a sample as a set of respondents or participants carefully chosen from a larger population for the purpose of conducting research. Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p. 59-60) affirm that sampling involves making decisions regarding which people, settings, events or behaviors to include in the study. The researchers decided how many principals would participate in the study. Purposive sampling was employed in this study. The researchers made choices regarding which participants or groups to include in the sample and selected five principals to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. The five principals were selected because they represented the Ministry of Education at the school, as ex-officio member of the school board.

Data collection technique

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The researchers utilized interviews as data collection technique in this study.

Interviews

For the purpose of this study, the researchers interviewed five principals in order to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. Interviews with principals were conducted at their respective schools. To be specific, all interviews with the five principals were conducted in their respective offices. The interviews with principals were appropriate to explore the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were employed as this type of interview is commonly utilized in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources (Maree, 2016, p. 93). The researchers prepared the semi-structured interview questions for principals beforehand, and included them in letters written to participants to enable them to prepare in advance for the scheduled interviews. In the letters, the researchers informed participants that the interviews were going to be recorded and that they were to last for twenty minutes. It is important to mention that, in the letters, the researchers informed participants that their identities in the study were going to be protected. The researchers provided participants with transcribed interviews for verification.

Data analysis

A qualitative data analysis (QDA) was employed in this study to analyze the data based on an "interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of meaning of a specific phenomenon by analyzing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon" (Maree, 2016, p. 109). QDA was the method best suited to explore the roles and

responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. For the purpose of this study, the researchers analyzed transcripts of interviews for five principals.

Findings

Profiles of principals

Table 1: Profiles of principals

Principals	Age	Gender	Qualification	Experience (Years)	School location	# of learners	# of School
John	45	Male	BEd (Hons)	17	Rural	449	One
Luke	44	Male	BEd (Hons)	5	Urban	710	Two
Mark	43	Male	BEd (Hons)	11	Rural	581	Three
Peter	42	Male	BEd (Hons)	9	Urban	970	Four
Samuel	54	Male	BEd (Hons)	1 yr. six months	Rural	659	Five

The data presented on Table 1 indicate that all five principals interviewed were male. Their ages ranged from forty to fifty-five years. With the exception of one principal with experience of one year and six months, the other principals who participated in this study had much experience as ex-officio members of the school board in the Zambezi region. The principal with one year and six months' experience was the oldest of the participating principals.

Roles and responsibilities of principals

In this section, the researcher presents the findings derived from the comments of principals regarding their roles and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities as principal and ex-officio member of the school board

Participating principals were asked to describe their roles and responsibilities as principals and ex-officio members of the school board. Their responses indicate clearly that they understood their roles and responsibilities. Below are the findings that emerged from their responses.

- Category 1: Implementation of day-to-day school activities

Participating principals' comments, as they responded to this question, concurred with one another. John, principal of School One stated that:

First of all, I am an overall implementer of the day-to-day activities at the school. I see to it that teaching and learning is taking place. Apart from that the implementation of the curriculum, which is mainly teaching and learning, I make sure that I maintain discipline at the school for both learners and teachers.

Samuel, principal of School Five affirmed that his work as a principal entailed the supervision of teachers and controlling their work. He said that he checked the work which teachers gave to learners. He revealed that he was not only an office principal but that he taught as well. Peter, principal of School Four emphasized that his role was to ensure that the curriculum was taught properly at the school. He pointed out that it was his responsibility also to ensure that every staff member had the proper resources at the school. He, furthermore, said that it was his role to ensure that learners received proper, as well as quality, education and that parents were satisfied with the education that their children were receiving at the school.

- Category 2: Advisor of SBMs

All participating principals interviewed stated that their role was to advise the school board. This was evident from the response of Peter, principal of School Four when he described his roles and responsibilities:

During school board meeting that is where I advise the SBMs on certain issues with regard to the smooth running of the school. You may realize that most of the SBMs are not from the field of education. So they don't have much knowledge of what is happening in schools. According to the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, now that is where I normally base my advices in explaining to them their responsibilities as SBMs. For examples, one of the roles of the school board is to come up with a school vision and mission. This is where I come in for advices. When it comes to disciplinary measures taken against learners or staff members, I advise the school board on these issues. I should not take sides but just to advise that if we have this case, the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 says this; maybe we also involve the PSSR, and I tell them that this case can be implemented this way. So, now it is up to the school board to take a decision. In actual fact they make recommendations. What happens is that this SBMs, remember it comprises of the teachers, learners and the parents, so the recommendations that the school board come up with should be mainly made by the parents who are serving on the school board. The majority of the SBMs are from parents, in this way, decision taken by the school board can be seen to be fair.

John, principal of School One, stressed that:

My other role is to maintain the infrastructures and also to advise the school board to see to it that if we need new infrastructure we have to apply through the Regional Director's office, through to the Permanent Secretary. I am also accountable for the school finance and also to link the school to the outside world. In this case the parents, the circuit office, the regional office and main stakeholders who have interest in the school. I also serve as an adviser to the school board and to the community which I serve.

Mark, principal of School Three, emphasized his role and responsibility as:

When it comes to being a member of the school board, I play an advisory role. I always make sure that our SBMs are clear when it comes to policies, the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, the Public Service Act and the work of the school board. These documents are written in English. It is my task to ensure that all that is contained in these documents are well explained to SBMs. I have to make sure that the school board follows all that is articulated in these policies and the Acts of the government. So, as a member of the school board, I have to manage resources.

Samuel, principal of School Five, explained some aspects regarding the way that he advised the school board:

As an ex-officio member of the school board, since I am the one on the ground, I know what is required and what is happening around the school. I normally advise the school board as to what we need, what is going on around the school and advise them of what their input could be so that the school is driven forward. I help with the preparations of the agenda for school board meetings together with the school board chairperson but I do not chair the school board meetings but the chairperson is the one who chairs them. Nevertheless, I contribute as much as possible in school board meetings because I am better informed regarding school activities, school occurrences than the other SBMs are. They are some SBMs who do not understand what their membership to the board entails or what they are expected to do. Those are the challenges that as a principal you may encounter as you go on explaining to other SBMs what their roles are and what they should do. Though sometimes we are challenged by the fact that other SBMs are just coming on the school board for the first time; they have no experience as SBMs.

- Category 3: Managing school finance

Mark, principal of School Three, stated that his role and responsibility included the management of school resources. He was referring to resources, such as the school development fund or the finances that the schools received from the government, namely the universal primary education grant (UPE). In Namibia, this fund is not only given to primary schools. The fund, according to Mark, was also given to combined and secondary schools, where it was called the universal secondary education grant (USE). He affirmed that, before these funds were utilized, he invited SBMs to inform them that they had received money. Mark emphasized that:

We sit together with the school board; we make the budget for the school. As a principal, I have to make sure that we strictly follow what is budgeted so that we do not run short of funds. I make sure that all that we need to have for us to get good results, we have them.

- Category 4: Ensuring that extra-curricular activities took place at the school

One of the roles and responsibilities of principals as ex-officio members of the school board was pointed out by Luke, principal of School Two during the interview. He stated that his role and responsibility were to ensure that the extra-curricular activities, such as sports, culture and the HIV and AIDS programmes, were running at the school. Luke, furthermore, stated that, in order to ensure that learners were developed in their totality, they should be engaged in extra-curricular activities and not just concentrate on teaching and learning. He stressed that learners should do extra-curricular activities so that, at the end of the day when they leave formal school, they would be fully developed.

- Category 5: Ensuring that the school achieved its goals and objectives

All participating principals interviewed in this study acknowledged that their roles and responsibilities as principals and ex-officio members of the school board were very broad and immense. This is supported by Mark's response, principal of School Three, who affirmed that:

Responsibilities of a principal are immense. The principal is they to ensure that the entire school is running in the right direction. The right direction means that the school has its own set goals and objectives where the principal is the driver of a team to achieve these goals and objectives. Therefore, you have to make sure that you plan and organize activities for the teachers. As a principal, I have to control, motivate and supervise teachers so that the school gets the desired results. The desired results is not only achieving good results in those Grades writing external examinations but to ensure that even the communities are satisfied with the achievements of their learners in all different Grades. At the same time, I supervise the resources that help the school to achieve our objectives. If these resources are not supervised properly we might run out of them

and we will have a problem to achieve our goals and objectives as a school.

• Category 6: Implementation of policies

Luke, principal of School Two, during the interview asserted that his roles and responsibilities as a principal and as an ex-officio member of the school board were very broad. He indicated that one of his roles and responsibilities was to ensure that the school functioned properly. He stated that this could only happen when ensuring that the ministerial, regional and school policies were implemented. Another responsibility that he pointed out was to ensure that the curriculum as the core business of the school was implemented. He said that it was his responsibility to ensure that teachers were teaching and that learning was taking place.

SUMMARY OF THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRINCIPALS

This section presents the roles and responsibilities of principals. Table 2 indicates the categories that emerged from their responses.

Table 2: Categories regarding the roles and responsibilities of principals

Categories	Principals
1. Implementation of day to day school activities	√
2. Advisor of SBMs	√
3. Managing school finance	√
4. Ensuring that extra-curricular activities took place at the school	√
5. Ensuring that the school achieved its goals and objectives	√
6. Implementation of policies	√

Discussion

This section discusses the findings regarding the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance in Zambezi region, Namibia. It was established from the findings that their roles and responsibilities were immense. They had to ensure that the curriculum and day-to-day activities of the school were implemented. This is in line with the roles and responsibilities of the principal as outlined by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016:23) which stresses that the work of the principal involves overseeing the day-to-day administration and supervision of all the aspects of the school. It, furthermore, states that the principal has to implement the school curriculum and ministerial policies. It was revealed that principals maintained discipline at the school for both teachers and learners. It was also their responsibility to ensure that the infrastructure was maintained.

It was revealed that principals were accountable for all finances of the school, including the UPE and USE funds/grants, money given to all government schools for the implementation of free education in Namibia. They assisted with the preparation of the agenda for school board meetings together with the school board chairperson but they did not chair school board meetings. Principals revealed that they ensured that the extra-curricular activities, such as sports, culture and the HIV/AIDS programmes, were running at the school. This was also in line with their roles and responsibilities. Libuku (2014:9) states that social welfare matters can be promoted at a school by the school board; these include programmes on HIV and AIDS, one of the leading causes of death in Namibia causing enormous challenges to the education sector. It was revealed that principals were they to ensure that the school was governed in the proper way to achieve its goals and objectives.

Conclusion

This study revealed that the roles and responsibilities of principals in school governance were immense. It was revealed in the findings that principals were accountable for all finances of the school, including UPE and USE funds. This is money given to all government schools for the implementation of free education in Namibia. They were involved in the budgeting process of their respective schools.

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