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The role of cluster centre principals in the Ohangwena
Education Region in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The Namibian Ministry of Education introduced the School Clustering System (SCS) in 1996. The system entails the grouping of schools into clusters to facilitate the sharing of resources and expertise. One school in a group is selected to serve as the Cluster Centre and the principal of the centre is identified as the Cluster Centre Principal (CCP). This has created a new level of educational leadership which is still relatively under-researched and the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of this new role since it is perceived to be pivotal to the effective functioning of the cluster.

This study is an interpretive case study of Cluster Centres in the Komesho Circuit in the Oshana Educational Region. Three data collection instruments were used, namely document analysis, observation and interviews. The collected data provided insight into participants' views on the role of Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), which shed light on the challenges facing the roles of CCPs.

The findings revealed that respondents welcomed the decentralisation of an education system that involves cluster members and parents in decision making. Furthermore, the perceived role of CCPs is perceived as delegation through participative leadership and management approaches. This involves groups in teamwork to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The study has, however, also exposed tensions surrounding the role and function of CCPs. This is partly because the role has not been formalised and is perceived as existing in a legal vacuum.

This study will benefit the Cluster Centre Principals, Inspectors of Education, Advisory Teachers, Non-governmental Organisations, the community and the Ministry of Education by placing the role of Cluster Centre Principals in perspective.

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DECLARATION

I, Ponny Haggai Nghatanga hereby declare that this study is my own work and it has never been submitted for a degree or examination in any university and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

Signed -----

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ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

BEP	Basic Education Project
CC	Cluster Centre
CCH	Cluster Centre Head
CMC	Cluster Management Committee
CiMC	Circuit Management Committee
CCP	Cluster Centre Principal
CP	Cluster Principal
IE	Inspector of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
PCECT	Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training
SCS	School Clustering System
SB	Subject group
SF	Subject Facilitator

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the context of the study and the reasons why I was interested in conducting this research on the role of Cluster Centre Principals in the Ohangwena Educational Region in Namibia. After this discussion follows a brief account of the methodology and the goals of this study. Finally, I provide an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Context

In 1996 Namibia introduced the School Clustering System in the Rundu region as part of an initiative to enhance education management and delivery through collaboration and sharing. Since then the perceived success of the system has led to its progressive spread throughout the country (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 3). In the clustering system schools are grouped into clusters of about five to seven schools which are geographically close and accessible to each other. One school in each group is selected to serve as the Cluster Centre (CC) and the principal of the centre school is identified as the Cluster Centre Principal (CCP) (Nandi, 2004, p. 13). The CC serves as a growth point for staff development and support of schools.

The clustering system is not unique to Namibia. Similar systems exist in neighbouring countries like Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as further afield in Latin American countries where schools are grouped around a larger and well-resourced nucleus school to form each cluster. In the UNESCO-UNICEF report entitled *School Clusters in the Third World: Making them work*, Bray (1987) explains that many developing countries use school clustering as an innovative way of addressing financial austerity. The theory is that schools in clusters are able to share resources which may be located at the cluster centre school only. Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 23) argue that the cluster centres also serve as in-service training centres and act as channels for community participation in education matters.

According to recent studies in Namibia - Aipinge (2007), Pomuti (2009) and Dittmar et al. (2002) - the school cluster system is best viewed as a manifestation of decentralisation in education. In a decentralised system responsibilities are delegated 'down' to involve people close to the sites of decision making (Bush 2003 p. 11). Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 30) argue that one important function of clustering is to bring different people together to enhance their participation in school issues. Naturally this way of working needs a particular kind of management and leadership, and it is the leadership required to make clusters work that interests me.

As explained above, the principal of the CC school is automatically assumed to fill the role of CCP, a role which is pivotal to the effective functioning of the cluster. These principals fall under the inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education and have a mandate to carry out school visits, to monitor and encourage the development of principals and teachers in order to ensure that the implementation of the SCS complies with national policies of education, directives and educational programmes. The CCPs also perform an important liaison function between the circuit and schools. These roles place CCPs at a higher level of management than that of school principal, a level at which they have the potential to have an impact on the principals in their cluster through collaborative activities such as joint decision making and planning. At the same time though, the CCPs are also managers of their own schools and the peers and colleagues of other principals within their clusters. This dual role points to an area of tension as yet not fully recognised, let alone researched.

One way in which this tension appears is in the lack of clarity regarding how to recognise and reward the added responsibilities that CCPs have to take on (Nandi, 2004, p. 21). A point of contention has been the issue of remuneration. Up to the present CCPs have not received additional remuneration for their increased responsibilities, but a recent review (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 22) pointed out that as of April 2009, CCPs would receive additional payment. While this idea has received strong support at regional workshops, Nandi (2004, p. 21) has cautioned that "promoting a CCP might create imbalance within (the) Cluster Management Committee (CMC) and other Cluster Principals (CPs) - a feeling that one of their own is enjoying benefits that they do not enjoy; therefore they can leave him to do the

job". Thus the issue of financial reward may be a source of conflict further highlighting the tension inherent in the role of being a CCP as well as a school principal. Part of the intention of this study was to explore this tension. However, the expected formalisation of the position of CCP did not materialise as expected early this year (2009), and so it was not possible to engage stakeholders in their perceptions of this tension.

Current leadership thinking tends to emphasise participative approaches to leadership and as such will help to provide suitable lenses through which to view CCPs leadership roles. A key element of participative leadership is the nature of the decision making process. Bush (2003, p. 75) argues that because policy is determined within a participative framework, the headmaster or principal is expected to adopt strategies which acknowledge that issues may emerge from different parts of the organisation and be resolved in a complex interaction process. Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, p.12) similarly argue that participative leadership assumes that the decision making processes *of the group* ought to be the central focus for leaders. Cluster centres seem to provide ideal platforms for this approach to leadership since they can only function on the basis of teamwork, cooperation and participation.

One of participative leadership theory's many strengths is its potential to bond staff together and ease the pressures of school management (Sergiovanni in Bush, 2003 p. 78). Bush (2003, p. 79) supports this view claiming that "participative leadership has the potential to ease the burden on principals and avoid the expectations that the formal leader will be a 'superhead'." At the same time though, CCPs are expected to be strong and competent leaders with vision and the capacity to handle additional responsibilities relating to the whole cluster and the school (Mendelsohn and Ward, 2001; Namibia. The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, 1999.) The tension between adopting a participative approach while playing a central supervisory role in a broader organisational context (a cluster rather than one school) is one of the interests of this study; hence my interest in finding out how 'normal' school principals perceive the role of CCPs and the leadership they offer to principals of schools in the cluster.

1.3 Research motivation

When Cluster Centres were established in Komesho Circuit I had been a Principal of a Combined School for five years and a member of a Cluster Centre in our Circuit. I was interested to discover that principals were taking up some of the duties which inspectors of education were performing. To me this suggested that the broader purpose of decentralisation – that is distributing responsibility ‘downwards’- was being achieved. In this context of decentralisation the central driving purpose of this research is to explore how CCPs are perceived to lead and manage the affairs of the Cluster Centre. Because I have opted to probe the perceptions of principals who are not CCPs an important side issue is how CCPs cope with the challenge of leading peers and colleagues in the absence of guiding policy.

1.4 Research orientation

This research is an interpretive study focusing on the perceptions of individuals. Bush (2003, p. 122) confirms that interpretive research is concerned with the meanings or interpretations placed on events by participants. According to Maxwell (2005, p. 22) the interpretive perspective is not simply about people’s accounts of these events and actions to be assessed in terms of its truth or falsity; it is part of the reality that one is trying to understand.

Therefore my research goal was to understand participants’ realities of the CCPs by enquiring into their experiences and perceptions. I concentrated my research on two cluster centres in the Komesho circuit so that I could obtain rich detailed information of a qualitative nature through in-depth interviews, document analysis and observations. These data collection techniques were included to complement each other.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with two CCPs, four CPs and an Inspector of Education to develop an in-depth understanding of how CPs perceive the role of CCPs in the Cluster Centres. Semi-structured interviews in case study research offer flexibility in responding to questions and allow for lengthy answers to give clear understanding (Gillham,

2000). All interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded with the participants' permission.

During the document analysis and interviews, observations were carried out as a natural way of generating data (Richards, 2005, p. 38). For the data to make sense all the data from document analysis, interviews and observation were analysed and triangulation was used.

1.5 Research Goal

The goal of my research was to investigate the perceptions that school principals have regarding the role of Cluster Centre Principals in the Ohangwena Educational Region. To achieve this goal, I needed to answer these questions:

- How do Cluster Principals perceive the role of Cluster Centre Principals?
- What are the root causes of the perceived tension in the role of Cluster Centre Principals?
- How can these tensions be resolved?

1.6 Outline of the thesis

Chapter one introduces the study by explaining what made me examine the role of Cluster Centre Principals in Ohangwena Educational Region in Namibia. The key questions that I have addressed in this study are also explained.

Chapter two presents literature on the role of Cluster Centre Principals and I have attempted to inform the reader how Cluster Centres were established in Komesho Circuit in Namibia. I also explore various theories related to the role of Cluster Centre Principals.

Chapter three describes the methods used in collecting, analysing and processing data in this study. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations were used to collect the data. The chapter also considers the validity, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter four presents the raw data that was acquired during data collection.

Chapter five discusses the research findings in relation to the theory and literature which was consulted.

Chapter six contains a summary of the main findings, recommendations and suggestions for future research. This chapter is concluded by discussing the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of my research was to investigate the perceptions of school principals of the role of Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs) in the Komesho Circuit in Ohangwena Education Region in Namibia.

The first section of the chapter presents a historical background of the Cluster Centres and the rationale behind Cluster Centres. I then shed light on the role of the CCPs in terms of how they manage to perform their function of leading the clusters with the involvement of teachers, principals, and parents. I also discuss other groups in the cluster; I examine the role of the Cluster Management Committee (CMC) and discuss the identification of Cluster Centres and the appointment of CCPs. Finally, I discuss the participation of CCPs in the National Standards Evaluation Programme.

The second section of the chapter discusses the leadership and management theories related to the role of CCPs in the cluster. According to Bush and Glover (cited in Earley & Wendling, 2004, p. 8) we see that "in the current policy climate, schools require both visionary leadership and effective management". I have chosen to focus on participative leadership and teamwork because the clustering system encourages the involvement of learners, teachers, cluster principals, and parents in decision making and sharing of ideas. This requires a leadership approach that stresses participation and involvement. Teamwork is also a feature of the SCS. Clusters are divided into cluster groups - for example Cluster Management Committees and Subject Committees - that work as teams in sharing ideas and expertise in the cluster. Theories of participative leadership and teamwork are likely to play a key role in the analysis and discussion of findings.

2.2 The establishment of a Cluster Centre

While the idea of a comprehensive system of school clusters was largely introduced by the Basic Education Project (BEP) it is important to recognise that the growth of the system has been driven by the expressed needs from within the schools and Regional Education Offices. According to Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 3) most of these needs arise from three factors: the isolation of schools; the small size of the great majority of schools and organisational problems. Most of Namibian clusters consist of five to seven schools. Clusters enable participants to discuss problems in groups or teams and share their views on issues pertaining to the schools and the cluster itself.

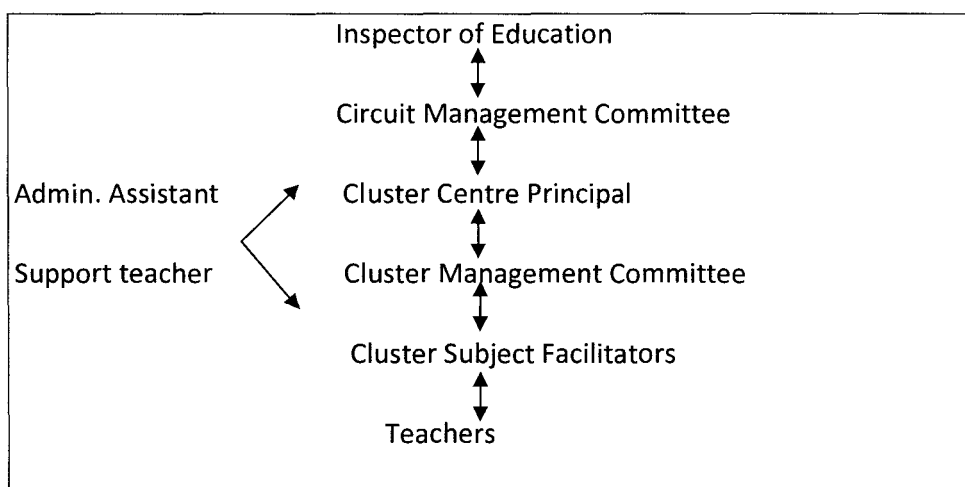
Mendelsohn and Ward (2007, p. 10) list some of the criteria that were used to select Cluster Centres:

- Accessibility to other schools in the cluster.
- Quality of facilities at the school.
- Potential for growth and development.
- Curriculum offered, with preference given to schools that offer higher grades.
- Location in villages and towns that are likely to develop and to which teachers and principals would be likely to travel, for example for shopping or health or banking services.

The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture, and Training (PCECT) recommended that certain schools become centres of excellence. The PCECT felt that there is merit in developing Cluster Centres into local centres of excellence were centres would not be elitist institutions, but would serve as examples of good management and teaching practices Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 37). Therefore, Cluster Centres are seen to be well placed to become good examples of educational practice and management. Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 23) added that Cluster Centres are the focal points for contact and coordination between the schools in the cluster. These Cluster Centres have to serve as in-service training centres and Cluster

Centre schools ought to provide examples of good educational practice and management as laid out by the Presidential Commission.

A recent study by Mendelsohn (2007, p. 10) revealed that Cluster Centres have increasingly consolidated their function as central points through which services and resources are channelled from circuits to schools, and through which schools give feedback to circuits. The following schematic diagram, as provided by participants at a regional workshop shows how the channel of communication is established for clusters.



Adopted from Mendelsohn (2007, p. 11)

According to Mendelsohn (2007, p. 11) a cluster functions most effectively where communication lines and the roles and responsibilities of people at different levels have been made clear. He further revealed that the most active clusters are generally those benefiting from solid leadership provided by Inspectors of Education (IE) who also have important monitoring and supervisory roles to ensure efficient functioning.

Effective clusters according to Mendelsohn are those where:

- Inspectors have made sure that CCPs are well informed about their roles.
- Inspectors work with, and guide CCPs in planning, organising, delegating, controlling and monitoring cluster activities and staff.

- Inspectors forge links between Clusters and Regional Offices and arrange access to Advisory Services.
- Inspectors explore new strategies for clusters, often by networking across circuits and regions.
- The Circuit Management Committee is active, providing space for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and information relating to administration of schools in the circuit. These meetings are convened by IE and attended by CCPs.
- Clusters have adequate resources.

Cluster Centres need good and competent leadership to lead and manage them because they are special places where learners, teachers and parents are expected to acquire the necessary intellectual knowledge and practical skills that enable them to continue with their studies or future careers.

2.2.1 Rationale behind Cluster Centres

In becoming a learning nation, Namibia is driven by the goals that were set in its basic policy document *“Toward Education for All”*. The goals of access, equity, equality, democratic participation, and efficiency remain as relevant as ever. These five goals according to Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 29) provide a useful policy context within which success of the cluster may be measured.

Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 29) explained the five goals as follows:

- Access relates to providing education for all by expanding the school system and removing barriers that prevent children from going to school. The cluster system improves access by helping to organise schools into networks which provide a range of grades within cluster.
- Equity and equality reflect a commitment to allocate educational resources fairly throughout the nation. The cluster system contributes to greater equity in several ways. This is often as a result of improved conditions in many schools, but teachers, textbooks, school equipment and other resources can also be distributed and shared more efficiently and fairly.

- Democratic participation promotes the involvement of teachers, parents, school communities and learners in the education process. Clusters allow more management decisions to be made at local levels in schools and clusters, thus contributing to decentralisation.
- Efficiency aims to reduce waste and to increase the efficient use of financial, human, physical and material resources. The clusters provide a framework for assessing and planning development needs, both for individual schools and for groups of schools, so that development can occur in a more rational and effective way.

The PCECT (Namibia, 1999) developed a framework for a School Clustering System to achieve its goal. People outside the immediate school network, the staff of the Basic Education Project (BEP), Regional Offices, and consultants essentially designed this framework. The framework has been embraced, adapted, and used for a multitude of purposes to suit local needs.

The School Clustering System has in recent years become a popular area for research though little research has been done on the role of CCPs. Recent studies (Topnaar, 2004; Uirab, 2006; Aipinge, 2007; and Pomuti, 2009) on School Clustering focused more on investigating the implementation of the school clustering system by managers or implementers. Studies by Dittmar et al., (2002); Nandi, (2004) and Mendelsohn, (2007) include a focus on the role of CCPs. This study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge of School Clusters focussing on the role of CCPs.

2.2.2 The role of Cluster Centre Principals

According to Sergiovanni (2007, p. 27) the “principal’s job is to provide the kind of purposing to the school that helps followership to emerge”. He further points out that he/she then provides the conditions and support that allow people to function in ways that are consistent with agreed upon values. I base my argument on Sergiovanni’s ideas of support to be rendered to the people in the organisation (in this case the cluster) to be allowed to participate in functions of the cluster with the support of the CCPs. The primary function of the CCPs according to Mendelsohn (2007, p. 11) is to promote teamwork and collaboration, and to enhance the management of schools. Furthermore, in monitoring and evaluating the

quality of cluster activities and standards within schools, CCPs extend quality assurance beyond their own schools to all members of the clusters.

Other duties CCPs are supposed to perform according to Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 24) are to provide general leadership and supervision of all activities in the cluster, and promote the formation of subject groups to improve the teaching and learning and examination of all subjects. Dittmar et al. (2002) further point out that, where needed, training should be provided to CCPs, in such aspects as management and leadership, office administration, financial management, and educational planning to help them to acquire skills to manage their clusters and assist other members in the cluster where needed.

In this context Sergiovanni's (cited in Bush 2003, p. 78) emphasis on a "participative approach" is important as it is likely to bond staff together in situations like Cluster Centres where the CCPs are supposed to work in the direction of unifying the cluster as one team. Sergiovanni (2007, p. 68) develops this argument further claiming that leadership techniques of "binding and bonding are the keys to an effective long-term leadership strategy for schools because they have the power to help schools transcend competence for excellence by inspiring extraordinary commitment and performance". Drawing on Sergiovanni's idea, the CCPs role is perceived to bond cluster members and the community together to have an effective cluster. However, Bray (1987, p. 112), writing in a Latin American context revealed that each cluster leader is also a full-time head teacher, often with classes to attend to or inexperienced volunteer teachers to guide. This is similar to the situation in Namibia, but experience in many clusters shows that although the workloads of CCPs have increased, this has not been perceived as a problem where the outcomes have been rewarding.

Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 13) affirmed that some CCPs have balanced their workloads by delegating tasks to senior teachers, thus empowering these teachers as well. Many heads of department are involved in Cluster Management Committees, sharing responsibilities and authority. However, there are questions that still need to be asked about the workloads of CCPs and delegating responsibilities to senior teachers, even though delegation is perceived as a good method in managing the activities of the clusters or schools.

CMCs are involved in decision making and planning of CCs activities and they are chaired by the CCP. They are the backbone of the clusters and the next section describes the role of CMCs in the cluster.

2. 2. 3 The role of the Cluster Management Committee and Subject groupings

Mendelsohn (2007, p. 21) draws attention to other cluster groupings which engage in a collaborative focusing on appropriate tasks, goals or issues. Some of the committees established in the cluster are the Cluster Management Committee (CMC) and Subject Cluster Facilitators. In these groupings, teachers are often encouraged to balance individual and departmental autonomy with greater collegiality as a way of promoting professionalism and of improving decision-making through sharing expertise and of providing in systemic reform (Timperley & Robinson, 2003, p. 152). A CMC is a forum where teaching and learning problems in schools may be addressed, and where principals are encouraged by CCPs to search for solutions in collaboration with their colleagues (Dittmar et al., 2002, p. 24).

This forum is chaired by a CCP and is used for planning cluster activities, preparing school development plans and developing common policies, for example, on discipline and school fund contributions. They also arrange community participation through school boards (Dittmar et al., 2002). However, Bray (1987, p. 122) emphasised that CMCs need training to perform their duties and plan correctly, for example on how to organise meetings, to identify problems and seek possible solutions in dealing with cluster members who are uncooperative and how to monitor and evaluate progress. When CMCs meet to discuss issues pertaining to the cluster and the schools, minutes are sent to the Inspector and Regional Education Office.

CMCs have to encourage teams and group work in decision making. The grouping of teachers and principals helps to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning. In cluster based grouping, subject facilitators are nominated by the CCP in consultation with the principals of member schools, with the nomination being approved by the Inspector of Education or Advisory Teacher. Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 26) stress that a range of other committees may be formed within the framework provided by clusters, and in some

clusters, each committee has a different principal as chairperson, and progress is reported to the Cluster Management Committee. Therefore, the establishment of cluster based groups for each subject or phase improves the quality of teaching by allowing teachers to share ideas, lesson plans, examination questions and papers, and other teaching materials. However, the establishment of working committees does of course add to the complexity of cluster management and poses challenges to CCPs.

2.2.4 Identification of Cluster Centres and appointment of CCPs

One of the secondary ideas of my study is to explore the identification of clusters and the appointment of CCPs and to see what type of procedure is used to identify them. Mendelsohn (2007) points out that the Cluster Centre should be as central and accessible as possible to its satellite schools, it should have adequate facilities and ideally be situated at a development centre where other social and commercial services are available. It seems, however, that the procedure for identifying cluster centres has not always followed clear and logical guidelines. The way the Komesho Circuit identified its clusters and appointment of CCPs is a case in point.

In this area each secondary school is automatically considered a Cluster Centre on the basis of its comparatively rich resources. This often means that secondary schools are automatically selected as Cluster Centres. However, secondary schools cannot necessarily provide the kind of support and collegueship to combined and primary schools – in, for example, the area of subject teams – and are hence limited in the role they can play as cluster centres. In a sense these secondary schools then become ‘stand-alone’ schools with limited participation in the cluster. In terms of Dittmar et al. (2002) and Mendelsohn’s (2007) rationale for the establishment of clusters with the purpose of grouping schools together in order for teachers to share ideas and resources so that quality education and good performance can be achieved this method of selection is problematic.

The fact the head of the secondary school is automatically regarded as the CCP is equally problematic. The draft policy of the Ministry of Education (MoE) on clusters in (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 20) points out that the Principal of each Cluster Centre will be appointed as the CCP

with appropriate recognition, training and remuneration. Mendelsohn (2007) further emphasises that he or she would have a formal leadership role in the cluster, thus playing an important function in supporting, promoting and coordinating all activities among the schools that make up the cluster. This supports the idea that Dittmar et al. (2002) put forward that the principal of the Cluster Centre should be a strong and committed manager, with a vision that can extend beyond his own school to the needs of all schools and the community in the cluster. The success of this argument rests on the competence of the CCPs. However, at clusters in the Komesho circuit, and probably in other circuits, the appointment of CCPs did not take into account the competence or 'readiness' of the principals as such, but was carried out according to the resources and space perceived to be available as explained above. Some of these secondary schools are in fact not perceived to be effective schools – judging, for example, by examinations results - and the leadership and management competence of these principals may be questionable. Nevertheless, they are 'automatically' promoted to positions of CCPs when their schools are selected as CCs. The fact that some clusters may be headed by unsuitable CCPs could well account for the fact that some of the clusters are not functioning as expected. Thus the identification of cluster centres and CCPs is an area fraught with tensions and problems.

A solution would be to formalise the appointment and position of CCPs. A policy would have to be developed and appointments can then be done in accordance with specific criteria. However, formalising the roles of CCPs is also not unproblematic. Nandi (2004, p. 21) cautions that "promoting a CCP might create imbalance within Cluster Management Committee and other Cluster Principals – a feeling that one of their own is enjoying benefits that they do not enjoy; therefore they can leave him to do the job". When this study was initiated the formalisation procedure was under way and, as explained earlier, one of my aims was to investigate the effects of this process.

Bray (1987), writing in an international context, also argues that the best leaders are not always in the school which have the most appropriate geographic and political settings, or are the best resourced. Bray (1987) gives examples of alternative selection procedures. In Thailand, for example, Cluster Centre Heads are selected by cluster members; in Peru they are appointed by community councils. These methods reflect a sense of peer evaluation and selection and are clearly preferable to the procedure followed in Namibia where the criteria

used are superficial and perhaps even misleading. In these circumstances it may be wiser to adopt more formal models of leadership where appointments are made on the basis of qualifications and experience, and promotion depends on the expertise demonstrated in present and previous positions (Bush 2003, p. 44).

2.2.5 The use of clusters for the National Standard Evaluation Programme (NSEP)

The national policy document *Toward Education for All* (1993) of the Ministry of Education identified major goals to improve the quality of education: access, equity, democracy, efficiency and life-long learning, (Dittmar et al. 2002, p. 29). According to Dittmar et al. (2002) these “goals provide a useful policy context within which applications of the school cluster system may be considered”. CCPs are envisaged as playing a major part in developing schools in pursuit of these goals particularly within the ambit of the National Standard Evaluation Programme (NSEP). These evaluations are seen as attempts to direct principals’ thinking and understanding and encouraging them to take responsibility for improving the results. The NSEP focuses on two methods of evaluation which have been adopted.

The first is by an external team of senior MoE officials that do inspections in schools and the second method is a self-evaluation conducted by the school where staff members compare conditions in relation to requirements set out in the document listing minimum standards and performance indicators (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 27). The MoE has made recommendations that both evaluation processes would benefit by involving clusters. The MoE thought that it would be useful if the CCPs were included in external evaluation. Reports from external evaluation should then be sent to the CCP and Inspector of Education and even the Regional Offices on the assumption that the most rapid improvements are likely to be made through the cluster system. CCPs would therefore make a vital contribution, if they are involved and encouraged to contribute to the evaluation process. Moreover, all the principals in a cluster would be exposed in a collaborative fashion to the standards that need to be met, the strengths and weaknesses of each of their schools, and the activities needed to resolve the most glaring problems (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 27). Since

clusters are groups of schools that need to share responsibilities, CCPs could share ideas from the evaluation of schools to foster improvement.

Within this context the creation of subject groups is one of the important innovations and applications of the cluster system, not least as it reflects a “home grown demand” for more collegial support that can easily be offered and structured through clusters (Mendelsohn, 2007, p. 27).

Since the cluster system is regarded as an example of decentralisation I now turn to this issue in terms of how it plays out in the system.

2.2.6 Decentralisation in the Cluster Centre

Decentralisation has become very popular in many countries’ organisations as a method of empowering employees. In Bush’s (2003) view educational institutions operate within a legislative framework set down by national, provincial or state parliaments. According to Bush (2003) one of the key aspects of such a framework is the degree of decentralisation in the educational system. As argued earlier the SCS can be viewed as an attempt by the MoE to decentralise the education system. Dittmar et al. (2002) argue that clusters work best when responsibilities are delegated down to circuit and cluster levels to involve people close to schools in decision-making. This practice is in line with the Ministry’s goal of promoting democratic participation of all stakeholders.

Bush (2003) argues that true decentralisation involves the devolution of significant powers to subordinate levels to a point where we may speak of self-management. In this way the role of central government in planning and providing education is minimised. Bush (2003) distinguishes among five forms of decentralisation:

- Federalism
- Devolution
- Deregulation
- De-concentration

- Participative democracy and market mechanism

Two or more of these modes may coexist within the same educational system. In Namibia, the national policy on decentralisation aims to move only certain management functions from the head offices to regional administrations in the 13 regions (Dittmar et al. 2002, p. 31). The MoE has transferred certain functions to regional directorates, circuits, clusters and school levels, while retaining control over key functions such as curriculum development, financial management, resource allocation, and policy formulation. Though this is a limited form of decentralisation – de-concentration – it may well be appropriate for Namibia at this time. Aipinge (2007) found evidence to suggest that some of the advantages of decentralisation - improved decision making, empowering of cluster members in taking responsibility, and improved efficiency – were evident within the system. In a decentralisation approach participation of members is perceived to be very strong, where it can be a vehicle for promoting participation both of professionals and of parents and other members of the community. The Cluster Centre can therefore be much more flexible, and can encourage local innovation with improvement in planning where planners can have detailed local knowledge on which to base their plans, and the local administrators are likely to be more committed to the implementation of those plans.

Decentralisation structures, based on the cluster system, have been established in some regions in the form of circuit and cluster management committees (Dittmar et al., 2002, p. 21).

In a decentralisation system activities are delegated to members to perform, and this will be elaborated upon in my next area of discussion.

2.2.7 Delegation in the Cluster Centre

Delegation is important from the Cluster Centre's perspective as it promotes succession planning. Smith and Cronje (2002, p. 211) outline several important advantages of delegation:

- Managers who train their staff to accept more responsibilities are in a good position themselves to accept more authority and responsibilities from higher levels of management.
- Delegation encourages employees to exercise judgement and accept accountability.
- Quicker decision making takes place if subordinates have the necessary authority; they do not have to refer to top management before taking certain decisions.

Adopting the ideas of Smith and Cronje, CCPs should encourage members to take responsibilities seriously when they are delegated tasks to perform in the cluster and at their schools. In this way increasing numbers of cluster members learn leadership and management skill thereby increasing the cluster's leadership pool. Delegation thus helps to promote sound succession planning.

In this section I discussed the establishment of Cluster Centres, with special consideration of the role of CCPs and the likely causes of tension among the CPs and CMC. I also shed light on decentralisation and delegation in the cluster system. In the next section I discuss leadership and management theories in relation to the role of CCPs.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The use of the term "theory" need not imply something remote from the day-to-day experience of the teacher. Rather, theories and concepts can provide a framework for managerial decisions (Bush, 2003, p. 23). Hughes and Bush (cited in Bush, 2003, p. 23) affirm that theories most influence practice when they suggest new ways in which events and situations can be perceived. They further suggest that fresh insight may be provided by focusing attention on possible interrelationships that the practitioner has failed to notice, and which can be further explored and tested through empirical research. However, they further argued that if the result is a better understanding of practice, the theory-practice gap is significantly reduced for those concerned. Therefore, a look at the theory of participative management and leadership is warranted. I now turn my attention to the theory that enriches our understanding of our organisations, of schools, clusters and the individual.

I begin by shedding light on the distinction between leadership and management. It is self-evident that the role of CCP involves both management and leadership. In her study of the SCS Aiping (2007, p. 13) found that the effectiveness of the system is strongly dependent on both management and leadership and it would be useful to discuss the distinction briefly.

Management, according to the Task Team Report (South Africa, 1996, p. 27), is about doing things and working with people to make things happen. Both Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach (1999) and Van Deter (2003) emphasise that the focus of management ought to be functions, tasks or behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organisation will be facilitated. Management is thus an enabling process. Management should also have a clear goal or focus. Management in education is not an end in itself. Good management is an essential aspect of any education service, but its central goal is the promotion of effective teaching and learning in schools. The Task Team Report (South Africa, 1996, p. 27) points out that management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisation engage.

Leadership, on the other hand, “involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over the other people to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation” (Yukl cited in Bush, 2003, p. 5). Leithwood et al. (1999), Cheng (2002) and Moos (2003) share the same idea that the central focus of leadership ought to be commitment and capacity. In applying these ideas to the role of CCPs, their role is to transform their students, teachers and principals not only by providing them with knowledge and skills but by building character and instilling virtue in them. That is what is expected from CCPs as leaders and managers of a cluster Centre. In this line CCPs should be influential to the learners, teachers, CPs and parents to involve them in decision-making in schools and clusters to perform better. This can only be achieved if CCPs help to establish clusters through communication and interaction with the Inspector of Education, principals and the circuit management. According to Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 4) leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if organisations are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives.

2.4 Participative management and leadership

Participative management is an appropriate theory to apply to the SCS since it allows and encourages subordinates to participate in decisions that affect them or organisational operations including those persons who are to execute those decisions (Aipinge 2007, p. 20). Aipinge's argument refers to the Namibian context where Cluster Management Committees are made up of all Cluster Principals in each cluster, and provide a forum to share and resolve problems in the cluster. In participative management organisation members (CCPs, CPs, and teachers) participate in the management of the cluster and in making decisions that affect them and their jobs (Erasmus and van der Westhuizen 2002, p. 246). This implies that teachers may participate in decision-making either as individuals or as a group. The core of participative management is the fact that it allows the best utilisation of human resources and demonstrates trust in the abilities of teachers.

Bush (2003, p. 64) frames participative management within collegial models of management, arguing that "the notion of collegiality became enshrined in the folklore of management as the most appropriate way to run schools and colleges in the 1980s and 1990s". He further argues that collegiality was closely associated with school effectiveness and school improvement and was then regarded as the official model of good practice. However, adopting a collegial management is not without its challenges. Little (cited in Bush, 2003, p. 71) points out that a collegial model depends on shared professional values leading to the development of trust and a willingness to give and receive criticism in order to enhance practice. This is not always achievable in practice. He further argues that it is a demanding approach which requires commitment from staff if it is to become an effective vehicle for beneficial change. Hence, while it seems appropriate for a decentralised system like the SCS to practise collegiality the challenges should not be underestimated. Namibia's educational administration history is similar to South Africa's in the sense that it was long characterised by top-down authoritarianism. Building the kind of trust and willingness to share that collegial models require will take time and will need careful management and leadership.

Erasmus and van der Westhuizen (2002, p. 247) describe participative management is fundamentally different from traditional management approaches. Participative

management may be implemented in various ways, but it usually involves the principal conducting a meeting with the teachers regarding matters related to various aspects of the school activities (p. 247). This notion makes sense in the clustering system as it aims to bring different people together and thus enhance their participation in schooling issues. Sergiovanni (cited in Bush, 2003, p. 78) points out that the importance of a participative approach is that this will succeed in “bonding staff together and in easing the pressures on school principals; the burdens of leadership will be less if leadership functions and roles are shared and if the concept of leadership density were emerge as a viable replacement for principal leadership” (p. 78). The idea of bonding staff together in sharing ideas and decision making refers to what Sergiovanni (2007, p. 67) describes as arousing awareness and consciousness that elevates school goals and purposes in a “moral commitment.” This requirement places particular demands on cluster leadership and suggests a leadership approach that goes beyond the traditional transactional style adopting some of the features of transformational leadership. In the context of the SCS this requires CCPs to make an effort to establish shared leadership and a shared vision among staff as to where the cluster is going. This in turn requires involving all staff in important decision making, planning, developing and evaluating school policy and helping staff to regard the school development plan as their own creation. To accomplish these Ipangelwa (cited in Aipinge, 2007, p. 21) argues that the practice of participative management can enable organisations to “produce high quality decisions and plans by involving the skills of different perspectives and expertise in developing solutions”.

Next I focus on the importance of group synergy, or teamwork that seems, a key characteristic of participative management approaches within collegial models.

2.5 Teamwork

One of the strategies of Cluster Centres is teamwork. As mentioned earlier clusters provide frameworks for a range of groups or committees to be formed to support various needs, and for the committees to function, they need to work in teams. Sheard and Kakabadse (2004, p. 13) stress that a key aspect of teams and teamwork is the ability of the group of

individuals that comprise the team to be more creative than any of the individuals could be in isolation. Sheard and Kakabadse (2004, p. 13) further point out that the issues associated with the management of creativity provide an insight into the essence of leadership, and therefore the nature of what is demanded of those in an organisation charged with providing the leadership it needs.

First, it is appropriate to consider what is meant by a team. A good working definition of a team is provided by Sheard and Kakabadse (2004, p. 13):

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

O'Neill (2003, p. 216) adds the notion of dealing with conflict:

A team is a small group of people who recognise the need for constructive conflict when working together in order for them to make, complement and support workable decisions.

Sheard and Kakabadse (2004, p. 14) argue that a small team of people rather than a large one - is more likely to be successful through their individual, functional and hierarchical differences. Teams are also versatile and can be organisation wide, permanent, temporary, cross-functional, and cross-level (Smith 2003, p. 14). In a school, for example, one team may coordinate the academic programmes, and another may be responsible for organising an event such as the sports day. The important feature of managing through teams is broad involvement and participation of organisation members. Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008, p. 223) argue that teamwork provides teachers with "a significant role in school decision making", "control over their work environment", and "opportunities to contribute to (a) range of professional roles". If this is true in a school context it is even more significant in a cluster which consists of several schools and where varied and complex activities need to be coordinated. Teachers' involvement in teamwork enhances individuals' capacity and understanding which also encourages them to take responsibility in the development of the school and the cluster.

The relevance of teams may also be considered within a context of risk and complexity. Sheard and Kakabadse (2004, p. 14) emphasise that in high-risk situations of low complexity, the appropriate response is to trust one competent individual to undertake the task. There

are no doubt many such situations within the clusters where, typically, the CCP may feel free to act singly. But in situations of high complexity the correct response is to break down the objective into a set of sub-goals, each of which can be addressed by separate small teams. Sheard and Kakabadse's (2004, p. 15) view on the idea that senior management teams do engage in work of this type of high complexity is that the majority of top team discussions focus on operational issues. The top issues in the Cluster Centre are issues such as:

- Mediating in cases of misunderstanding or friction
- Teachers' and principals' appointments
- Solving teachers', principals' and parents' problems concerning the school or cluster

These 'issues' create the impression that the role of teams is usually around problem-solving but this is not the case. Teamwork plays a significant role in bonding members. Sergiovanni (2007, p. 126) argues that team leadership enhances both purposing and collegiality by demonstrating a commitment to shared leadership. This notion articulates well with principles of participative management and collegial models of management discussed earlier. Teamwork is thus, in some ways, the lifeblood of a complex organisation.

In the clustering system the CCP is mandated to appoint teachers and other non-teaching staff and by doing so he involves cluster members in discussions and decision-making showing shared leadership. Sergiovanni (2007, p. 128) further argues that opportunity and capacity, teamwork and collegiality, when combined with purposing, leadership by 'outrage', and other dimensions of value-added leadership, are the powerful ideas needed for building a professional culture of teaching aligned with excellence. However, for teams to perform reasonably takes time; people need to become better acquainted with each other (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2004, p. 100).

The leadership in the Cluster Centre is likely to play a major role in enhancing teachers', principals' and parents' participation in teams and groups for the better performance of the school. Clusters have been grouped so that decisions, planning and sharing of ideas can be done collectively. The head of an organisation, according to Everard (2004, p. 163), plays a key role in making the best choices of who to bring together to make what happens for the

good of the organisation. She further argues that he or she then has to ensure that these groups work effectively and collaborate with one another synergistically to achieve the task of the organisation. Thus the leadership of teams is a key function of the CCP.

2.5.1 Managing team performance

The effective management of a Cluster Centre depends on team leadership. This can influence the cluster members who are leading the teams and groups in the cluster to aim at good performance and an improvement in the results in their schools and of the cluster.

Everard (2004, p. 174) cautions that team performance can be affected by biting off more than the team can chew, especially if members are already experiencing a sense of overload. Thus it pays to prioritise objectives and avoid working on too many at a time. There has to be a clear and consistent focus on achieving results, both short and long-term. Everard (2004, p. 173) points out that “short-term results help success to breed success, long-term results are important in creating an enduring school culture of continuous improvement”. In line with Everard’s view Cluster Centres need to adopt the culture of long-term results, of continuously performing and achieving good results. To achieve this, leadership needs to be flexible, and leaders need to delegate and involve cluster members in decision-making. However, Everard (2004, p.174) considered the most important end for a school is student achievement, not just team or departmental performance, so there is the need for a logical link to measure this.

The idea put forward by Everard (2004) of counting students first, will encourage teachers and parents if the CCP emphasises the monitoring of learner’s activities both in school and at home. The encouragement of parents to involve themselves in school and cluster activities boosts the morale of staff members and learners. The more the whole community knows about the many incremental improvements that are occurring, the more the culture of continuous development and improvement can be reinforced (Everard, 2004, p.174). This places a particular expectation on the role of the CCP and other leaders of teams within the cluster. Generating the involvement and commitment of stakeholders who are not integrally

part of the organisation – like parents – calls for strong and encouraging leadership and a commitment to organisational purpose and vision.

Beaty and Scott (2004, p. 5) further argue that team success depends on a number of factors, including attracting the right people to work on a common goal, enabling them to begin working together well quickly, setting and adhering to performance schedules and handling the interpersonal stress that occurs when people work together closely. To avoid this stress or deal with the conflicts that arise Cluster Centres can involve expertise in the form of Advisory Teachers. Mendelsohn (2007, p. 23) stresses that there is a particular value in promoting Advisory Service support for cluster-based activities since this involves subject groups that benefit the schools and clusters, invited by the CCP to the Cluster Centres. Being part of a team requires members to involve others in making important decisions, to share critical information openly, and at times to sacrifice one's personal agenda for the good of the team (Beaty and Scott, 2004, p. 5). The challenge, of course, is to harness the group creativity that comes from an open exchange of ideas and opinions to produce an integrated solution that builds on the best of the individual thinking. In Subject Groups the strengths of teamwork are likely to be most apparent but perhaps also most difficult to manage.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented an overview of leadership and management in the Cluster Centres. I discussed the establishment of Cluster Centres in the Komesho and Ohangwena Education Regions. In the discussion of the role of CCPs I highlighted their functions and the Ministry of Education's expectation of the type of a leadership required to manage the cluster. I discussed also the role of the Cluster Management Committee, the identification of Cluster Centres and the appointment of the CCPs. Decentralisation which is the Ministry's goal, together with delegation, is also discussed in this chapter.

The theoretical discussion concentrated on participative and transformational leadership theories and the management and leadership of teamwork.

In the next chapter I present an outline of the methodology of the study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the research paradigm in which the research has been conducted. I further discuss case study as the method that I have chosen to use in this study. I also describe the instruments used for data collection and how I analysed the data and finally consider ethical considerations.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research orientation

This research is an interpretive, qualitative study focusing on the perceptions of individuals. Bush (2003, p. 122) confirms that interpretive research is concerned with the meanings or interpretations placed on events by participants. According to Maxwell (2005, p. 22) the interpretive perspective is not simply about people's account of these events and actions to be assessed in terms of its truth or falsity; it is part of the reality that one is trying to understand.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 21) explain that the central endeavour in the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. They say furthermore that the interpretive researcher begins with individuals and sets out to understand their interpretations of the world around them (p. 22). In the same vein Kamupingene (cited in Semba, 2006, p. 25) points out that interpretive research will

normally be framed by meanings given to phenomena by both the researcher and those participating in the study.

My interest in this study was to understand participants' 'realities' of the phenomenon by enquiring into their experiences and perceptions of it. The interpretive approach also enabled me to probe for in-depth data and understanding. To achieve this I used several data collection instruments within the scope of the case study.

3.2.2 Research site and sampling

This research was conducted in Komesho which is part of the Ohangwena Region in Namibia. There are six Cluster Centres in Komesho. As a school principal I am a member of a CC but not one of these. I planned to concentrate my research on two of these Cluster Centres. These were selected on the basis of convenience since they are close to my home and also to facilitate objectivity since I have no direct dealings with either of these clusters.

I selected cluster centres to which I had easy access and whose participants were mostly not known by me. This correlates with the description of convenience sampling given by Cohen et al. (2007, pp. 113 – 114):

Convenience sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time. The researcher simply chooses the sample from those to whom they have easy access.

A sample of two Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), four Cluster Principals (CPS) and an Inspector of Education (IE) was used in my research. In the following section I discuss the case study method that I employed.

3.2.3 Case study method

I selected the qualitative case study method in this study. According to Yin (2003, p. 13) "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its

real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” Yin (as cited in Bassey, 2006) added that case study inquiry:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 26 – 27).

Cohen et al. (2007, p. 253) point out that case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Hitchcock and Hughes (cited in Cohen et al. 2007) also suggest that the case study approach is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events. They consider that a case study has several hallmarks:

- It is concerned with rich and vivid description of events relevant to case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report (p. 253).

This description of case study research applies to my research as it allows for some level of concrete real life research within this specific context. I have examined individuals' interpretation and experiences of the role of leadership in the cluster centre. My research has involved the gathering of extensive data through observation, interviews and document analysis.

3.3 Data collection

I used document analysis, observation and semi-structured interviews as data collection techniques in the study. I spent one week at each cluster centre from 8.7.2009 – 14.7.2009 at one cluster centre and 17.7.2009 – 27.7.2009 at the other. I also spent two days at the circuit office from 6.8.2009 – 8.8.2009. On the first three days of the week document

analysis was carried out followed by the interviews with the CPs and CCPs. It was a busy time since schools were selecting new schoolboard members and schools were about to close for the second term. Teachers were moderating the examinations. The inspector was interviewed towards the end of August 2009 because of commitments and observations were carried out throughout the data collection to complement the main data.

3.3.1 Document analysis

In document analysis I focused on ministerial policy guidelines, recent cluster minutes and other materials which helped me to gather relevant information to answer my research question. Yin (2003, p. 87) states that documents are helpful in verifying accuracy of details like titles or names of organisations that might have been mentioned in an interview. Gillham (2000, p. 21) adds that documents provide a formal framework to which you may have to relate the informal reality. According to Topnaar documents provide:

- An excellent source of information about rationales, purposes and history.
- An indication of how people thought about something at a particular time or under particular conditions.
- The language people use to record, communicate, think etc.
- The frequency with which things happened or were discussed.
- A potential substitute for activities researchers are unable to observe directly; in some cases documents may be the only source to get certain information or be the only form in which it is valuable (as cited in Aipinge 2007, p. 37).

By analysing documents I sought formal descriptions of the role of CCPs and what they do in practice. The analysis of documents was done before, during and after the interviews and, as such, was used to inform and complement the interviews.

Different documents were studied at the two clusters and circuit office in verifying the activities carried out at the cluster and the role played by the CCPs and other cluster members. I studied the following documents:

- Ministerial policy guidelines;
- Cluster Development Plans;
- Cluster Year Plan;

- Minutes of meetings (cluster subject meetings, cluster management meetings and circuit management meetings);
- Circulars;
- Reports on cluster activities and term reports from schools

Documents in the files showed past and recent information since the establishment of the SCS. CCPs requested school secretaries to assist me if I needed help since they were busy conducting school board elections.

3.3.2 Observation

According to Richards (2005, p. 38) observation is one of the most natural ways of generating data. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 396) similarly describe observation as a research process that offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. They further add that the researcher can look directly at what is taking place *in situ* rather than relying on second-hand accounts.

Simpson and Tuson (2003, p. 16) stress that very often people do not tell an interviewer all that is relevant to the situation. This may be because they deliberately choose not to, or it may be that they simply do not think to mention something, and because the interviewer does not have enough information to enquire further, important factors are overlooked. Individuals may never have become aware of them in a conscious fashion, and are therefore unable to talk about them in an open and articulate way. Observation can enrich and supplement data collection even if the main method of collecting information is by interviews and document analysis; the addition of data collected by observation can greatly enrich and enhance a database. With the permission of the Inspector of Education and CCPs I spent a week at each cluster to observe a cluster meeting. The cluster meeting I observed discussed a prize giving ceremony which was going to take place in the cluster. The idea was to encourage learners, teachers and parents to take education seriously and work hard. I recorded issues related to my research question in a research journal. Gillham (2000, p. 46) argues that the overpowering validity of observation is that it is the most direct way of

obtaining data. It is not what people have written on the topic; it is not what they say they do. It is what they actually do.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Gillham (2000) affirms that the most helpful form of interviewing in case study research is the semi-structured interview since it offers flexibility in responding to what participants say. Semi-structured interview questions are of an open-ended nature and encourage discussion and reflection. Yin (1994, p. 84) argues that the more a respondent assists in this latter manner, the more that role may be considered as one of an “informant” rather than respondent.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with two Cluster Centre Principals in a rural area. I also interviewed two principals from each cluster and the circuit Inspector of Education. Cluster Centre Principals were asked about their views on the establishment of Cluster Centres and the difficulties and challenges they faced in their leadership of the Cluster Centre. I probed the role they played through their personal experiences in their leadership and engaged them in discussion of the leadership approach they adopted.

Cluster Principals (or ‘normal’ principals) were asked to comment on how they saw the role of the CCP and what their expectations were. I also engaged them in discussion of the appointment procedures of CCPs, and difficulties and challenges that CCPs faced. The Inspector was asked to discuss his views on the leadership challenges facing CCPs and how he saw the tension inherent in the role as discussed above.

When I conducted the interviews I obtained permission from the participants to tape-record the interviews and none of them objected. Although none of the participants had English as a mother tongue all the interviews were conducted in English as all of them were principals and could express themselves very well. They also use English in their official activities or duties. I promised the participants that after the interview I would transcribe the data and give them copies for proofreading and verification of their responses.

3.3.4 Data analysis

I categorised the data according to each of my research questions, and these categories enabled me to compare the data and establish relationships among my data sources. Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004, p. 128) affirm that data analysis should truly reflect the respondents' perceptions. I transformed this data into meaningful and useful information that helped me explore the perceptions and experience of the role of CCPs.

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.183) data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data, making sense of data in terms of participants' definition of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. I analysed my data throughout and after the collection of data. The data were coded, categorised and themed to capture emerging information I needed to answer my research questions. Rossman and Rallis (cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 192) define coding as a process of organising the material into "chunks" before bringing meaning to those "chunks". I found it useful to colour different categories on the transcripts and cut segments and paste them on to big sheets of board.

Throughout the analysis of data, I kept comparing in order to identify similarities and distinctions between categories to discover more patterns and to rearrange the categories. From categories I developed themes and sub-themes according to the research questions.

3.4 Ethical issues

Creswell (2003, p. 65) stresses that the ethical code for a researcher is to protect the privacy of the participants and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in the study. Henning et al. (2004, p. 73) add that participants need to know that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected and what was going to happen with their information after recording. They further point out that participants must be fully informed about the research in which the interview is going to be used. I informed the participants about the nature of the study to build trust. I also assured them of confidentiality and anonymity.

The issue of confidentiality is explained by Cohen et al. (2007, p. 65) as follows:

Although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected.

Cohen et al (cited in Semba, 2006, p. 32) highlight the meaning of anonymity as follows:

Information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity ... in the case of a participant agreeing to a face-to-face interview ... the issue of anonymity becomes irrelevant and that participant cannot expect that. For my purpose anonymity refers to participants remaining anonymous to readers.

I have followed this advice by not revealing the names of either the people or the Cluster Centres. In my letters to the participants to obtain permission to interview them, I made it clear that their participation would be voluntary and the option to participate or not rested with them. I also informed them about the purpose of the research and assured them that the copy of the completed research would be available in their library at the Ohangwena Educational Region. Participants provided good responses and agreed with the content of the letter.

3.5 Validity

I used triangulation to reduce the chances of reaching false conclusions. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 142) and Hammersley (2008, p. 23) point out, triangulation involves combining data produced by different methods. Similarly, Flick (2006 p. 24) and Stake (2003, p.148) add that triangulation goes beyond the limitation of a single method by combining several methods and giving them equal relevance.

As I have pointed out I spent one week at each Cluster Centre to collect data. I was given approval and authority by CCPs and the Inspector of Education to quote directly from documents collected from the Cluster Centres' and circuit's files. During observation, I assured the participants that I was not going to inspect their work and my presence in their

meetings should not hinder their discussions and progress in what they were doing; I was just trying to develop an understanding of what I was researching.

Participants were given the opportunity to do member checking to proofread transcripts and to verify the notes taken during document analysis and observation. For ethical reasons I explained to the participants that confidentiality and trust had to be maintained between us and pseudonyms had to be used.

3.6 Limitations

One of the validity threat of this study is that during the collection of data, I could not guarantee the honesty of the participants' responses because respondents have a tendency of responding to the researcher what they think they are interested in hearing or seeing and that can easily give a false picture of what is happening in the Cluster Centre. However, I think the relationship and trust I established with them made them open up and be frank in their responses.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the rationale for the methodology applied in my research and the process of data collection, through information sharing. Through the use of three data collection tools I was able to collect rich data which I present in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Data

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the data as triangulated through the different data collection methods discussed in the previous chapter. I present data collected from two Cluster Centre Principals (CCPs), four Cluster Principals (CPs) and an Inspector of Education (IE). The data collected are supported by document analysis and observation notes where appropriate.

The interviews were driven by seven main questions:

- What are your views on the establishment of CCs?
- What criteria do you think were used to appoint CCPs?
- What is the role of CCPs?
- What do you think are the challenges facing CCPs?
- How do you view the leadership of CCPs?
- What are your expectations from CCPs?
- What do you think makes the CCs work?

Data emerging from the interviews, documents, and observation were then categorised into the following themes:

- Respondents' understanding of the establishment of CCs
- The capacity of CCPs
- The perceived role of CCPs
- The challenges facing CCPs

- The benefits flowing from the SCS
- Recommendations for the more effective implementation of CCs in the Ohangwena Region.

I use the respondents' own words as far as possible, intervening occasionally in order to clarify the meaning of the responses. All the respondents' names have been withheld in order to maintain anonymity. The codes I have used are: for the Inspector of Education, IE; Cluster Centre Principal A, CCP A; Cluster Centre Principal B, CCP B; Cluster Principal A, CP A; Cluster Principal B, CP B; Cluster principal C, CP C; and Cluster Principal D, CP D. In order to contextualise the data, I present them under headings and subheadings pertaining to my research goals, and these headings are directly related to the questions posed to the respondents. I posed the same questions to all the respondents.

4.2 Presentation of findings

4.2.1 The establishment of CCs

In general, there seemed to be agreement among respondents and data acquired through observation and document analysis as far as the rationale and procedures for establishing CCs were concerned.

The focus of the MoE workshop conducted in Ohangwena Educational Region dated 17-02-2009 was on issues pertaining to the Cluster System, especially on the establishment of Cluster Centres in Namibia. According to the minutes of the workshop:

Cluster Centres are centres of coordination, information dissemination and in-service training centres. Every effort should be made to develop these centres in terms of facilities such as resource facilities eg laboratories, libraries, offices and meeting halls, equipment and possibly human resources to supplement the existing manpower.

Respondents felt that the establishment of Cluster Centres helped schools to commit to common goals through the sharing of information and expertise. They believed that CCs were established to bring education closer to the people, especially when it came to the

management of schools. They also saw CCs as a link between the schools and circuit offices. Respondents believed that CCs provided teachers with essential information, assistance, and training in educational issues.

One of the CCPs described the CCs as a system that made neighbouring schools accessible to each other and thus aided their ability to share information and expertise. In the IE's view, "the Cluster Centres are a link between the circuit and the schools and sometimes the region".

One of the documents I consulted was an official notice dated 19-10-2005, which endorsed what respondents had to say about the role of the Cluster System for teachers, cluster principals, and stakeholders:

- Teachers get together to discuss and interpret syllabi and schemes of work, thereby setting the same standard in cluster schools. Tests are prepared as a group effort collectively and this enhances and improves the standard.
- Learners of schools in the cluster are exposed to a similar standard.
- Principals and teachers share each other's experiences and ideas.
- The morale and confidence of teachers are boosted, with the result that improvements are made and supportive mechanisms are realised.
- Resources at schools are shared with other schools in the cluster.

Minutes of a workshop conducted to discuss the MoE document in the Ohangwena Educational Region dated 28-05-2009 indicated that Cluster Centres were required to assist the inspector with the ordering and supply of textbooks and other materials, statistical data collection, and the efficient and equitable allocation of teachers for all the schools in the cluster. The document also indicated that cluster centres should assist the circuit inspector with the supervision and evaluation of teachers at cluster centres and satellite schools.

According to these minutes, a cluster centre provides the framework for a range of groups or committees to be formed to support various needs, and these groups help to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning. A cluster centre should have information relating to:

- Circuit Management Committees

- Cluster Management Committees
- Subject groups
- Examination Management Committees
- Workshop reports

CCP A's experience was that cluster group members "formed different groups, namely Cluster Management Committees, Subject Group Committees, Examination Committees, and HIV/AIDS Committees". These groups met and discussed matters relating to their schools. They helped to improve the management of schools through the sharing of ideas, expertise, training and so forth. She further commented that all the teachers in their schools welcomed the CC because it was perceived to be helpful.

CP B endorsed this sentiment, remarking that in the Cluster Centre there should be a very strong Examination Committee, as well as other committees such as Sport, Debating Club, and Finance Committees, and that the centre should serve as a source for all the information required to cater for the needs of the schools.

4.2.2 Identification of CCs in the Komesho circuit

A key issue in the SCS is the question of how CCs are identified by the MoE. This process is potentially fraught with tension and potential conflict, because the principal of a CC automatically becomes the CCP. Although there is no additional remuneration attached to this position yet, it is likely that the seniority accompanying the position of CCP within the system would make it an attractive 'promotion'.

According to the official document of the MoE on the structure of the Cluster Centres, the cluster centre should be a school generally perceived as 'good' and effective as well as easily accessible to other schools in the cluster. Respondents generally agreed with these criteria, adding that a CC should be well equipped; circuit and the regional offices must nominate schools that had electricity to make it easier for other schools to make copies of documents and disseminate information. This criterion was emphasised by the IE, who stressed the

centrality and capacity of CC schools so that they could effectively serve “satellite” schools. All three CPs agreed with this criterion.

The only critical or dissenting voice among the CPs was CP D, who argued that, in selecting CCs, “the circuit and regional offices did not really consider the performance of principals or schools”. He “could remember some schools were performing better than Cluster Centres but those schools were not appointed”. This issue was fully discussed in Chapter Two, and relates to the custom of automatically selecting secondary schools as cluster centres, and their principals as CCPs, even where these were not necessarily the best or most suitable schools.

4.3 The capacity of CCPs

Respondents felt strongly about the particular qualities CCPs needed to be effective.

The interviewees provided different responses, but all agreed that CCs needed to be led and managed by someone who had been in management for some time and possessed good leadership and management qualities. They felt that CCPs should be able to interpret national policy documents and draft policy on the School Clustering System. The IE emphasised this point, saying, “The CCP must be able to understand the government documents, especially the national policy”. He argued that principals often needed assistance with understanding and implementing educational policy, and the CCPs had a role to play here. He further stressed that the principal of the selected cluster centre school should be able to understand the smaller schools that cater for lower grades, such as grades 1 – 4 and 8 – 10. This is a significant point in terms of the issues raised earlier surrounding the MoE’s practice of appointing secondary school principals as CCPs. The comment suggests that secondary school principals may not always fully understand and appreciate the particular challenges faced by primary schools. Another related thought was expressed by CCP B, who argued: “the person must be well qualified in terms of academic development and must have experience in perhaps leading schools that are more challenging.” This too is a reference to the fact that CCPs usually head functional, well-

performing schools, and may lack insight into the problems faced by under-performing schools.

The qualities of openness and generosity also emerged. CCP A pointed out that “a CCP should be a person who is committed, ready to share ideas and expertise with others for the improvement of the cluster”. She further stated that a CCP should be able to develop cluster based in-service training to CPs in leadership and management skills to guide them in managing their own schools.

The question of the relocating or replacing ineffective CCPs was also raised. CP C felt that in a situation where “the current principal is not suitable, they [MoE] can transfer him/her to another school and transfer a suitable one to the CC.” CP A offered an example from her circuit where “a principal did not want to be a CCP and was moved to a smaller school”.

The IE’s views on this were:

The inspector has a right to transfer that principal to a smaller school when a principal is not be able to cope or understand the other levels of the whole cluster. A principal who is not well informed will not be able to do what is expected of him and when they [MoE] interview principals, they also check their competence.

He indicated that in some circuits in his region, if a principal with a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) for grades 1 – 10 headed a school nominated to be the Cluster Centre, she or he would not qualify, because the CC has a secondary phase which is up to grade 12 while the BETD only goes up to grade 10. The principal could then be transferred. He saw transfer both as a question of technical compliance as well as professional need.

The next two sections (4.4 and 4.5) go to the heart of this research. Respondents were asked to elaborate on how they saw the role of CCPs, how they saw the challenges facing CCPs and the cluster system generally, and the benefits the system has brought.

4.4 Perceived role of CCPs

A number of respondents felt that CCPs had a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders in the cluster, for in addition to heading his/her own school, the CCP was also a coordinator and needed to create a platform to advise schools on matters pertaining to education, e.g. by organising management workshops and community participation. During the two weeks I spent at the two Cluster Centres, I observed that CCPs needed to follow two programmes or schedules: one devised by the MoE to guide them as well their own programmes, as planned by their Cluster Management Committees. As CCP A remarked, "it is the duty of the CCP to oversee the functions of all the committees in the cluster". CP A confirmed that CCPs had to attend Circuit Management Meetings because they were all members of the Circuit Management, and that was an additional responsibility. In CP B's view, "CCPs are there to coordinate and to ensure the correct structures are in place for the placement of teachers and other personnel". CP C likewise indicated, "CCPs are there to play a guiding and supporting role, helping CPs to solve problems and conflicts at their own schools". According to CP D, Cluster Centre Principals were the ones who chaired meetings in the cluster, while all the satellite principals were Cluster Management members. Their role was to come together and share ideas, expertise and information about educational matters, and thereafter give feedback to their schools.

For the IE the CCP played what might be described as a management role, rather than a leadership one:

The most important roles are those of disseminating the information and when it comes to academics, the CCP is the one that makes sure that the cluster examination is properly done.

Singling out the dissemination of information and the smooth running of examination suggests a 'functional' view on the part of the IE. The principals generally emphasised both leadership and management roles.

According to some of the respondents, CCPs are expected to ensure that staff throughout the cluster follows the correct channels of communication. They are expected to involve parents, teachers, and learners in decision-making. They also have to promote the

formation of subject groups to improve teaching and set standards for examinations in all subjects. These expectations point to team leadership and participative decision-making.

CCP B was aware of these expectations. He remarked: "I think other school managers are going to have high expectations from us that they need this or that, CCPs must organise this and that because now we are more recognised as the cluster centre heads and there is even talk of CCPs being remunerated for doing that job". He thought a lot would be expected of CCPs in terms of follow-through on cluster activities.

4.4.2 CCPs as a link with the Circuit Offices

Some of the respondents saw CCPs as links between schools and the circuit office. According to the IE:

The CCP is supposed to be a link between the circuit office and the satellite schools in the cluster centre. The CCP will be attending meetings because a CCP is a member of cluster management and will be attending meetings here, and then will take the information back to the cluster.

CP B commented on the link between the circuit and satellite schools as "a good thing that speeded up the connection of cluster members to the circuit". In CP C's view, "CCPs make the flow of information easier to and from schools through channels that link clusters to circuit and regional offices". CP D stressed, "This is the link between the inspector and the other principals in the satellite schools. I think that is a kind of decentralization".

4.4.3 CCP as mini-inspector

According to a number of respondents, CCPs are seen as "mini-inspectors" because they conduct school visits, give guidance in the cluster, and coordinate all the activities related to school matters in the cluster. They felt that CCPs had the responsibility of facilitating the examination process, including making sure that they were set and assessed at the required

standard. According to the IE, most of the problems are solved at cluster centres where the CCP is the chairperson. He further remarked that:

Another job for the CCP is to collect mail, letters to the principals to the schools in his cluster also to see to it that the teachers are recruited properly because he is like the mini inspector: he or she does some of the jobs the inspector was supposed to do and see whether schools are run properly although he is not the inspector. His job is also to solve this mini conflict that might come up in the cluster; he or she has to see if they can solve these problems, and if he or she cannot solve them then he or she can refer them to the circuit.

CP A confirmed that the CCP had reduced the workload of the inspector in some activities in order to help the circuit to achieve its goal. She stated that:

Apart from that, a principal of that particular school is also like a mini inspector for all other schools in that particular cluster. He has also reduced maybe the workload of the inspector in monitoring, supervising the principals of various schools. I think the cluster system as such is really going per intended purposes, he is very much like an inspector because the inspector has so many schools in a circuit to visit ... well the workload of an inspector is a bit on one side paralysed or reduced but the effectiveness part of it is more on its CCH to run the job

CP B indicated, "CCPs deputise for inspectors when they have official programmes to attend to; since CCPs were automatically Circuit Management members, CCPs take turns to be in charge of the circuit office".

These views indicate the extent to which CCPs are seen as 'in authority' over principals of schools in their clusters.

4.4.4 Conducting school board elections

One of the Ministerial document's regulations made under the act (2001, p. 4), as discussed in a Cluster Management meeting of 19-04-2009, states that: "A staff member designated by the Permanent Secretary in terms of section 19 of the Act must act as presiding officer at every school board election".

The IE commented, "Another important job that the CCP does is to conduct school board elections where he or she is the presiding officer to make sure things are done correctly". CP B remarked that: "CCPs facilitate and coordinate the chairing of meetings and also the appointment of bodies, like the school board". He further commented that CCPs were responsible for presiding over the school board election. In CP C's view, when it came to the election of the school board CCPs served as presiding officers in all those schools.

I also observed in the first week I was at CC A, that the CCP was busy conducting school board elections. This was one of the leadership and management tasks he had to perform for the Cluster Centre, to make sure that the right procedures were followed and appropriate parents were selected to participate in decision-making at school level.

4.4.5 Uniformity in clusters

CP A argued: "we expect CCPs to standardise the level of the schools in our cluster and also to provide information from other clusters". He expected uniformity because of shared resources, and in terms of policies and standards of teaching and learning. This appeal to 'equity' and equality indicates levels of consciousness of the legacy of unequal development under which Namibia has long suffered. CP A further pointed out that the CCP facilitates various activities within the committees: these activities have to be coordinated among the schools within the cluster, and as a result, the standards of those schools should be at the same level.

For the cluster to have a unified and standard examination process, respondents felt that the examinations themselves should be uniform. Subject committee members should meet and ask teachers to set a standard examination, and then moderate the question papers before and after the examination. The IE commented, "When it comes to academic affairs the CCP is the one that makes sure that the cluster examination is properly done and the cluster facilitators are in place".

According to CP C, “the functions of the CCP in the cluster are to have meetings with subject facilitators from satellite schools at examination time”. They discuss how to set uniform exams of a good standard in all the satellite schools. The principals of satellite schools come to the cluster to discuss the quality of the examination set by the subject facilitator and other examination-related issues. I also observed, in the meeting of CC B, that it is not only CPs who come together and discuss issues relating to examinations, but there were also examination committee members who came together to share ideas and set up common examination papers to be written in the cluster.

The sections under 4.4 provide rich description of the kind of leadership and management expected from CCPs. I now move on to challenges facing the system and the CCPs.

4.5 The challenges facing CCPs

When I asked respondents about the challenges faced by CCPs, many of them felt that these were considerable: that the implementation of the School Clustering System was not being taken seriously enough and was going very slowly. Numerous factors, such as transport, lack of recognition, lack of infrastructure (venues) to conduct meetings, lack of support staff (human resources), cluster funding and overload are seen to be hindering the progress of the school clustering system. The problem underlying all of these challenges is the fact that the CCS has as yet not received official recognition from the MoE.

4.5.1 A question of recognition

Respondents felt that CCPs needed to be officially recognised in order to gain the necessary confidence to perform their cluster activities. At present, they were volunteering their services in a way that was considered demotivating. They needed to be remunerated and promoted. I certainly observed that the fact that CCPs were not officially recognised seemed to hinder them from performing their leadership and management tasks, and noticed that whatever they did was arranged internally by the circuit office or by the regional office. It

has long been felt that their appointment needs to be recognised by the MoE so that they can fully assume these very important responsibilities. CPs would then be able to assist CCPs in whatever activities they wished to perform at their schools because their appointment would be official.

CCP A stressed that “recognition of CCPs in terms of remuneration and promotion is very hard for them since they have to keep putting their hands in their pockets if they are to fulfil their functions in the cluster”.

CCP B noted that in terms of recognition:

up to now they are operating in a legal vacuum, for example there is no obligation for CCPs to issue the principal of the school in the cluster with a warning although the current arrangement is that they are under them and you can also hardly enforce certain aspects or activities to be done by that particular school because CCPs do not have the legal back-up; it is just a kind of internal arrangement.

CCP B continued to explain that CCPs provide leadership and guidance but they:

guide and intervene and their subject depends on the observation that they have carried out but they cannot really force this on people or compel them to carry it out because you are his supervisor, it is not by law.

Again, these comments suggest a narrow view of leadership and indicate a mindset of compliance rather than educational leadership.

CP D commented, “I think CCPs need to be appointed officially to encourage them to take their responsibilities seriously without fear and they can proudly assist other CPs with good motivation”.

Most of the other challenges discussed here stem from the fact that the system and the position of CCP have not been officially recognised and no policy exists. Hence, there is no national budget.

4.5.2 Remuneration

CCPs are supposed to be given extra money since they have additional duties to perform in the cluster. According to the IE, this arrangement is not yet an accomplished fact. Although it exists on paper, the details of the payments are not clear. He said he did not know whether they were going to be given a car grant, or an allowance or a notch:

It is debatable. Therefore, everything is like that but officially, they have clusters. Even the Minister of Education would say that clusters are in operation, but now when it comes to money there is no allowance attached to that post of a CCP.

At the time of this research, the MoE introduced a new salary structure according to which all principals receive the same salary, regardless of whether they are Primary phase or Secondary phase principals. The respondents reacted very favourably to this development. However, the issue of additional financial support for CCPs remained largely unresolved. It is certainly true that CCPs who are overloaded with responsibilities feel that they need to be remunerated. Not all principals feel this way, though. CP A commented, "I personally feel happy now that the new salary structure has come in for principals and they are all to be remunerated". He thinks it is a good answer for the CCP because they all receive the same remuneration. The IE however strongly emphasised that:

CPs were happy with the new salary structure because it had been adjusted and they were to receive the same amount whether you were a CCP or not. The CPs did not consider the workload and responsibilities CCPs are having, CCPs need to have a different salary scale from CPs for motivation and encouragement to commit themselves to CCs responsibilities.

He indicated that the idea of remunerating all the principals equally would have the effect that CCPs would reduce their school visits because of a lack of suitable compensation, especially if they were to use their own cars to visit schools: they would be forced to pay for petrol themselves, which is discouraging to them as well as to those who would like to apply for new posts as CCPs.

4.5.3 Lack of infrastructure (offices or venues)

The respondents stressed that one of the difficulties that the CCs face is that of finding a meeting venue for the cluster. That they are obliged to operate from the normal office of the school tends to hinder the progress of cluster activities. CCPs further commented that they sometimes used the library to conduct cluster meetings, but materials relating to the cluster could not be displayed on the library notice board because learners used the same venue for their studies. CCP A confirmed that “we find it difficult to run the Cluster Centre effectively because we do not have meeting space; if we want to meet we come to the CC where there is no hall for cluster meetings”.

CCP B acknowledged that they do not have a Cluster Centre office. They operate from their own offices, which are dedicated to the business of their particular school, and they have to use that school’s resources for all the cluster activities. This was perceived to be unfair. He went on to say that these resources belonged to the learners studying at that school, and asked why they had to share these resources with other schools if other schools did not contribute anything. According to CP C, “the MoE was supposed to provide CCs with infrastructures especially venues for meetings so that CCs could function properly and reach their targets”. I noticed during the week I was at the Cluster Centres, that there were no proper venues for CCs. The cluster centre activities were discussed either in the principal’s office or in the school library, which impeded other activities at the schools: for instance, learners who were supposed to use the library to study were asked to wait for the meeting to finish before they were allowed in.

4.5.4 Lack of support staff (human resources)

According to the respondents, Cluster Centres are supposed to be provided with secretaries to provide administrative support. Moreover, a teacher was supposed to be provided to take over the CCPs’ teaching in order to free up time to enable them to concentrate on activities connected with the cluster. This has not yet happened.

The IE commented that one of the challenges was a lack of support staff. The inspector summons the CCPs to meetings, which means that their learners are left with nobody to teach them.

According to CCP B: "If I am a CCP and at the same time also a class teacher and now owing to intervention in the school, in the cluster and also owing to class work and home work even just general teaching it becomes very difficult to do". He argued that their learners were always behind, which made it very difficult for them to work. If he was away for a week, when he came back he had to try to catch up, and in the process, learners missed the requisite homework.

Moreover, CCP A noted that "there was no secretary for the Cluster Centre; we use the school secretary to serve as a cluster secretary which is overloading the secretary with a lot of work for which she is not paid". She believed that an additional secretary was needed in the cluster.

CP A argued that there was nobody to deputise for the CCP and said that:

I feel when the CCP is not in the office and you need assistance sometimes the HOD or Deputy Principal does not even know what other processes you are undertaking and probably some of the resolution. When you go to the CC you find somebody who is not even a CM member and you want to make a follow up on a particular issue that you discussed in the CM and the CCP is not there it becomes a problem because the person does not know exactly what you have decided ... the current stage where they are operating now, it is true that they are overloaded because there is no additional staff to assist the Cluster Centre Head. They do not have anybody to leave in the office except maybe they delegate HOD or deputy principal or any other staff member who can act in his absence.

She further argued that the CCP has to delegate one of the CPs whenever he or she is not in the office, because the CP knows what was discussed in the previous meeting. To make things easier the delegation process should be taken seriously and administered effectively.

4.5.5 Transport

The general view of the respondents is that a lack of transport hinders the CCPs' performing their functions in the cluster. They are obliged to finance transport from their own pockets. One of the respondents remarked that if the MoE provided transport to CCs, then CCPs would perform their duties more easily. I personally observed how a lack of transport contributed to the ineffectiveness of the monitoring of activities at various schools in the cluster. The CCPs of the two CCs I observed could not execute all of the duties expected of them in the cluster because the cluster could not fund the CCPs to visit schools. According to the interviewees, this was one of the key reasons why the School Clustering System was not functioning very well.

The IE reminded the researcher during the interview that one should not forget the issue of transport because:

The aim was for the CCP to go from one school to another ... transporting principals from that ... just to visit one another but now without transport, the country is very big you cannot just travel like that and the poor CCP comes with the tank empty.

In support of IE's view, CCP A felt strongly that there should be provision for transport.

CCP B noted with concern that:

There is a challenge with transport when you are expected to visit schools in the cluster or to inquire about things in schools, and sometimes there are also classes that might have cropped up at a particular school that needs your attention yet when it comes to transportation you use your own transport and if some schools are far from your station, you may cancel the visit.

CP B indicated that the challenges of costs range from the cost of driving twice a week to and from the circuit to collect the mail to dropping off submissions and attending Cluster Management meetings.

4.5.6 Cluster fund

A number of respondents felt that CCs were supposed to have well-organised financial committees to assist in the day-to-day activities in the cluster, especially for buying materials for examinations. Each school in the cluster is supposed to contribute a certain amount of money, but because of the implementation of the School Clustering System there are many things (recognition of CCPs, transport, infrastructure or venues etc.) which are not yet in place. This makes it difficult for committees to function, and some schools refuse to contribute to the fund.

In the IE's view, well-organised clusters have a cluster fund to which every school contributes money to enable them to "buy textbooks, let's say maybe a machine to make copies or to put petrol in their cars". He indicated there was resistance from some of the Cluster Principals and said that:

Principals are resisting that contribution because some schools bought their own photocopier machines. Now they are saying what is the need to contribute if they have theirs.

According to CCP B, they have to use resources from their own school because the cluster has no funds or resources. He stressed that CPs in his cluster refuse to contribute money because some of them have resources at their schools.

CCP A remarked that whereas they do not have a cluster fund, they do contribute to the running of examinations. If you happen to use the contribution on transport, you will have no money to buy examination materials, since the circuit does not always provide photocopy paper. Cluster Centres have to fend for themselves in terms of resources.

According to CP B, a problem arises when you receive a document that you need to distribute to other satellite schools and you are unable to make copies as you do not have the equipment and facilities, resulting in the information not being circulated to the relevant destinations. It was therefore necessary for schools to contribute an amount of money to the cluster fund.

4.5.7 Overload of CCPs

A number of respondents felt that CCPs have many responsibilities and sometimes may neglect their duties at their own schools because they could spend as much as a week visiting and solving problems at other schools. Respondents further said that CCPs attend many meetings at the circuit and sometimes they act on behalf of the inspector. When visiting CC A I observed that the CCP was unable to concentrate fully on her own school activities as she was always out on cluster business. Her teaching responsibilities were neglected and learners were left alone in the classrooms. A possible remedy for this would be if her teaching responsibilities were reduced in order for her to lead and manage the cluster actively and effectively. The CCPs and CPs interviewed all felt that CCPs had too much on their plate. No allowances had been made for the fact that CCPs are also principals of their own schools, while being expected to be quite heavily involved in the five or six schools in their clusters. This once again points to an absence of planning and provisioning on the part of the MoE, a result of their failure to recognise the SCC.

In order to address this problem, CCP A argued, "I think CCPs' responsibilities are supposed to be reduced to in order execute their duties effectively, and they should be relieved from teaching to concentrate on his or her school and the cluster activities". In CP A's view CCPs are overburdened, because currently they operate with no additional staff to assist the Cluster Centre Head; if additional staff were appointed, then the overload would be reduced. CP D remarked that: "It's true that CCPs are overloaded with a lot of responsibilities but I think they can delegate some activities to CPs to make their work easier". He further stressed that delegation in the cluster reduces the burden and encourages CPs to take up new responsibilities through teamwork.

Whereas the appointment of additional staff is clearly a matter for the MoE, practising delegation is considered one of the characteristics of good leadership. I did find a degree of delegation in the system, as discussed below, but perhaps its level and extent are insufficient to provide much relief and support to CCPs.

4.5.8 Perceived tension in the Cluster Centres

The fact that CCPs are not officially recognised and remunerated does seem to generate tension. One of the respondents indicated that “you could see that [teachers and principals] are not happy because one of their colleagues is intervening [without official sanction] in their schools’ activities while he has his own school to look after, but the issue is that they fear their weaknesses to be revealed”.

CCP A commented that:

They are not recognized but they are working very hard to solve problems and maybe what they are doing is not legalised but you find out that they agree and reach the solution. Some CPs take actions which are not good and in your opinion you feel that he should not have taken it and you intervene to try and solve it amicably or perhaps you receive a complaint from one of the staff members that A, B, C is happening and you are not yet with it you come in to intervene but when you recommend they feel undermined; now somebody from outside is telling me what to do.

CCP B cited an internal arrangement that was made in the cluster to visit schools:

They divided themselves, as principals in the cluster, to go and visit schools and when they went, they tried to examine teachers’ work and learners’ work and other things in the school; of course the CCP only got support from a few principals. The rest objected because such a visit is going to show perhaps a lot of weakness in their schools so there is that tension already and the idea was discarded because you cannot enforce action when there is no legal basis for our operation.

He indicated that tension arises because people fear that their weaknesses or those of their school were being exposed, hence try to close ranks and not cooperate with others in the cluster. He said, “Teachers themselves don’t understand the need for the system”.

As discussed earlier, the primary cause of these problems is the poor implementation of the School Clustering System. There is no law that regulates the School Clustering System once it is put in place, which is why one of the CCPs said that they were operating “in a legal vacuum”. One problem was the matter of extra work and staffing norms. CP A commented

that: “when you calculate the learner: teacher ratio at school, the principal is also included”.

He suggested that:

CCPs could have been excluded when a calculation of the learner to teacher ratio was done so that maybe they can have fewer periods to teach and concentrate on other management activities in the cluster.

According to CCP B, the MoE should promote and remunerate CCPs so that they can be more effective in their role as Cluster Centre Principals. However, if additional staff is not appointed even official recognition and remuneration are not likely to make a difference.

4.6 Benefits flowing from the CCS

In spite of the many challenges facing the system, respondents were able to identify several benefits. These are all improved structures or practice that point to improved managerial practice, or a development in the participants’ views of an effective organisation.

4.6.1 Delegation in the CCs

The CCPs organised their Cluster Centre members to share responsibilities through delegation. I observed, for example, that CPs are delegated to chair meetings in their clusters and take turns to be secretaries in their Cluster Management meetings, since clusters are not provided with secretaries. Minutes of cluster meeting of 04-04-2007 indicated that a CCP was called on by the inspector to assist in organising the school timetable, which had not been correctly done. The inspector subsequently directed the CCP to investigate the problem in his cluster and give him feedback.

On 10-09-2007, the Cluster Principal of one school in the cluster was delegated by the CCP to represent him at the school board meeting to supervise the shortlisting of candidates who had applied for a teaching post.

The document further indicated that CCPs stand in for the inspector if he is not around. On 30-07-2007, the CCP was asked to represent the inspector in the case of mismanagement of funds at one school. He had to have discussions with the CP and the treasurer of the school in order to investigate the matter, and then he had to give feedback to the inspector concerning the outcome.

According to IE, leadership varies from person to person, but the truth is that most of them assist the IE in their role as inspector because:

Things he is supposed to do, they are doing it, because you cannot be everywhere you see, the circuit is big. It used to have 35 schools now they are only 30 then the running from one school to another or somebody reporting to him is not easy - they are helping. When he is not there he leaves the CCP to do the acting, like when he went to Katima somebody was acting at the circuit and that person has to be a CCP.

The IE further stressed that:

It is also good because it is like staff development when you leave them to act here, and for example when they go for interviews they would be able to do well because they are exposed to issues and their leadership is good, most of them are doing well.

The first day I requested permission at the circuit to conduct research in the Komesho Circuit, I observed that the CCP was delegated by the inspector to be in charge of the circuit, which stood to benefit him by providing training and exposure to leadership and managerial skills.

There seemed to be a spirit of delegation and/or substitution throughout the system, indicating a healthy approach to problem solving and management, and enabling personal/professional development. There is no doubt that this has come about because of the SCS and the particular demands that managing the system makes of the participants.

4.7.1 Communication

In a county like Namibia, a large, thinly-populated country where rural areas often lack access to basic infrastructure such as electricity and telecommunications, communication

becomes a matter of grave importance. Since part of the rationale for establishing the SCS was to improve communication, it was interesting that this point emerged strongly in the findings. The general view of respondents was that communication between the CCs and Circuit Offices was good. There are central points in the Cluster Centres and Circuit Offices where information is distributed to schools or circuit offices. Respondents felt that they no longer had to travel long distances to the circuit to collect information; they could get it from the cluster nearby their school. The general feeling of the respondents was in line with what I observed during the observation week, that CPs come in to collect their mail and other important information from the pigeon holes provided for them at the CCs and take it back to their schools.

The question of communication also emerged in terms of its bureaucratic function. According to the IE, the CCP is not an ordinary principal; he is like a mini-inspector, and as such was required to follow procedures. He indicated that according to the organogram the correct channel of communication for satellite principals is to work through the CCP before going directly to the IE. The CCP is supposed to inform the inspector at the circuit, who then delegates someone to deal with the problem.

On the other hand, CP B remarked, "if you want something very urgent at the region, it can be difficult". Some CCPs write letters to the director and those letters remain in their offices for weeks and in the circuit for longer. It can take time to reach the destination office. He further pointed out that if the CCP is not sufficiently active the flow of information in the cluster is delayed.

4.8 Teamwork

I asked respondents what enabled a Cluster Centre to work effectively. They commented that CCs need commitment from all the members of the cluster, who had to participate fully in all the activities through sharing ideas, expertise, and relevant information. According to them clusters work best when people work as a team. They further said that a Cluster Centre is divided into cluster groups, which encourages teamwork and brings people

together in various collaborative groups. In teamwork, participants develop greater competence as they learn to make decisions and take responsibility within their clusters. In one of the CC meetings I attended, I observed that the CCP did not dominate by showing that he was the CCP in charge but rather encouraged others to actively participate in the decision making of their cluster.

According to CCP A their Cluster Management members work together as a team, holding frequent meetings at the CC. From there principals go back to their schools and disseminate the proper and correct information to their teachers. She further commented that this is what makes the Cluster Centre work properly: "It is just a matter of sharing correct information with everybody in the CC". She pointed out that she had been away for many days conducting school board elections but she was also needed at school and cluster level. Because of the bond that binds them together, they do not have problems: they work as a team in the school and the person who is delegated to lead has the authority to replace her.

In CCP B's view what makes the CC work is "commitment from both parties; the management and teachers". He further stressed that the primary movers are the managers if they are committed to development within the cluster, and if they are committed to creating some level of uniformity in the way schools in the cluster are run. He thought that they were making good progress in this regard. Nevertheless, he pointed out that, thus far, the only uniformity they had was in the April examinations and sometimes the August examination, which is also set in the cluster unless it is a mock examination from the region (for Grade 10 only).

CP A pointed out that: "I expect uniformity in school activities because a cluster is formed; there are various committees that involve teachers from different schools, and these committees work together as a team". CP C remarked, "We work as a team when it comes to the examinations and moderation of question papers and typing the exam". The secretaries in the cluster come together to type the question papers and put them in the envelopes according to the number of learners taking each subject at each school.

It seems clear that teamwork is regarded as one of the major benefits to have resulted from the SCS. This points to post-traditional and dynamic views of leadership and management, which are explored in the next chapter.

4.9 Recommendations to enhance the implementation of CCs in the Ohangwena Region

When the School Clustering System was implemented in the Ohangwena Educational Region, all welcomed it. But Cluster Centres are operating with difficulty in terms of the lack of CCPs' recognition; the lack of transport for CCPs to visit schools; the need to perform other activities in the cluster; and the dearth of physical facilities like machines and venues for meetings. Hence, while the implementation of Cluster Centres was felt to be a good idea, one respondent commented that it would be wonderful if the MoE provided everything clusters needed to enable them to operate effectively. The IE said that the Ministry had undertaken to provide allowances, transport, and an extra teacher. He further commented that:

The MoE should recruit support staff and additional secretaries for example, and give allowances so that they would be able to put petrol in their cars, put up some infrastructures: a hall, chairs and some facilities like telephone, fax and he thought that one of those would be able to be used by the community, because the School Cluster System is a very good idea to decentralise education, taking it to the people because things are already written, it is only maybe the implementation which is the problem.

The IE is of the opinion that the MoE is processing all the grievances mentioned above and would respond to them in time.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present a comprehensive picture of the perceived role of CCPs at the selected clusters in Namibia. The general picture that emerges portrays the CCP as a key figure in the system. CCPs are regarded as a coordinating link between the schools

and the regional offices. They are regarded as mini-inspectors. Their role in maintaining a system of communication is seen as vital. The CCPs in this study are both regarded as strong leaders and managers.

There are challenges, however, mostly associated with the lack of policy on the post-level (or position) of the CCP. It seems that the MoE is dragging its heels on attending to this issue. Because the CCPs are in fact doing the work of inspectors they are at times regarded with suspicion, as principals are reluctant to allow them to examine their schools too closely.

Other challenges relate to the lack of venues, transport, administrative and human resources, and a proper budget to finance the system. While these are important, they are not the focus of this study.

I identified the benefits accruing from the system as increased delegation and teamwork.

In the next chapter, I discuss these themes in terms of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five

Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

The Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, Namibia (1999)

recommended that:

A school in a central situation is chosen as a lead school and exercises a leadership role with respect to the other schools in the cluster. The cluster unit is used as the basis for in-service education and for the collection of statistics, the distribution of materials and information, and the spread of good practice. The link between the Regional Education Office and the school becomes much simpler since most of the communication is undertaken with the central schools in the cluster rather than with each individual school. The principal of the lead school of each cluster has additional responsibilities relating to the whole cluster as well as his or her normal responsibilities as a principal (p. 100).

This quote provides the framework for this chapter and highlights how the MoE has strived to implement the School Clustering System. The School Clustering System is part of the policy for the decentralisation of education that involves learners, teachers, and stakeholders in decision-making at cluster level in Namibia. Although the School Clustering System has been in place since 1996, there are still issues that contribute to the slow progress of the implementation of the system; I explore these issues as they emerge in this chapter.

The discussion is presented under the following themes derived from the categories in Chapter Four:

- Cluster Centres as a form of decentralisation
- Perceived roles of CCPs and delegation
- The kind of leadership and management required
- The need for teamwork and cooperation at cluster level

- Challenges facing the system

I discuss these themes with my research goal in mind and make close reference to the literature I consulted. In addition, I have added my own personal comments.

5.2 Cluster Centres as a form of decentralisation

5.2.1 Decentralisation

The data revealed that participants have a basic knowledge of what the decentralisation of education entails with regard to the establishment of Cluster Centres. The essence of their understanding is that the decentralisation of education brought the governance of education closer to them by sharing information with the learners, teachers, and the community. A further effect was the transfer of the responsibility of management from regional officers (such as IEs) to CCPs, CPs, teachers, and the community through team management. This is in line with Pomuti's (2009, p. 26) claims that decentralisation involves the transfer of decision-making powers and responsibility from central government to lower levels of governmental or private institutions.

The respondents believe that the establishment of Cluster Centres has unified schools by enabling the sharing of information and expertise. They agree that CCs were established to bring the administrative matters closer to the people involved in education, especially in terms of the management of schools. A similar finding was reported by Semba (2004, p. 52) in a study of education decentralisation in the Omaheke Region of Namibia. In her studies decentralisation implies that bringing decision making closer to the people is a big commitment by the government to allow communities more control of the schools. Cluster Centres represent one of the areas of schooling where parents and other stakeholders committed to being involved in school activities, are able to enhance performance at the school. This is in line with how Lauglo (cited in Bush, 2003) defines decentralisation as follows:

Decentralisation in education means a shift in the authority distribution away from the central 'top' agency in the hierarchy of authority . . . Different

forms of decentralisation are diverse in their justifications and in what they imply for the distribution of authority. (p. 12)

Bray (1987) agrees that the aim of decentralisation in the Cluster Centres is to “improve decision making” and “empower” cluster members to take responsibility. This quote by Bray encapsulates what I observed about the participation of learners, teachers, and parents in decision making at the two Cluster Centres where I conducted my research. The process of decentralisation led to parents being called in to look at learners’ performance by checking learners’ books and discussing their progress with teachers, this reflects a serious level of involvement on behalf of parents in their children’s education. Cluster Centres thus become the focal points for contact and coordination between the schools in the cluster (Dittmar, et al., 2002, p. 23).

It also “improves efficiency” in the appointment of staff members and speeds up the process in other activities. I feel that empowering learners, teachers and parents to take the initiative in decision making raises people’s confidence and motivates them to participate in school activities in the cluster. Encouraging this sense of empowerment is one of the strategies that the Cluster Management can adopt to enhance the participation of learners, teachers, and parents in cluster activities.

Another feature of the respondents’ understanding of decentralisation is that it allows remote schools to be in a better position to share resources and knowledge. One of the respondents, a CCP, describes the establishment of CCs as a system that made neighbouring schools accessible to each other and this grouping aided their ability to share information and expertise. This is particularly important in under-resourced schools.

An important finding of this study focuses on improved efficiency because of better and faster communication. Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 14) argue that “clusters improve efficiency because they divide the very large circuits into a series of interrelated and more manageable parts through which information can flow and within which resources can be used rationally”. Dittmar, et al. (2002) go on to explain how communication is channelled in the cluster saying that:

Communication is channelled through the Cluster Centre to all the satellite schools, helping to speed up communication between schools and Inspectors, the Regional Education Office and Head Office (p. 14).

It appears from data that communication lines in the CCs are adhered to and respondents indicated that they were happy with the arrangement and welcomed the School Clustering System. As mentioned in Chapter Four, I noticed that the use of pigeonholes in offices was an efficient method of distributing information as Cluster Principals collected this information and took it back to their schools.

The effects of decentralisation are also felt in the respondents' sense of feeling involved in decision-making and other activities in the cluster.

5.3 Perceived role of the CCP and delegation

5.3.1 Perceived role of CCPs

A number of respondents believed that the CCPs were key figures in a cluster carrying a lot of responsibility on their shoulders. They coordinate, lead, manage, and have to create a platform to advise schools on matters pertaining to education, for example management workshops, and community participation. In this sense they are well placed to provide the kind of "binding and bonding" (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 68) referred to in Chapter Four. Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 24) similarly argue that CCPs provide general leadership and supervision of all activities in the cluster, and promote the formation of teams, such as subject groups to improve the teaching and learning and examination of all subjects. The perceived role of the CCPs role is to bond cluster members together to ensure good performance in the cluster. The data suggest that CCPs in this study have managed to connect cluster members by involving them in various activities in the school and in the cluster.

An idea I found relevant to the role of CCPs (although it did not feature in the literature chapter) which Davidoff and Lazarus (2002, p. 134) refer to as the "role of administration" (in this case CCPs) that is to "ensure that decisions taken are followed through". They further argued that "managing the school relates to decision making processes and a coordinating function" (p. 134). This quote supports the situation at the two Cluster Centres where I conducted this study. The CCPs were newly appointed to the position of principal

and CCPs, and according to the respondents who were Cluster Principals and an Inspector of Education they were performing well in executing their duties and ensuring that their decisions were followed up.

The portrayal of leadership that emerges from the data could be said to lack depth and richness. In light of the comment by Sergiovanni (2007, p. 33) that “anyone who is aspiring to be a good Principal needs to have some sense of what she or he values, something to be committed to, a compass to help navigate the way – a personal vision” one could argue that the qualities of leadership highlighted by the respondents lack a sense of “personal vision”. Rather, the comments emphasised the value of efficiency; respondents stressed that all the information they received from schools or the Circuit Office needed to be forwarded by them as soon as possible to the relevant cluster members. One of the respondents insisted that CCPs who are disorganised delay the process of disseminating the information to the relevant destination, which is inefficient. This characteristic – of being ‘organised’ or ‘efficient’ – seems to be highly prized. The relative absence of a sense of personal vision – and transformational leadership – from the data may be an indication of the complexity of the system. It may be that CCPs – who are also principals of their own schools and sometimes even subject teachers – are simply too ‘busy’ to develop personal or organisational visions.

In spite of their ‘busyness’ and the complexity of the system, it seems that CCPs are able to develop a sense of participation and teamwork. During the observation period, I observed that CCPs have different cluster programmes because each cluster has its own Cluster Management Committee that plans the cluster activities. Some of the programmes are the same because they receive a calendar from the MoE as a guide, but as a cluster, they should have their own programmes. The view expressed by respondents shows that CCPs visit schools every term according to their programmes, discuss issues or findings with the CPs amicably, and forward the report to the Circuit Office, so that the Circuit Management can discuss the report and other programmes on the agenda in order to plan the way forward. The idea is in line with Davidoff and Lazarus’ argument (2002, p. 105) that “successful implementation of any decision or plan is largely dependent on the extent to which people concerned have some sense of ownership – of control and responsibility”. According to the data, Cluster Centre Principals not only concentrate on school visits and meetings, but also

attend to examinations and subject groups that facilitate the writing of examinations that measure learners' understanding and performance. Respondents expect CCPs to standardise the level of the school in terms of examination outcomes, and to achieve this there should be an Examination Committee and facilitator to coordinate the setting of examination papers under the leadership of the CCPs.

The data show that CCPs have multi-functional activities that they perform in the cluster and these functions cannot be performed alone; therefore, the next section discusses the delegation process in the cluster.

5.3.2 Delegation

The CCPs and Cluster Management alone cannot make the Cluster Centre successful; neither can parents as individuals make a difference without delegating tasks to cluster members. Smith and Cronje (2002) describe delegation as:

... The process of assigning responsibility and authority for attaining goals. Responsibility and authority are delegated down the chain of command from the person at a higher level in the organisation to a person at a lower level. (p. 197).

Smith and Cronje (2002, p. 210) further point out that the delegation process is essential to every manager, and this is how managers like CCPs get others to share in the organisation's drive for better performance. Respondents believe that CCPs organise their Cluster Centre members to share responsibilities through delegation. CCPs are delegated to chair meetings in their clusters and take turns in the role of secretary in their Cluster Management meetings, since clusters are not provided with secretaries. In support of Smith and Cronje's idea Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 13) affirmed, "Some CCPs have balanced their workload by delegating tasks to senior teachers, thus empowering these teachers as well".

According to the data, CCPs are given tasks by the Circuit Office to visit schools or to investigate a problem. Respondents believe that delegating CCPs to perform various duties would develop their understanding and allow them to acquire new skills in leadership and management which is part of staff development

CCPs and other principals should be motivated to accept the responsibilities of delegation because this will improve people's capacity in terms of management and leadership skills. Blandford (1997, p. 27) stresses that "when delegating, a middle manager should retain control over the work delegated, whether by instruction or participation". The process of delegation needs commitment from the delegating officer to make sure that the task is understood. The essence of delegation will enhance the quality of work as a leader and that of the team. In the next section, I discuss how participative leadership and management involve cluster members in decision-making and other activities in the cluster.

5.4 The need for participatory leadership and management

The respondents provided different views on participative leadership and management in the cluster, but showed agreement that Cluster Centres need to be led and managed by someone who has experience of management and has good leadership and management qualities. Respondents further argued that the leader of a CC should be able to interpret the national policy document and draft policy on the School Clustering System. Erasmus and van der Westhuizen (2002, p. 246) argued "Under the system of participative management employees (CCPs, CP and Teachers) participate in the management of the school and in making decisions that affect them and their jobs" as discussed in Chapter Two.

This quotation defines the kind of participation whereby members have a sense of belonging and may be emotionally involved in situations that will encourage participants to contribute as a group. The respondents had different responses to this issue, but realise that they need to work together through participation and understanding to achieve a common goal.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Aipinge (2007) found that participative management allows and encourages subordinates to participate in decisions or organisational operations that affect them, including the people who are to be executing those decisions. This idea is similar to what Dittmar, et al. (2002) argued, that decisions could only be executed if Cluster Centres provided a forum of CMC to share and resolve problems in the cluster. This is felt

most keenly with the issue of examinations that requires the expertise of Advisory Teachers to give their input. I think that this would be resolved by having a forum at the cluster level.

At the Cluster Management meeting that I observed, CPs were very effective in contributing to the discussion and I noticed that the chairperson did not dominate, rather he allowed the CPs to participate fully in the proceedings. This is a form of participative management by allowing and encouraging teachers and principals to participate in the management of the school and in the cluster decision-making. The CCP reminded them that the idea of a Cluster Centre is to involve cluster members in sharing ideas, information, and decision-making through participation and taking responsibility in the cluster. Effective leadership and management encourage participation of all school managers in the management process just as the CCP did in their meeting.

From my observation, I feel that the CCP has an influence in decision-making in the school and in the cluster. Cheng (2002) argued that leadership is a “process that influences others’ behaviours”. In this case, CCPs should be able to persuade learners, teachers, CPs, and parents to get involved in decision-making in schools and clusters to achieve good results. Even though the CCP was influential, the leader should not behave as a star standing alone but rather as a facilitator who lets others make decisions together as a group. Leithwood, et al. (cited in Bush, 2003, p. 78) stress the importance of participative leadership when he asserts, “Participative leadership ... assumes that the decision-making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group”. I personally believe that when people participate as a group they mostly reach a better result and this makes participative leadership a successful process.

The data show that respondents are happy with the CCPs in the way they lead and manage the Cluster Centres because of the participative approach they use. It appeared that when parents are elected as school board members they do take part in decision-making during school board meetings. In my view and experience as a Cluster Management member, I think parents can gain from the experience of school management in order to be effective in school activities. School management should motivate parents during parents and teachers’ meetings and offer guidance in becoming more involved in the schooling process. In addition, Cluster Centres have a forum of school board chairpersons from schools that meet

at the cluster once a term. These chairpersons can also motivate parents to take education seriously for the benefit of their children and the cluster.

Drawing on Bush's (2003) notion of collegial management – as discussed in Chapter Two – collegial models appear to depend on shared professional values leading to the development of trust and a willingness to give and receive criticism in order to enhance practice. In my opinion in order to foster participative leadership and management in the Cluster Centre, the CCP should develop trust among his or her cluster members and the community and he or she should be ready to accept criticism. However, as reported in Chapter Four, some CPs felt threatened by the CCPs' 'interference' in their schools' management. In a truly collegial model of management, this response would be unlikely to occur since everyone would feel a sense of openness and willingness to share and learn. Rather than be suspicious of CCPs' visits, principals would welcome them, be ready to debate, and reach solutions to problems together. It is arguable to what extent the absence of this sense of openness and trust is due to the 'legal vacuum' explained earlier in Chapter Two. If organisation members are unwilling to be guided by senior people who have the expertise – but lack the official title and position – the picture that emerges seems more bureaucratic than collegial.

However, it is important to bear in mind that collegiality is a demanding approach, requiring commitment from staff if it is to become an effective vehicle for beneficial change. When change happens, it requires the involvement of people or a group of people to bring about change. This kind of thinking was prevalent as early as 1996 in the Task Team Report (South Africa, 1996, p. 26) which argued that management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of an organisation engage. It is through this process of joint management that ownership grows and a sense of collegiality develops.

The general view of the respondents is that they believe the current CCPs deserve to lead and manage the Cluster Centre because of their competence and the way they take responsibility seriously. Furthermore, respondents believed that CCPs should involve learners, teachers, and parents in participating in the decision-making process in the cluster activities. The leadership and management of CCPs at cluster level should encourage shared

responsibility of activities, and encourage all cluster members to acquire knowledge and skills through the sharing of information and expertise. This kind of widespread participation in education activities can only be accomplished if the CCPs trust their members and are willing to accept a sharing of responsibilities and participate in decision-making. The CCPs should use their influence to control and monitor the tasks and activities to enhance improved performance in the cluster.

If trust is not present, then one could have a similar situation to that in South Africa. According to Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008, p. 17), the legacy of apartheid continues to discourage true democratic participation and collegiality. These authors refer to the “overriding tension between holding on and letting go, and the concomitant challenge of trust as key ingredient of building cohesion”. In these circumstances, placing ‘trust’ in official sources of power and authority seems the natural course of action.

5.4.1 Democratic participation

The main idea that emerged from respondents was one of democratic participation whereby all cluster members have a right to participate in decision-making of their organisation. This idea reflects what Dittmar, et al. (2002, 30) suggested, “Democratic participation in the cluster promotes the involvement of teachers, parents, school communities and learners in the education process”. Dittmar, et al. (2002) further said this happens most effectively when decentralisation is focused not only on the region, but also on the school community.

Drawing on Topnaar’s (2004) understanding of democratic participation, “decisions should be made by those who best understand the needs of learners and the local community”. All these quotes emphasise the involvement of the community in school activities, which I believe is a good idea to enhance participation in decision-making. The idea is also in line with the tenets of decentralisation since this process enables those who are closest to the problem – and most affected by it – to make decisions.

In a disciplinary hearing meeting dealing with problem learners in the school, I observed parents and teachers agree through consensus on the punishment to be given to learners who had committed an offence. All supported the view expressed by the parents on the judgement of punishment given to learners, and parents asked the principal to announce their names at the assembly because they believed that it would discourage others from committing offences. This is an indication that democratic participation prevails in the Cluster Centre that involves parents and teachers. This supports Bush's (2003, p. 67) belief that there are "common values and shared objectives that lead to the view that it is both desirable and possible to solve problems by agreement".

The education system is increasingly geared towards strengthening democratic participation in bodies like the School Board, Learners Representative Councils, and the Education Forum. Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 30) suggest, "One important role of clusters is to bring different people together and thus enhance their participation in schooling issues". In this sense, the cluster system could be described as a vehicle for democratic participation.

One of the Ministerial document's regulations made under the Act (2001, p.4) emphasised that:

A staff member designated by the Permanent Secretary in terms of section 19 of the Act must act as presiding officer at every School board election.

During my observation, the CCPs were involved in presiding over School Board elections, where parents had to take part in decision-making and other activities at the school and cluster level. According to Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 25) CCPs promote community participation by ensuring that school boards function properly, that community members value schooling and that communities respond to discipline problems at their schools. The main idea that emerged from respondents is that the CCPs facilitate and coordinate the chairing of meetings and appointment of bodies, like the School Board. The government's idea is to involve parents, teachers, and learners in decision making, which will help schools to share responsibility.

5.5 The need for teamwork and cooperation at cluster level

It is evident from the data that clusters provide a framework for a range of groups or committees that support various needs, such as the Cluster Management Committee, Subject groups, Examination, Sports and HIV/AIDS. These committees help to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning. According to the data, these committees draw up programmes like a School Development Plan, Action Plan, Draft Internal Cluster Policy, timetables, recruitment of personnel and other schedules in the cluster. The point raised by respondents indicates that all committees except the Cluster Management Committees are chaired by CPs who are members of the CMC. Cluster Principals have to be creative and innovative leaders so that these committees can function effectively.

Through the data, teamwork emerges as an important aspect of organisational success in Cluster Centres. A key aspect of teams and teamwork as explained in Chapter Two is the ability of the group of individuals that comprise the team to be more creative than any of the individuals could be in isolation. Similarly, the definition of teams by Sheard and Kakabadse (2004) in Chapter Two, share the same sentiment with Stofile (2005, p. 15) in a study of participative management in a South African school who found that:

Teamwork in an organisation creates synergy because the sum of the effort of team members is far greater than the sum of people working alone. In a team situation, each member contributes to the success of others and this collaboration of different members to bring about an integrated achievement is the secret that lies behind the success and effectiveness of high performing organisation.

The point made by respondents is that commitment by all the members of the cluster should be encouraged in order to participate fully in all the cluster activities through sharing ideas, expertise, and relevant information needed in the cluster. The advantage of teamwork identified by Hardington (cited in Sheard & Kakabadse, 2004, p. 16) is that:

Working in teams can lead to improvements in efficiency. When people are planning and implementing a variety of activities together, with ongoing co-operation and constant communication they are able to identify many ways to improve how work is organised, how information, ideas and output flow, and how different activities influence one another's critical paths.

The view expressed by CCP A is that “their Cluster Centre has a strong team formed by Cluster Management members that work together, and these Cluster Management members have frequent meetings at the Cluster Centre (Chapter Four, p. 56)”. After the meeting Cluster Principals go back to their various schools and disseminate the proper and correct information to their teachers. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Jones (2005, p. 19) argues that “team leadership is about influencing the activities of a team towards achieving team goals. Jones (2005) further points out that team leaders not only achieve goals – school and team – but also build an effective team and draw the best from each member of the team”.

I think teamwork is a strong feature of the good performance of the cluster and schools. Therefore, CCPs need to create favourable conditions for people to spontaneously come together to share knowledge and learn as they explore organisational challenges and identify novel ideas (Beaty & Scott, 2004, p. 2). The data suggest that the CMC needs to have a vision to lead cluster members to participate in teamwork. Beaty & Scott (2004) put the necessity of teamwork this way:

By teamwork, we mean real teamwork, whereby the right people with the right skills, knowledge, and perspectives join to collectively explore challenges, generate creative solutions, and work diligently to build the necessary support and commitment for implementation. (p. 2).

5.5.1 Subject Groups

Respondents considered Subject Groups as crucial to the success of a cluster. Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 25) similarly saw them as the most important groups, because they work directly with the schools’ core business: teaching and learning. The data show that the formation of cluster groups - especially Subject Groups - is an area that needs more attention from the CCPs. For the Subject group to function effectively and efficiently teachers have to commit themselves to work together as a team and trust each other so that the planning and decision-making will be done collectively.

The role of Subject Facilitators was a feature in the data. Subject Groups are expected to be led by Subject Facilitators and Cluster Principals chair the committees. The data show that

there was a need for Subject Facilitators who are committed and have a good understanding of the subject area. Mendelsohn (2007, p. 23) remarked that “Subject Facilitators and CCPs are equivalent, the former leading professional activities in the cluster and the latter being responsible for management aspects”. The data show that Cluster Management Committees approve the nominations of Subject Facilitators in the clusters. The Subject Facilitators are from different schools appointed by teachers who know them. Subject Facilitators represent all the different phases in the cluster; the secondary phase has its own facilitator as have the other phases.

In my opinion, Subject Facilitators have to be competent teachers who have a sound knowledge of their particular subject to help in facilitating workshops, and guiding and setting examinations. My view is supported by the statement by Dittmar, et al. (2002, p.26) who stressed, “Each Subject group in a cluster is usually coordinated by a Subject Facilitator who should be supported by an Advisory Teacher”. Similarly, Mendelsohn (2007, p. 24) stresses that links between Advisory Teachers, Subject groups and Subject Facilitators offer the opportunity for these services to become much more effective than they are now. Mendelsohn (2007, p. 24) further argued that a contact between one Advisory Teacher and a Subject group would benefit several teachers and schools simultaneously.

Although the job description of Subject Facilitators did not feature in the literature chapter, I found it significant to include it in this chapter. Dittmar, et al. (2002, p. 26) and Mendelsohn (2007, p. 23) cited the job description of Subject Facilitators as:

- Convening and chairing subject group meetings
- Designing and preparing activities for subject meetings to stimulate teachers
- Coordinating common class teaching and learners assessment procedures
- Promoting the development of similar standards of teaching and assessment among schools in the cluster
- Assisting teachers to interpret the syllabus and draft schemes of work
- Supporting and monitoring subject teachers and identifying training needs

- Provide guidance and induction to newly appointed teachers
- Liaising with Advisory Services to obtain their assistance
- Liaising with the Cluster Management Committee and other relevant cluster groups

According to Mendelsohn (2007):

Given the value of collaborative activities performed by Subject groups, it is recommended that the role and position of Subject Facilitators be recognised more formally than has happened, that Subject Facilitators be officially appointed and recognised and certain incentives be provided to encourage their work. (p. 23).

Teamwork appears to exist in the Subject Facilitators committees in the sharing of ideas and participating in decision-making, and by setting examinations together as a team. Respondents felt that Subject Facilitators have a heavy workload; therefore, teamwork was strongly encouraged.

5.5.2 Teamwork and motivation in the Examination Committee

According to the data most of the teachers felt motivated by the initiative of leadership on the Examination Committee. The responsibility to head the Examination Committees led to confidence in the activities they were performing in the cluster. Woods, et al. (cited in Bush & Middlewood, 2005, p. 107) link distributed leadership to teams, stating that:

The literature on teams, with its emphasis on collaboration, multiple and complementary strengths and the need for all members to share a common view of both the purposes of the team and its means of working, has similarities to much of the decision of distributed leadership.

This links distributed leadership to teamwork. I think it is useful to include it here as teachers are empowered to convene meetings, prepare schemes of work, and set examinations in the cluster. Distributed leadership allows teachers to take control when they lead examination committees. The data indicates that the examination committee involves teachers in the setting of examinations and discussing curriculum development to

ensure that it is suitable for the learners in the cluster. These teachers share a common understanding in meeting as a team to achieve this goal.

Macbeath (2005, p. 353) stresses that “people must have high self-esteem because people need confidence to engage in distributed leadership”. In my opinion leaders or managers need to be able to stimulate and encourage their followers, in this case teachers, to take their responsibilities seriously to achieve the goal of the cluster, then teachers will feel inspired to continue motivating others in the cluster.

The data show that at the commencement of examinations, Cluster Management Committees come together to assess what they have in terms of examination materials and through teamwork, arrive at solutions. The data revealed that some Cluster Centres had a well-established cluster fund to assist the school and the cluster in examinations and buying materials. Some schools resist contributing which of course defeats the purpose. It appears that the School Clustering System faces challenges related to examination materials and the contributions from the schools as in some cases the school fees generated do not amount to much.

I think cluster members and the community need to understand and adapt to the change, which was brought about by decentralisation in the Namibian Education system. The view expressed by respondents emphasises that parents and stakeholders should be encouraged to accept change and be accountable to school programmes especially the contribution of school fees. My point of view is that CCPs and Inspectors of Education need to motivate parents and give them a sense of ownership of their school through collaborative decision-making and teamwork.

5.6 Challenges facing the system

The most significant challenge facing the system is in fact a systemic one rather than a leadership or management challenge. It would seem that government’s failure to formalise the role of the CCP and create a new level of leadership – recognised and remunerated – might be at the heart of many of the issues. Other challenges of a logistical and infrastructural nature are related to this, for if the system were officially recognised by the

Ministry, it would have to create a budget, thereby making it possible for CCPs to function effectively financially.

Cluster Centres are complex and very difficult to manage especially if there is no motivation and recognition; the MoE needs to provide CCPs with support if they are to make a meaningful contribution to the School Clustering System. I believe that empowerment is one of the most important ingredients for CCPs to be able to coordinate and manage Cluster Centres effectively. The data strongly support the idea of the post of a CCP being recognised with legal backup from the MoE and not just the internal arrangement as exists at present.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings of my research through the lens of the literature reviewed. The findings are presented in themes and sub-themes, firstly the decentralisation of education at the cluster level and delegation, which is a process essential to these managers. In addition, one cannot separate participatory leadership and management from teamwork since they involve members by getting them to participate in group discussions. My motive for discussing those themes was to make sense of the statements made by participants in the light of the theories of participatory leadership and management and other literature I have consulted relevant to my findings.

In the next chapter, I provide a summary of the main findings of my research and then make recommendations regarding the role of Cluster Centre Principals.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise the main findings of my research as discussed in Chapter Five. I attempt to establish whether my research question has been answered. I also make my own personal recommendations on the role of CCPs. I then give the suggestions for future research and discuss the limitations of my study.

6.2 Summary of main findings

The study revealed the respondents' views and opinions on the role of CCPs in a decentralised education system in Namibia. First, respondents acknowledged that the decentralisation of education governance was a good decision from the MoE bringing education closer to the people. Namibia is a vast country with schools situated far away from each other, and the School Clustering System has brought efficiency to the system. The cluster system is believed to have ended the isolation of schools and brought them together so that education can involve parents and all stakeholders in participation in educational activities.

It emerged from the discussion that respondents strongly acknowledged the way CCPs were executing their duties, perhaps not quite achieving the "binding and bonding" described in literature, but certainly achieving levels of efficiency and some success through teamwork.

The data revealed that there is lack of understanding among schools when it comes to cluster funds. According to the data, which was revealed in Chapter Four, schools are supposed to contribute so that the cluster can execute its functions without any hindrance but these were not always forthcoming. In the draft policy on the School Clustering System, there are recommendations for CCPs to encourage and motivate Cluster Centres to raise funds for cluster activities.

It was revealed in the data that the process of delegating responsibilities to CCPs by the Circuit Office is progressing well. At cluster level, some respondents revealed their unhappiness regarding the way CCPs delegate to staff members like the Heads of Department or Deputy Principals who need to act as CCPs when in fact they were supposed to delegate to one of the Cluster Principals. This implies that Cluster Centres need human resources to assist in the cluster in the absence of the CCP.

The dominant view of the participants seems to be a desire for participative leadership and management, because these involve all cluster members in the participation of decision-making in the cluster. The data revealed that it is the responsibility of CCPs to motivate learners, teachers, and parents to participate democratically in cluster activities especially in decision-making. The study noted that the Cluster Management Committee, which is the heart or engine of the Cluster Centre, has to motivate cluster members to participate in school and cluster activities as a team. The Cluster Centres have various teams as revealed in the data, and these teams acknowledged the way Cluster Management Committees are coordinating them.

The responsibility for overseeing the roles of CCPs lies with the Inspector of Education of the Komesho Circuit. CCPs forward all their cluster's programmes and reports to the Circuit Office for the Inspector of Education to attend to, or forward them to the Regional Office.

The study further revealed that CCPs experienced difficulties in performing their duties, one of which is the recognition of their status as CCPs. The MoE has not yet mandated the draft policy on the clustering system. However, a positive finding is that this lack of recognition has not prevented CCPs from performing their duties neither did it discourage them, as they continued to perform their tasks with a positive outlook.

The overall picture of leadership that emerges is one that stresses efficiency and diligence – rather than visioning and transformation – is a little disappointing. As explained earlier, this could be due to the novelty of the system and the relative ignorance of contemporary leadership approaches among principals.

6.3 The significance of the study

I was not aware of any studies done on principals' perceptions on the role of CCPs in Namibia and hence assume that this is the first of its kind, which makes it significant.

- This study could provide the Ministry of Education and implementers with a picture of the role of Cluster Centre Principals some ten years after its implementation. Ten years may seem like a long time but there are several indications that the MoE was not fully prepared for the initiative, which would have the effect of slowing down and complicating its implementation. The difficulties surrounding the functions of CCPs and the cluster itself need to be urgently addressed by the Ministry, so that the CCPs can execute their duties with confidence.
- This study may interest other researchers and open doors for related research because it has revealed the issues surrounding the concept of participative leadership and management and teamwork in Namibian Education especially in the Cluster Centres.
- The research shows the advantages of teamwork in cluster groups and participation of parents and other stakeholders in decision-making. Decisions in a group were made efficiently because a group of participants made them collectively.
- This research also provides information on how the CCPs may encourage principals in the cluster to work as a team so that sharing and support between schools is promoted and it may be encourage teachers to compile common schemes of work and set common question papers.
- Above all the study draws pertinent attention to the danger in assuming that collegiality will automatically ensue if participation is encouraged within a

decentralised context. Collegiality is a complex feature resting on the mutual recognition and respect of others' professional expertise and a sense of joint ownership and commitment.

6.4 Recommendations

- The MoE needs to recognise the position of the CCPs and Subject Facilitators so that they can perform their tasks with legal authority. Currently they are volunteering their services, which is not adequate motivation. The policy on the School Clustering System should be formalised to allow the CCPs an opportunity to perform their duties with confidence.
- Cluster Centre Principals should be provided with a budget so that they can manage their clusters efficiently at no personal (or school) expense.
- Effective communication and understanding should be encouraged in the cluster to avoid unnecessary tension that could slow down the process of participation. It is only through solving problems amicably and with understanding that progress in the cluster can occur.
- CCPs need to be trained in leadership and management skills so that they can manage the Cluster Centre effectively because they are considered to have extra workloads and responsibilities in the cluster. In particular, CCPs need to be exposed to current leadership thinking so that a sense of collegial ownership may develop.
- There is a great need to develop Cluster Centres in terms of facilities especially physical facilities (such as venues where they can operate). They also need to be supplied with all the resources required to function efficiently. The MoE needs to address these needs so that the implementation of the School Clustering System can operate effectively.
- Participation and teamwork in cluster groups should be encouraged by the CCPs, and they should make sure that supervision and monitoring are effective.

- The MoE should provide extra human resources, in the form of teachers, for example to teach the CCP's subjects and a cluster secretary to do Cluster Centre's work.

6.5 Suggestion for further research

I believe that further research needs to be done with regard to the following aspects of the role of Cluster Centre Principals:

- When Cluster Centres were established, CCPs were involved in the process of electing school board members to take part in decision-making. I believe that research on parental involvement in cluster decision-making needs to be conducted on the roles they perform in the cluster.
- Further research needs to be done on investigating the leadership and management of the Cluster Management Committee, which is considered the engine of the Cluster Centre to define what this role entails. It is also important to explore the roles of other cluster groupings.
- Subject Groups have been identified as key committees in this study. There is a need to study their composition and effectiveness, particularly the role of subject facilitators.

6.6 Limitations of the study

This is a small-scale study and it has various limitations, reflecting its scope, the time available for its conduct, and its limited findings.

This study focused on only two Cluster Centres in the Komesho Circuit in the Ohangwena Education Region in Namibia. The research was conducted on seven people, including two Cluster Centre Principals, four Cluster Principals, and an Inspector of Education. I believe if

other Cluster Centres had been included, they could have contributed more information by drawing on their experience and made the research more comprehensive. I did not attempt to generalise the findings beyond the participants and information studied. The findings of a case study are sometimes not generalisable except in so far as a reader can 'recognise' findings and place them in a similar context. Feagin, et al. (cited in Winegardner, 2001, p. 15) refer to this kind of generalisation in the following way:

It is considered legitimate to generalise based on the degree to which a case is representative of some larger population. It is not merely a question of how many units but rather what kind of unit is under study; it is the nature of the phenomenon that is the true gauge of the population to which one seeks to generalise.

6.7 Conclusion

I hope that readers will indeed 'recognise' some of the issues I have raised in this thesis and find my coverage of them helpful. I hope too that this study will contribute towards awareness of the importance and the role of CCPs in the School Clustering System in Namibian Education. There is no doubt that the system has been an exciting innovation in Namibia, with much to offer. I trust that the MoE will respond positively to the criticisms and suggestions for improvement made in this and other recent studies.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions

The following questions will be used to interview the Cluster Centre Principals:

1. Cluster Centres were established in your circuit few years ago. What are your views on the establishment of Cluster Centres? (possible follow up question) What are the benefits of schools from Cluster Centres?

2. What role do you play as a Cluster Centre Principal?

3. What are the challenges you face as a Cluster Centre Principal?

4. What are the root causes of these challenges?

5. You have been a Cluster Centre Principal for Since the establishment of the Cluster Centres.
 - What do you think makes the Cluster Centre work?

 - What do you think causes the Cluster Centre not to work?

Appendix B

The following questions will be used to interview Cluster Principals.

1. Cluster Centres were established in your circuit few years ago, and Cluster Centre Principals were appointed. What criteria do you think was used to appoint CCPs? (possible follow up question).
2. In your opinion, what is the role of the CCP?
3. How do you view the leadership of the CCP?
4. Looking at the role of the CCP what do you think are the challenges?
5. What do you think are the causes of these challenges?
6. What are your expectations from the CCP?

Appendix C

The following questions will be used to interview the Inspector of Education:

1. Cluster Centres were established in your circuit few years ago, and Cluster Centre Principals were appointed. What criteria do you think was used to appoint CCPs? (possible follow up question).
2. In your opinion, what is the role of the CCP?
3. Looking at the role of the CCP what do you think are the challenges?
4. From your point of view what do you think should be done to overcome these challenges?
5. How do you view the leadership of the CCPs?
6. What is your final comment on the role of CCPs and the challenges they are facing today?

Appendix D

Rhodes University
Education Department
Grahamstown
South Africa
23 June 2009

The Director
Ohangwena Education Region
Ohangwena
Namibia

Dear Sir

Permission to conduct research in your region

I would like to request your permission to conduct a research on the role of Cluster Centre Principals. The research on clusters would partly fulfil the requirement for my Master's degree course in Educational Leadership and Management (ELM). I have chosen to focus my study on the role of Cluster Centre Principals to gain a clear understanding of it.

Using a participatory approach, data will be collected and handled anonymously and confidentially. The collected data will not be used for any purpose other than Educational Leadership and Management, with the permission of the participants.

My target group for the research will be two Cluster Centres, Eengedjo Cluster, Endola Cluster and Endola Circuit. In each cluster I will take only three principals and an Inspector of Education.

My task will be mainly to collect data, analyse it and give feedback to the participants. It would be appreciated if the research could be granted a space in these Cluster Centres at the beginning of July 2009.

Your response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ponny Haggai Nghatanga (609n4100)

Appendix E

CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORM 1

I hereby agree to participate in an interview with Ponny Haggai Nghatanga. I understand that he will be inquiring about my understanding of the establishment of Cluster Centres with regard to the role of Cluster Centre Principals.

SignatureDate

CONSENT FORM 2

Ponny Haggai Nghatanga is hereby given permission to record an interview conducted with me as part of the process of his data collection for a research report that he will be writing for the completion of his Master's degree. I understand that transcripts will be made of the interview and that extracts from these may be used in the final report.

I have been assured that my Cluster or Circuit and I have anonymity in the report. I have been further assured that I have the right to quit the research at any time and the phone number where I can reach him is (home) 065 – 231028, (Cell)

Signature

Date

Appendix F



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: OHANGWENA EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

Private Bag 2028, Ondangwa. Tel. 264 65 281 903, Fax. 264 65 240 190

Enq: Josia S Udjombala
E-mail: tatemadala@yahoo.com
Ref: SP

Prof Hennie van der Mescht
Education Department
Rhodes University


June 29, 2009

Dear Prof Van der Mescht

RE: PERMISSION FOR MR P H NGHATANGA TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OHANGWENA REGION

1. I write to refer to your letter of June 26th instant with regard to the above subject matter.
2. Permission is hereby granted to Mr P H Nghatanga to conduct research in our region, at schools of his choice. Permission is granted on condition that:
 - participation by individual teachers/learners is voluntary;
 - school academic programmes are in no way to be disrupted;
 - Once completed, a copy of his research findings is to be deposited with our regional library, or teachers resource centre.
3. I would like to wish Mr Nghatanga every success in his studies, and look forward to the findings and possible recommendations of his research.

Yours sincerely


JOSIA S UDJOMBALA
DIRECTOR: MoE
OHANGWENA REGION

Appendix G

for your information

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OHANGWENA REGION
INSPECTORATE MANAGEMENT

Tel: 065 268810
Fax: 065 268826

P.O. Box 3668
Ongwediva
6th July 2009

Inquires: Mr. S. Vaeta

Ref: SP

To: The Cluster Centre Principals
Fengedjo/Shilawa Clusters
Endola Circuit

**RE: PERMISSION FOR MR. P. H. NGHATANGA TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN YOUR CLUSTER**

This letter serves to inform your office that **Mr. P. H. Nghatanga** is hereby granted permission to conduct research in your Cluster.

He would interview you and some of your principals. Sometimes in this month (**July 2009**), as always, permission is granted on condition that participation by individual teachers / learners is voluntary; classes are not disrupted and once completed a copy of his research finding is to be deposited with our regional library, or teachers resource centre.

Thank you for your assistance

Yours faithfully,

 06.07.09

Mr. Simon Vaeta
Inspector of Education
Endola Circuit

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OHANGWENA REGION
INSPECTORATE MANAGEMENT

2009-07-06

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