

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**Parental involvement in school governance:**

**A case study of a secondary school in Okahandja, Namibia**

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**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

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**Victoria Shikwambi**

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## **Abstract**

Since Namibia gained independence parents have increasingly been seen as equal partners in the education process. The Education Act 16 of 2001 provides for the democratic participation in schools by parents, learners and other education stakeholders through the introduction of regional Education Forums and School Boards in schools. Parental involvement in school governance has been widely researched and has become a 'hot topic' worldwide, including in Namibia. This study investigated and described parental involvement through the School Board in school governance in a secondary school in Otjozondjupa region, Namibia. The study was conducted within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. The study employed three data collection tools namely, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation.

The School Board was made up of parents of different classes and backgrounds, i.e. employed, unemployed, professionals and business persons and with different levels of educational background. These members create a network that represents the voices of parents from different social groups, with different levels of social capital. The different levels of social capital shape the nature of the contributions and interactions on the Board.

The study found that in spite of the frequency of interaction between the School Board, parents and the community the School Board is still in a dilemma as it is unable to connect with its prominent source of potential support, such as the business community, due to an outdated view that the school is well-off based on its historic status of privilege. With respect to communications with parents the focus tends to be on the negatives of learners' behaviour or performance and the task of the parents in this regard. Broadening the agenda of the collaboration to include positive aspects of the child would add to the motivation of parents and open possibilities for new forms of collaboration. The school lacks a well-coordinated system for utilizing the available resources as well as community expertise for the benefit of the school.

On the strength of the findings, one of the recommendations is for a more structured program and strategy for the Boards various interactions with the community and parents.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to my grandparents Lukas Shambo Kakende and Liina Shikongo

## Declaration

I, Victoria Shikwambi, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, and it has not been submitted for any study in any other university. I have acknowledged the work of others used in this thesis as quotes and referrals, their names appear in the list of references at the end of this thesis.

Signature:

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The chapter presents the context of the study and the motivation for the study, the research goals, aim of the study and the methodology employed. The final part of the chapter gives an outline of the whole thesis.

The study seeks to investigate and describe parental involvement in school governance through the School Board at a secondary school in an urban area in Okahandja town, Namibia.

## **1.2 Research motivation**

My interest in undertaking this study comes from my own professional experience. The school where I was a Principal had active parent School Board members who were eager and ready to participate in school activities, support the school in any way and contribute to school governance; yet even they did not know or understand their roles and responsibilities. This has prompted me to conduct this study.

I expect to gain some insights that will be of benefit to me in my professional capacity as an Education Officer at the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED). My work entails providing support and strengthening capacity in schools with regard to planning, materials development and the implementation of site-based Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes for educators. Parental involvement programmes are one of the priorities in the CPD Consortium's list. Hence I anticipate that the study will be useful to NIED and other stakeholders in the formulation of the parental involvement programme, as well as the development of materials designed to enhance parental involvement in schools. This will contribute towards the ongoing wave of education reform that is currently underway in Namibia.

Besides my professional interest, the study can contribute to the body of knowledge and also provide a platform for future research on this topic since it has not yet been explored much in Namibia.

### **1.3 Background and research context**

Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, education was divided along ethnic and racial lines. Power and resources were distributed unequally. There was little democratic participation and the black community in particular was denied the right to participate in the management of their children's education. Principals held sway in the management of schools; parents were less involved in school governance because their roles and activities in school governance were ambiguous (Mendelsohn, 1997). Parents were also not viewed as educational partners (Namibia. Ministry Education and Culture [MEC], 1993, p. 41- 42).

Since independence, Namibia has been undergoing an educational reform in pursuit of the national goals of economic growth and democracy (Naidoo, 2005). As part of the reform process, the management of education was shifted from authoritarian to democratic rule in order to tolerate citizen's representation and participation, and ensure accountability and transparency (ibid).

To facilitate the reform process, the Namibian government has sought to build an education system based on equity, access, quality and democracy in order to address the inequalities, disparities and tensions that were a legacy of the colonial education system (Namibia. [MEC], 1993, p. 32). Therefore, the Namibian education system has adopted the principle of democracy based on social justice. The policy document, *Towards Education for All* emphasised that "A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making and clear accountability of those that are our leaders" (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 41). In a similar vein, Naidoo (2005, p. 13) clarifies that "participatory does not extend to the right to elect representatives but translates into the right to influence decisions". In order to strengthen and support the democratic participation principle in education, the formulation of various legislations such as The Education Act, and other guidelines were made necessary.

The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 is a legal document which is in accordance with the Namibian Constitution which declared that education should be democratic which revolves around the notion of representation and participation. The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia, 2001), delineates how schools should be organised, managed and governed. Its

aim is to construct a school governance system based on inhabitants' participation and partnership between the government and community (Naidoo, 2005). As a result, it gives rights to parents, the learners and other education stakeholders to democratically participate in school affairs, under the belief that "improving the quality of our schools is a responsibility we share. We all have a vital stake in the success of our efforts" (MEC, 1993, p. 40). Consequently, The Education Act recommends the establishment of School Boards in all Namibian schools.

The School Board is a democratic structure made up of parents, teachers and learners in the case of a secondary school. Through this structure, parents and the community participate in the education of their children, are involved in the decision-making processes of the schools which they serve and take part in the general school governance (Namibia, 1993). The Act also stipulates that education policies and directives advocate for the inclusion and Board participation of parents and the community in the education of their children (Duma, 2013). According to Hamunyela (2008), advocating for parental involvement requires the recognition of parents as co-partners in the learners' schooling.

In order to comply with the Education Act requirements, Guidelines for Namibian School Board members (2004) outline the rights and responsibilities of School Board members in the governance of schools in Namibia. The National Standard Indicators (Namibia, 2005) and the National Curriculum for Basic Education (Namibia, 2010) encourage stakeholders representation, inclusion in the school's decision-making process and in general school governance activities. Similarly, The National Professional Standards for Teachers in Namibia (2006) competence number 25, places emphasis on schools' *networking* with the parents, the entire community and other agencies in order to build relationships that support learners' learning and well-being.

As noted earlier, Namibia is currently undergoing a dramatic education reform that demands education be democratic and participatory. This necessitated the need for an urgent call for school improvement which is a key component towards the realisation of *Vision 2030, A Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development* aimed at making Namibia a developed country by 2030. Education Training Improvement Programme (ETSIP) was designed by the Ministry Of Education to facilitate programmes and activities and lead to the attainment of Vision 2030. One of the main objectives is the call for the broader involvement of all stakeholders in the governance and management of school activities.

Projects are one approach adopted by the government to achieve this vision. Since 2000 the Academy for Education Development (AED) has co-operated with Namibia's locally developed programme for improving school management and increasing parental involvement in schools, called the School Improvement Programme (SIP). IBIS is another organisation that provides extensive training to School Board members in Namibian schools to help them realise their roles and responsibilities, so as to enhance the effectiveness of parental involvement in schools.

The concept of a School Board is new in the Namibian education system (Niitembu, 2006; Khama, 2014). Since the implementation of its policy and the establishment of School Boards in Namibian Schools in 2003, only a few studies have been conducted. Niitembu (2006), Hamunyela (2008) and Khama (2014) all researched the area of parental involvement in school governance in rural areas. None of these researchers looked at parental involvement in school governance in an urban area. Besides this, none of the above researchers utilised the Epstein framework and Bourdieu's social capital theory as a lens to examine how parental activities take place. This is what makes this study special. Nevertheless, I will be comparing my findings with those of the above-mentioned scholars in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

I am also aware of a programme facilitated by civil society in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, however, they are not pedagogically comprehensive and hence the need for a study of this kind.

This study therefore investigates and describes parental involvement in school governance through the School Board and is thus likely to help fill the gap that exists in the literature.

## **1.4 Research goal**

The goal of my study is to investigate and describe parental involvement in school governance through the School Board at a secondary school in the Otjozondjupa region. To achieve this goal the study asks the following research questions:

1. What are the views of parent School Board members regarding their roles and responsibilities in school governance, and where do these views originate?

2. What are the challenges experienced by School Board members in executing their roles?
3. What could be done to address these challenges?

## **1.5 Research methodology**

It takes the form of a case study conducted in the interpretive paradigm using a qualitative approach since the goal is to investigate and describe parental involvement in school governance through the School Board. According to Merriam (2002, p. 38), “Qualitative researchers conducting a basic interpretive qualitative study would be interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences”. In the same line, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 26) assert that the interpretive paradigm provides the researcher with an opportunity to understand and interpret the world “in terms of its actors”. I designed instruments to enable participants to provide information related to the phenomena of the case. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), qualitative researchers do not simplify what they observe but identify that the issue they are studying has more than one dimension and layer, so they always try to portray the issue in its multifaceted form (p. 133). In order to understand the nature of the case, it is being studied from a different outlook and is not able to be generalised.

I selected a case study, because my focus was on a single school. I utilised semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation as data collection tools. Researchers always try to be as objective as possible and attempt as much as possible not to be influenced by perceptions, impressions and biases. I began my data collection by interviewing the Inspector of Education, the school Principal as instructional head, one HOD and four teachers. Relevant questions were set and cross-checked before the interview process began formally. Apart from interviews, I also employed observation and document analysis as further data collection methods. With regard to data analysis I first immersed myself in the data and then developed themes that formed the basis of my discussion with my research questions in mind.

## **1.6 Thesis outline**

This study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the general overview of the study, the context of the study, research motivation, the study goals, methodology and outline of the thesis.

Chapter two presents an overview of the literature on parental involvement through the School Board and other themes and theories relevant to the study topic.

Chapter three illustrates the methodology used to conduct this study and it further describes the approach, the procedures and tools used for data collection. It also highlights the study site and its participants. Finally, it looks at ethical issues and validity of the research.

Chapter four presents the raw data collected from interviews, document analysis and observation and discussion of the main findings. The findings are also discussed in relation to the literature reviewed.

Chapter five presents the summary of the main findings, it suggests some recommendations for practice and provides suggestions for future study with regards to parental involvement and finally concludes the study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study investigates and describes parental involvement in school governance through the School Board (the Namibian equivalent of the SGB), at a secondary school in the Otjozondjupa region of Namibia. This chapter contains two sections.

In the first section I begin by defining the concepts parental involvement and school governance. School governance is the platform through which parental involvement takes place in South Africa and in Namibia where the term ‘governance’ refers to the role of the Governing Body, which consists of parents, teachers and in the case of secondary schools, learners. Thereafter, I discuss the significance of parental involvement in school governance. I give a historical background of the School Board and how this body came about. I also discuss its composition and functions. This is because I believe it is important to look back in history in order to understand the present: what we have today is informed by the past. In addition, I look at the legal perspective, by briefly discussing the legislature and policies that regulate the structure and functions of School Boards in Namibian schools.

In the second section I discuss the theories underpinning this study. I begin with a brief discussion of decentralisation as it is framed in policy, because School Boards represent a move towards decentralising responsibility and authority to the level of school management. Next I discuss Bourdieu’s social capital theory as a lens for understanding some of the challenges in parental involvement. Finally I briefly discuss Epstein’s model of parental involvement which is likely to help with data analysis. In addition, Epstein’s model will serve as a framework through which I describe and classify parental involvement.

### **2.2 Defining parental involvement**

There is no precise or fixed definition of the concept parental involvement. Even though many scholars have studied and discussed the concept, they have not reached a consensus simply because scholars define parental involvement based on their perspectives which are influenced by the environment and context they find themselves in (Chindanya, 2011).

Furthermore, schools are unique and parents have different beliefs about schooling. Besides, the government through the Ministry of Education formulates policies, directives and programmes that are subject to institutional and individuals' interpretations; hence the implementation of these programmes will be different in each school due to the cultural differences and unique needs experienced by different schools (Lemmer, 2007, p. 22). However, much as scholars may disagree on the exact definition, Young, Austin and Growe (2013) note that there seems to be worldwide agreement that parents should be involved in their children's education.

Young et al., (2013) indicate that many scholars define parental involvement as a partnership between the home and the school with parental participation in school activities. They base their definition on a study conducted by Deslandes, Royer, Turcotte and Bertrand (1997) which describes parental involvement as the presence of parents at school and their communication with teachers.

Bower and Griffin (2011) and Fullan (2007) point out that parental involvement can take many forms such as volunteering at school, communicating with the teacher about the learners' progress in the school, assisting learners with homework in order to become better teachers of their own children, attending school events and serving on a school governance body. Obeidat and Al-hassan (2009) similarly view parental involvement as "the active, ongoing participation of parents or primary care givers in the education of his or her child" (p. 124 - 125).

These definitions are in agreement with Fullan (2007) and Chindanya and Pretorius' (2014) views, namely that parental involvement is inclusive of home-based and school-based activities that support learners' academic achievement or help learners' to engage in school activities. Home-based activities comprise *home discussion* about school related issues as well as *home supervision* which relates to monitoring the learners' school activities. School-based activities refer to activities that allow direct parental participation at school, such as regular *school communication* with parents about the learners' progress and other emerging issues. It also embraces *school participation* which includes parents' participation in school governance, volunteering, attending school events, contribution of school fees, and organising fund raising events and other social activities.

All these descriptions have something in common, namely the notion of *parents as partners* engaging in a *two-way communication* with schools. Consequently, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003, p. 12) refer to parental involvement as a “*catch all term*” and Zoppi (2006) (as cited in Chindanya 2011, p.24) supports this by indicating that parental involvement is an “*all-encompassing term*” because the concept describes a variety of activities that parents engage in, both at school and home level as elucidated in the definitions above.

Most of the definitions of parental involvement include the six factors of the Epstein model as explicated by Erlendsdittir (2010) and Bower and Griffin (2011). The Epstein model outlines a framework for implementing parental involvement in schools, namely parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaboration with the school community. Three of these are directly related to School Board membership: communicating, decision-making and collaboration with the school community. Furthermore the model advocates for *two-way communication – genuine dialogue* - between the home and school and calls for equal partnership (Mncube, 2009, p. 84). Ultimately the model aims at empowering parents so that they can participate fully and have a say in the school’s leadership and management. The Epstein model will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

### **2.3 School Boards in Namibia –political and legal framework**

In Namibia, parental involvement through School Boards has been formalised by the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia, 2001). Section 17 of the Education Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia, 2001) provides for the democratic participation in schools of parents, learners and other education stakeholders through the introduction of regional Education Forums and School Boards in schools. The National Standard Indicators and the National Curriculum for Basic Education (Namibia, 2005), key area no 6, recommends that schools create a link with the parents and the community. The Customer Service Charter (Namibia, 2000) also regards education as the shared responsibility of the school, the home, and the community at large, so it encourages schools to engage parents in school governance. In addition, The National Curriculum for Basic Education, (2010, p. 49) regards the community around the school as an asset to the school and a source of information and knowledge that a school can tap into.

Namibia's decentralisation policy (REF) further provides for the devolution of authority and responsibility from the central Ministry of Education to educational regions, to smaller groups of schools (Circuits) and finally to teachers and parents in schools through School Boards (Presidential Commission, 1999, p. 70). Decentralisation of education is meant to provide opportunities for the community (parents) at grassroots level to take part in the educational activities of their children. As Caldwell and Spinks (as cited in Coleman & Bush, 1994, p. 226) caution, "Devolving power to institutions should be matched by the empowerment of people *inside* schools" (p. 226). All these policies call for parental and community participation and support to supplement state efforts.

## **2.4 Defining school governance**

For the purpose of this study, the term 'governance' is used to refer to the act of governing or ruling a school (South Africa, Department of Education and Culture, n.d.). According to Edge (2000) school governance is a radical form of decentralisation that allows the school to become its own means of "stimulating and sustaining improvement" (cited in Mncube, 2009, p. 84). The government recognised the need for formal democratic governing structures that allow parents, learners and teachers to participate in deliberations dealing with school governance in the hope that participation would encourage parents to create ownership. Therefore, school governance is structured with parents, community participation and decision-making in mind; thus, the responsibility of actually deciding how to run a school falls on the School Board. The Namibian Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, stipulates clearly how School Boards are elected, which parents can serve on the Board and what the powers and functions of the Board are.

According to Naidoo (2005, p. 39), school governance is a complex process because it can result in major changes in the way that the school system is organised and managed, and how the curriculum is delivered. As a result, Mncube (2009, p. 84) refers to school governance as the institutional structure entrusted with the responsibility to formulate and adopt school policy focusing on a range of issues which include the mission and vision of the school, school financial policy and budgeting, development priorities, and the endorsement of the school code of conduct for both learners and teachers. Maile (as cited in Xaba, 2004, p. 314) similarly regards school governance as an act of determining policy, rules and regulations by which a school is to be managed, organised, controlled, ensuring that rules and policies are

carried out accordingly. The notion of 'control' occurs in several descriptions. Houle (as cited in Naidoo, 2005, p. 39) argues that "school governance carries a connotation of control, authority, responsibility and prestige related to decisions about the operations and objectives of the educational institution", a school in this case. In a Namibian context this means that school governance – through the School Board - becomes the primary means of determining schools' needs and sustaining improvement through the School Development Plan.

The important notion of ownership is also emphasised by several scholars. Villarreal and Rodriguez regard school governance as a means through which the school community claims ownership of the school through School Boards in view of the fact that school governance contains the principles of democracy and equity (cited in Niitembu, 2006, p. 10). Along similar lines, Potgieter, Visser, van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (cited in Niitembu, 2006, p. 10) emphasise that the democratisation of education recognises the participation of parents, learners, teachers and other community members as stakeholders in school activities. In the Namibian context, the School Board is the school Governing Body which is made up of parents, learners from grade 8 and above, as well as teachers. Together these people become the voice of the school community, "the nervous system, the control center and the steering mechanism" that governs the school (Plecki, McCleerly & Knapp, 2006, p. 3). This body ensures accountability, transparency and equity, sets priorities and ensures that the school fulfils its role as desired.

The main point here is that school governance is a platform for parental participation in schools. Governance refers to the act of governing a school and ensuring that the school fulfils its functions of providing a relevant, quality service to the learners and the community in which the school is situated. School governance also has to do with the creation of policies and rules for the school and its members i.e. staff, learners and parents. In other words, it is about making decisions about how the school will be run, managed and organised. Finally, governance creates opportunities for stakeholders to develop a sense of belonging and ownership.

Next I present a discussion on the significance of parental involvement in school governance.

## **2.5 The significance of parental involvement in school governance**

The issue of parental involvement in children's education has been a concern worldwide. There are literally hundreds of books, reports, articles and journals on the subject of parental involvement in school activities (Fullan, 2007). It has become a "*hot topic*" worldwide, including in South Africa and Namibia, due to the increasing concern regarding the quality of education schools are providing, which I believe is a common concern around the world.

The National Curriculum for Basic Education, (Namibia, 2010, p. 49) and Fullan, (2007, p. 190) regard the community around the school as an asset, a source of information and knowledge that a school can borrow from, for it believes that teachers cannot do it all alone; they require complementary efforts from the parents. Parents' expertise and experience are essential to the partnership and can help schools make sound decisions that can be linked to improved learner outcomes. At the first national post-independence conference in Namibia one of the important recommendations was for parents to support schools and to take the responsibility, since they are the primary and lifelong educators and source of support (Namibian National Conference on Education, 2011). Hence, parents remain a major influence throughout their children's schooling and beyond.

Fullan (2007, p. 189) acknowledges a noteworthy message that emerged from research and it goes: "The closer the parent is to the education of the child the greater the impact on the child development and achievement"; Henderson and Berla (1994) add that children whose parents are involved, also do better and stay in school until they complete their last grade. Further, Fullan (2007) maintains that parental involvement brings parents closer to the education of their children and to their children themselves as they spend little time together as parents go to work while children go to school. Through this practice, parents learn about their children's behavior and get to know their children and the school staff better as they are exposed to and become more familiar and knowledgeable about the school's goals, policies and procedures and communicate the importance of education to their children (Lareau (2000), as cited in Howell, 2008). In fact parents develop an interest in the education and achievements of their children.

According to Hamunyela, (2008) and Cripps and Zyromski, (2010) it is important for parents and teachers to create and maintain a strong relationship. In addition, Paratore and

McCormack (2005) emphasise that a partnership recognises the shared responsibility of home and school for children's learning and development. In principle, it creates an understanding of the roles of all members i.e. the role of parents as partners, governors, decision-makers and educators and also improves working relations that benefits the children.

Siraj-Blatchford et al., (2000) cited in Desforges and Abouchar (2003, p. 24) assert that when parents and teachers strive to achieve the same goals related to a child's education, creating and maintaining a special rapport, it is likely that good learning progress could emerge. For instance, if parents and teachers wish to educate a child in totality, they have to join forces to instill attributes that inspire, motivate, and encourage the child to continue school and work hard in order to achieve success. Likewise, Gordon and Louis (2009) stress that children need the company and support of their parents during their schooling in order to help them cope with the demands of society, peer pressure and change in adolescence.

According to Haung and Mason (2008), parental involvement has collective benefits therefore it creates a win-win situation for all role players: the parents, the learners, the teachers, as well as the school. Henderson and Berla (1994), Davies (1993), Lemmer and van Wyk (1996) (as cited in Risimati, 2009, p. 48) place emphasis on the following benefits as underscored in various studies: parental understanding and interaction with their children improve and they keep track of their children's progress in school - on the other hand, learners performance and attitudes toward schooling improve knowing that they have more support. In the same vein, teachers' morale improves, their workload decreases and commitment to teaching increases. Finally, when a school achieves high academic standards it gains a better reputation in the community as a result.

Furthermore, Niitembu (2006) acknowledges that parental participation and full involvement in the school's decision-making processes makes a difference to the success of the school and learners' achievements. Harris and Goodall (2008) concur, and claim that "the more engaged parents are in the education of their children the more likely their children are to achieve academic success" (p. 278). Hence, Erlendsdittir (2010) suggests that parental involvement should be the top priority in the schools' development plan - in addition, the school should establish and maintain strong relationships with parents, since parental involvement is seen as a building block that enhances democracy in the school system which contributes to effective and good governance of the school. The kinds of parental involvement activities referred to earlier in this section - parents attending meetings, serving in different school committees,

organising and attending school events - serve as building blocks in helping prepare parents for their role in school governance as these activities enable parents to understand the school's structure and curriculum and provide basic experience in working with school personnel. These experiences can expand parents' knowledge, raise their morale and increase their credibility with school staff as they move into decision-making roles.

## **2.6 A brief historical background to School Boards**

It is necessary to look back into history because parental involvement is linked to the history of the apartheid education system. History can also help us to understand and explain why parental involvement is the way it is today in Namibia.

The apartheid ideology manifested inequality and disparity in the quality of education. The governance and management of schools was a one man's show hence school activities were not coordinated and there was no proper collaboration between schools and regional offices. In fact, there was little democratic participation in education; the black community in particular was denied the right to participate in the management and decision-making of their children's education. The management and governance of schools was based on an authoritarian and bureaucratic approach because decisions were made from the central government through a top-down structure, which did not recognise parents, teachers, learners and the community as partners or collaborators who had an interest in, and a role to play in the education process of their children (Namibia, Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 1993, p. 41 - 42).

According to Ndlazi (1999) it was a fact that black people had little democratic participation in education. Sayed and Carrim (1997, p. 91) stressed that black people started demanding the right to be involved in decision-making and to be part of schools' governing structures in the 1970s and 80s. As a result, committees were put in place in the 1980s leading to the establishment of Parent Teacher and Student Associations (PTSAs). However, Sayed and Carrim (1997) indicate that the bodies did not have legitimate power because the committees were imposed on the community, members were nominated by the minority white government and parents had little information about what was happening in schools as they were not proportionally represented. As the bodies were based on discrimination, for this reason they were regarded as illegitimate by the majority of the black community.

In a Namibian context, Amukugo (1993) in agreement with what has been alluded to by other scholars, explains how parents and the entire Namibian community was deprived of their right to participate in the education process of their children and how power resided with the government alone rather than parents, by acknowledging Act 30 (section 4) of 1980 which states:

The active involvement of parents and the communities shall be given a place in the educational system, but at the same time the Administrator General advocated for parents' participation in the area of school, he [the Administrator general] was responsible for establishing the school committee or advisory board for every state school. Even worse he could whenever he deem it necessary, dissolve any school committee or advisory board, withdraw any powers and duties, as well as replace members of such committees and boards (section 8). With Education Act No. 30 of 1980, the Administrator General had an overwhelming power to control and direct education of Africans in accordance with the interest of the state (p. 77).

As a result of this Act No. 30 of 1980, parents and some community members withdrew from their involvement in school activities because they were made to believe that education was not important to them and that the education of their children was the responsibility of the Principal and the teachers (MEC, 1993; Ndlazi, 1999).

Reflecting on the challenges of parental involvement experienced in the past as illustrated above, Niitembu (2006) concurs with Ndlazi (1999), Christie (2001) and HSRC's (2005) views, that parental involvement has been complicated and that the road was long and bitter, full of obstacles and challenges. Hence history shows that there was little or no democratic participation in education in the past, even though some structures were in place and seemed to represent parents in school governance activities. In reality, these structures were mere masks to conceal the reality, as the entire education system was under the control of the colonisers. In addition, members of these structures were not democratically elected by the parents and the communities and only those that were in favor of the government whom Ndlazi (1999) termed "*puppets of the state*" (p. 11) were appointed by the Administrator General, yet they had no power to oppose the views of the government because their rights were limited. The Principal had the right to lay down rules and regulations as well as to implement directives from the central government. This implied that Principals were simply "*watch dogs*" (Haines, 2007, p. 28) of the colonial masters because their roles, duties and functions were not clearly defined.

It became apparent that the oppressors discouraged parental involvement in the affairs of education especially the black community, “because schools were simply not open for parents” (MEC, 1999, p. 27).

The government of Namibia recognised the need for change as a focal point after the country’s independence. Change was regarded as a political necessity to achieve social justice, recognising equal participation of all stakeholders in education. For these reasons, the government advocated for transformation in education, structures such as School Boards and ameliorating of discriminatory policies and practices in order to be equitable and socially just. Based on this background, I now discuss how parental involvement through School Boards came about.

### **2.6.1 How parental involvement came about**

After Namibian independence, the government sought to address the inequalities, disparities and tensions that were a legacy of the colonial education system by introducing structures that would facilitate the participation of parents and the community in the activities pertaining to school governance (MEC, 1993; Khama, 2014). These structures did not claim quality but only aspired for education to be better than before and advocated for democratic participation of parents and their right to be part of their children’s’ education. This points to Mendelsohn’s (1997, p. 258) claim that “the new Namibian government decided to promote parents’ participation through democratic School Boards but yet there is no structure or evidence of what they have done to improve schools”. The impression here is that involving parents and the community in the affairs of the school will possibly benefit the school, the learners, the parents themselves and lighten the responsibilities of teachers and eventually lead to a better functioning school (Bush & Heystek, 2003; Mncube, 2009).

Matshe and Pitsoe, (2013, p. 647) affirm that “parental participation is a constitutional obligation ever since the democratic dispensation in South Africa” and the same applies to Namibia. The Namibian Constitution (1991) places emphasis on democracy and participation based on fundamental human rights to which school governance is linked (Bush & Heystek, 2003).

Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (Namibia, 1991) stipulates that:

All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory and the state shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge (p. 14).

Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (1991) grants parents and the entire community the legal right and responsibility to support and participate in school activities and to take part in the decision-making in matters that affect the education of their children. The aim is to deconstruct the legacy of the apartheid education system and to find a way for parents and communities to reclaim their rights and responsibilities denied to them during the apartheid era, as well as to ensure schools' practices are based on the principle of democracy, as this is one of the goals on which Namibian education is based (MEC, 1993; HSRC, 2005). Therefore, its values should be taken into consideration in the governance of the school (Potgieter et al., 1997, p. 5). This implies that the government has to democratise education by involving parents and the community as partners while still reserving the right to provide education for all. For this reason, The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 was conceded in order to provide an “*accessible, equitable, qualitative and democratic national education service*” (Namibia, 2001, p. 2).

The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia, 2001) provides for the democratic participation in schools of parents, learners and other education stakeholders through the introduction of regional Education Forums and School Boards in schools. It further states that “every state school, establish a School Board to administer the affair and promote the development of the school and learners of the school” (p. 15). Furthermore, it points out that all members of the School Board must be democratically elected by the parents. It also specifies that the majority of the School Board be composed of parents, teachers and learners in the case of a secondary school and the Principal *ex facto* by virtue of his position. Likewise, this call was again emphasised in the Guideline for Namibian School Board Members (Namibia, 2004, p. 2).

The School Board is tasked with dealing with specific issues and it has definite functions as outlined in the Education Act and these functions will be discussed below. However, the Act does not give authorisation for the School Board to lead and manage the day-to-day operational matters linked to the professional activities of teachers; rather, their specific role and function give an obvious direction to the type of activities that members of the School Board can take part in (Naidoo, 2005; Brown & Duku, 2008). Moreover, The Act states that

learners that are members of the School Board should be informed about the issues affecting their education and play a part in the decision-making processes at school (Namibia, 2001).

The notion of democratic participation in education matters through School Boards is advocated and supported by various policy documents and reports on education. *Towards Education for All* (MEC, 1993, p. 93) notes that though the government has the responsibility to provide education to all children in Namibia, it is impossible for the government alone to successfully fulfil this responsibility because it does not have sufficient resources to do so. It calls for parental and community support to supplement state efforts. According to *Towards Education for All* (MEC, 1993), “Schools are allocated in the community to serve them therefore the communities must be fully involved in the affairs of the school” (p. 179 - 180). Furthermore, *Custom Charter*, Namibia (2000) points out that “We regard educating our children as a shared responsibility of the school, the home, and the community at large” (p. 1). Therefore, parents should be seen as equal partners in the education process because they are the suppliers and customers who benefit from the learners’ educational achievements (Arcaro, 1995) and the overseer and remedy of whatever is going on or is missing in the education delivered to their children (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004).

It is evident that School Boards are legal structures and have a legal status that has been put in place in the hope of addressing the past imbalances and practices in the current education system. However, these structures were made legitimate by key legislations namely, The Namibian Constitution (1991) and the Education Act, (Act 16 of 2001). The Namibian Constitution serves as a guide to how the education system should be constituted and managed. This is under-pinned by Potgieter et al., (1997) as they state that “the constitution is the highest law in the country and all other laws and conducts must be in accordance with the constitution” (p. 5).

Since the Namibian Constitution promotes the values and principles of democracy, it also recommends that the transformation of education be in accordance with the values and principles of democracy. The Education Act came about as a guide to promote democracy through school governance. It made the establishment of School Boards compulsory and democratic for every government school and it stipulated clearly that School Boards should be composed of parents, teachers and learners in the case of secondary schools and the Principal as a member by virtue of his position.

As noted before, the Constitution, The Education Act and various policy documents view parental and community participation as a form of democracy and a means by which the stakeholders can exercise their democratic right by influencing decision-making through school governance. However, Naidoo (2005) disputes this as he is of the opinion that the government is making the stakeholders responsible and accountable for the provision of educational outcomes and services, which according to the constitution, they have the right to receive.

School Boards have specific functions as mandated by the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 which are discussed below.

## **2.7 The functions of School Boards**

The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, section 17 outlines the power and function of the School Board as follows:

1. To develop a mission, and objective of the school
2. To advise the school's management on the extra-mural curriculum of the school
3. To advise the Regional Director of Education on the educational needs and the curriculum of the school
4. Recommend the appointment of teachers and other staff members at the school
5. To allow the reasonable use of the school facilities for community purposes
6. To consider any case of misconduct by learners or staff members of the school
7. To exercise the powers and perform other duties and functions as may be authorised or imposed by or under the Act.

Moreover, the Guidelines for Namibian School Board members (MEC, 2004) places emphasis on the key responsibilities namely to:

1. Develop the vision and policy of the school
2. Recommend the appointment of personnel
3. Develop the school infrastructure
4. Promote welfare
5. Communicate with parents/guardians and the community

6. Establish various committees for managing specific issues (hostel, finances, HIV and AIDS)
7. Establish and run the school development Fund (SDF)

The philosophy underpinning parental involvement in the Namibian context is a democratic participation of all stakeholders in education. Moreover, parental involvement is seen as part of the decentralisation of education in the new democratic system used to increase the voice of the parents and the community at grass roots level through active participation in the decision-making processes, in the context of a school governance structure (School Board). Below I present a brief discussion on the concept of decentralisation of education. I look at an overview of decentralization, the definition and the types of decentralisation.

## **2.8 Decentralisation**

As already noted in the previous section of this chapter, Namibia unified the education system in line with the principles and values of democracy. Therefore, a democratic education system that revolves around broad participation in decision-making and clear accountability of all stakeholders with an interest in education is in place. The current education system is structured in such a way that the schools and its associates, partners and active participants, governors and evaluators can take accountability for the quality of education the school is offering (MEC, 1993, p. 42). However, “these structures continued to act as agents of the centralised structures” (Pouty & Weber, 2012, p. 7). Consequently, decentralisation has been introduced as an intervention in education reform process that would give people at the grassroots level decision-making power and authority to engage in educational matters (MOE, 2000). Naidoo (2003, p. 15) advocates that education reforms need to be accompanied by strategies to help build capacity and provide support to schools. Naidoo (2005) states, “education change is never simply a matter of implementing a set of principles and policies”.

### **2.8.1 Definition**

Many scholars acknowledge the complexity of decentralisation because it includes a wide range of processes and structures, nevertheless, they have a similar understanding of the concept (Bray, 1985 as cited in Pomuti, 2008). As a result, Geo-jaja (2004, p. 309) describes decentralisation as a “process of re-assigning responsibility and corresponding, decision-

making authority for specific functions from higher to lower levels of government”. In the same line, Work (2002: p. 5) defines decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government to the local government.

Kauzya (2000) refers to decentralisation as the transferring of power and authority for decision-making from the central government to local government and the community, while Marishane (cited in Botha, 2013) defined decentralisation as a shifting of the educational resources and decision-making responsibilities for the use of resources to schools and their community with the aim to improve service delivery and accountability. Similarly, Dryer and Rose (2005) have the same opinion; they perceive decentralisation as a process of redistribution of resources and responsibilities among the various actors part of the education system.

A basic definition emerged from the above definitions: that decentralisation is about the transferring of power, authority and responsibilities from central government to local government and the community. The power and authority alluded to relate to the decision-making power while the transfer of responsibilities refers to the distribution of resources, fundraising, planning, administration and management activities from the ministry (head office) to the regional office, regional councillors and schools (Pomuti, 2008; Dyer & Rose, 2005). Some definitions did not specify which kind of power, authority and responsibilities are reassigned to the local agencies.

Decentralisation implies self-management. It advocates for democratic participation of stakeholders in the management of and support of schools. This is done in the way of promoting citizenry participation in the education process of their children. Decentralisation of education provides opportunities for communities (parents) at grassroots level to take part in the educational activities of their children. Caldwell and Spinks (as cited in Coleman & Bush, 1994, p. 226) caution, “Devolving power to institutions should be matched by the empowerment of people *inside* schools” (p. 226).

According to Marishane (as cited in Botha, 2013, p. 110), “Education reform through decentralisation whenever and wherever it happens take a different form”, moreover, types of decentralisation have different implications, especially for local participation and may take place at different stages as discussed below.

## **2.8.2 Types of decentralisation**

### **2.8.2.1 De-concentration**

De-concentration is basically a shift of administrative and executive matters from the central government to local level (Daun & Mundy, 2011). At this stage, the government establishes branches at the regional level and equips them with human resources that act on behalf of the central government offices by taking care and responding to the needs of the locals, while they are still accountable for any decision they take to the central office (Marishane as cited in Botha, 2008). This means that the final decision-making authority remains within the central government office; for instance, schools in each region are accountable to the regional offices which are held accountable by the Ministry of Education at Head office. Furthermore, whatever decisions the regional office takes should be in line with the policies, regulations and directives formulated by the Head Office (Pomuti, 2008; Marishane as cited in Botha, 2008).

### **2.8.2.2 Delegation**

Delegation refers to the transfer of a “*stronger degree*” of decision-making power and specific managerial areas to local government (Marishane as cited in Botha, 2008, p. 111). However, the central government remains accountable for the transferred activities handed over to the local government. Thus, the decision-making powers assigned to the local authority offices can be withdrawn at any time it deems fit (Pomuti, 2008; Marishane as cited in Botha, 2008). For example - a School Board found guilty of mismanagement of school development funds, may have its power for managing funds withdrawn.

### **2.8.2.3 Devolution**

This type of decentralisation involves the transfer of decision-making power, authority and management tasks e.g. financial and administration issues from the local level to an independent and autonomous structure for e.g. School Boards. At this level, the structure (School Board) has legal rights provided for in the Education Act to make its own decisions without further consultation or approval from the central government, although the functions and activities of this structure are indirectly monitored and controlled by the central government through regulations and evaluation systems (Pomuti, 2008; Marishane as cited in

Botha, 2008). Moreover, the powers and functions can be withdrawn only on the basis of an amendment to the appropriate law.

In a nutshell, the different types of decentralisation indicate the degree at which the power, authority, functions, resources and responsibilities are transferred to the local government represented by regional offices and various schools and how they are controlled by the central government. It has become apparent that the government chooses the type of decentralisation depending on how they want to keep track of the system. They may choose to de-concentrate and delegate because they want to assign only a portion of financial functions, power and authority while they are still in control of the system. While delegating, the central government may transfer specific administration authority with conditions attached, for example, the private schools that are subsidised by the government are regarded as semi-autonomous and the government has little control over some aspects of school management and finances. However, there are times when they have to consult with the central government.

Finally, devolution implies the transfer of full decision-making power and management authority to local level, for example, from the head office to School Boards that are autonomous, independent bodies outside the central government perimeters (Daun & Mundy, 2011). However, the central government Ministry of Education Head Office exercises little or has no direct power over the management of a school's functions and responsibilities, because the School Board has a legal mandate to provide and control services and run their own affairs - for example, controlling school finances and budgeting, fundraising, and recruitment of teachers etc. (Dyer & Rose, 2005). The above serves as evidence that devolution aims to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the management of schools. Furthermore, the concept of devolution is important for this study as it provides an understanding of how and where parental involvement through the School Board is located in the Namibian decentralisation context.

It is evident that de-concentration and delegation do not necessarily lead to more democratic participation of stakeholders; neither does it empower them fully because the power remains with the central government. Instead, it makes the school system bureaucratic even though the management responsibilities are extended over to the local level (Pomuti, 2008).

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

The parent-teacher relationship in a school is a reflection of the social beliefs of the school and perspectives influence the relationship that occurs between the parents, teachers and learners. Therefore, Bourdieu's social capital theory and Epstein's typology of parental involvement provide useful insights into the relationship between schools and parents. These theories are briefly discussed below.

### **2.9.1 Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory**

At this point in time I will focus on Bourdieu's social capital theory. According to Murariu (2010) the notion of Bourdieu's theory which includes habitus, capital and field, help him in creating a unique approach to explain among other things, the existing social inequality present in society and the perpetuation of this inequality. Although all these theories intend to explain social inequality and concentrate on the benefits accruing to persons or families by virtue of their affiliation with one another, I have opted to concentrate on the social capital concept. For the purpose of this study, Bourdieu's social capital theory is primarily useful because it explains the complexities of parental involvement on School Boards at diverse schools and explains the different experiences at these schools based on various social and professional networks (Dike & Sign, 2005; Murariu, 2010).

Dike and Singh (2002) note that scholars have varying interpretations of social capital, which sometimes results in unclear distinctions between social capital and cultural capital. For this reason, I start by defining social capital for clarification sake and follow with a discussion on what social capital is about and how it influences parents and teachers' views on parental involvement and school governance.

Bourdieu (2001) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network to more or less essential institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 102 - 103). In line with Bourdieu's definition, Van Sly (cited in Botha, 2013) views social capital as the social relations of different people and the way in which social networks and connections are sustained. Similarly, Pena and Titus (2005) affirm that social capital focuses on the social networks and the manner in which the social networks and links are preserved.

Furthermore, Lee and Bowen (2006) assert that social capital is a relationship that provides access to information and resources, which has a potential to build *political power*. This implies that within the School Board itself the different ‘classes’ of parents will have different degrees of power, perhaps based on the degrees or levels of capital that each possess. Further Bourdieu argues that the dominant group can and will reproduce their power and that would also come into play in the School Board, which can shape the power relationship between the School Board and the school.

According to Lin (2001) Bourdieu acknowledges that, “social capital consists of resources embedded in social relations and social structures, which can be mobilised when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action” (p. 24). Likewise, Pena and Titus (2005) affirm that social capital comprises of attitudes, norms, resources and trust which are obtained through an individual’s relationship with one another, mainly through membership in social and professional networks (School Board committee) and other social structures like schools. Furthermore, Gordon and Nocon, (2008) claim that the forms of social capital have a positive influence in the establishment and enhancement of social relations from generation to generation. They equip parents with different resources that they can draw upon when they engage with the schools by offering support and contributing to their children’s education (Mitchell, 2008).

Bourdieu (2001) further stresses that the education system recognises and acknowledges the social relations occurring within an organisation (a school) simply because “the school which forms part of the system is arranged *culturally and socially* in order to allow groups and individuals that value education as the supplier of credential for the preservation of the capital” (Gordon & Nocon, 2008, p.323). This implies that each member (parents, teachers and learners) of the groups alluded to above brings in his or her unique habitus acquired through their background that can be exchanged with others at school. Habitus refers to an “internalised set of dispositions and preferences that subconsciously define an individual reasonable action” (Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 490). In other words, habitus refers to social norms, tendencies and behaviours that guide thinking which exist from past experiences (Lareau, 2001).

As a result, every member of the group (parents, learners and teachers) has greater access to and the ability to influence the social capital of the school in order to ensure that effective and efficient education takes place no matter their educational and financial background (Gordon

& Nocon, 2008). Thus, Mitchell (2008) believes that a strong networking structure, for example, a School Board committee, is needed to facilitate the way of networking and provide the opportunity for all members, whether from middle or low class in terms of their educational, economic backgrounds, and the school to exchange social capital and participate in the school governance process.

However, Perna and Titus (2005) point out that Bourdieu's social capital theory focuses on the way some individuals are advantaged by their historical background and that the amount of social capital to which an individual may gain access through social networks and relationships depends on the size of the network as well as the amount of social capital that individuals in the network possess (p. 488).

Consequently, that is why Lin (2001) believes Bourdieu regards social capital as a means that the dominant class uses to maintain their dominant position without recognising the fact that the group of learners and parents from a low social class also have networks, experience and skills they can draw upon to effect change (Gordon & Nocon, 2008). The problem lies in the fact that what learners and parents from lower social classes have to offer is often not highly valued and therefore is unlikely to bring about change.

Gordon and Nocon (2008) further stress that although individuals i.e. learners, parents and teachers have different capital acquired from their backgrounds that can be exchanged at school, not all capital can be exchanged and this gives a distinct advantage at school to the group whose capital is valued.

In summary, in the context of this study social capital is about the connections that the School Board develops with the school's agents like teachers, the Principal, learners and other parents. Social capital plays a vital role in the educational route of learners. According to Ho (2009) parental involvement in the education of their children is a practice that takes place within a social world. Consequently, parental involvement on the School Board can be viewed as a social network, where trust is established between parents, teachers, learners and the school to facilitate educational achievement (Van Wyk, 2004). Parents become partners with the school and establish links and connections (social capital) and begin networking as

partners in the provision of education and improvement of learners' academic achievements (Van Zyl, 2013).

Furthermore, the School Board committee consists of parents, teachers and learners with different social capital as a result of their background, for instance, parents from a rich educational and economic background possess more knowledge and a better understanding that parental involvement has a positive influence on learners' education, therefore their level of motivation, participation and involvement would be higher than parents from a poor, less educated background. For this reason their level of participation in the education process will differ. Eventually, the group with less social capital is believed to contribute less and as a result they are sometimes alienated from the decision-making processes in matters that affect the education of their children.

Moreover, Bourdieu views social capital as a means of social reproduction for the dominant group over the less dominant group but it fails to recognise the role of agency because the group with little capital also has experience and skills resulting from their background. Besides, the knowledge and skills of the dominant i.e. the well-to-do family group could only be activated when both groups come together on the School Board to interact, share experiences, skills and motivation. As a result, they form a collective and holistic body of knowledge they can draw from when taking decisions and this will help them during the formulation of policies and programmes that lead to successful management and governance of the school.

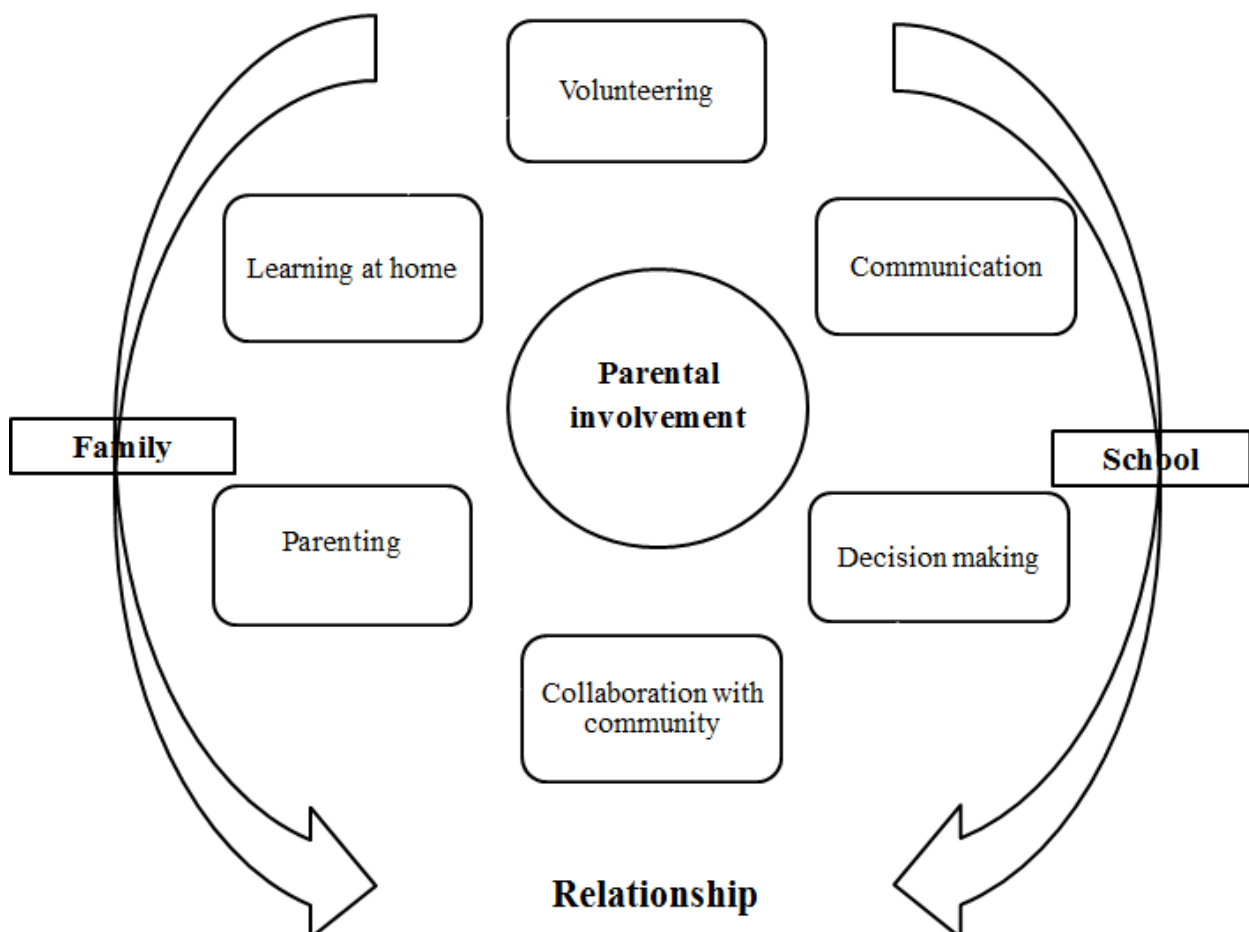
In conclusion, the use of social capital in this study provides a lens for examining how parents, teachers and learners through the School Board access information and resources in the school. It also examines how the exchange of social capital takes place within the network that allows members of the School Board to share knowledge and tap from experienced School Board members in order to participate in the governance of the school. Furthermore, Bourdieu helps to show how some members' of the School Board voices may be silenced and become victims of the system due to the dominant group. Social capital was also used as a starting point to lead me to the Epstein model which will be used as one of the frameworks for data analysis, therefore the Epstein model is discussed below.

## 2.9.2 Epstein's model

Epstein (2010) has written widely on the subject of “parental involvement” and her model is one of the most referenced models used in the promotion of parental involvement. In this study I present a brief discussion of her six typologies of parental involvement. While her model does not address school governance as such, I believe Epstein's typology of parental involvement will be relevant to my study because it presents a good example of a comprehensive programme in which parents could be engaged in both at home and at school. Therefore, it can be used as a strategy for implementing parental involvement activities through School Boards.

Epstein's (2010) framework highlights six types of parental involvement. The aim is for the school to develop a collaborative parent/community relationship whilst creating more comprehensive and appropriate programmes for parents in the school (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

Figure 1 below adopted from Hall (2014, p. 28) illustrates Epstein's six types of parent involvement. The diagram indicates how the system of equal partners connects and works together in harmony. Parental involvement is at the center, demonstrating its central impact



on the development of the family/school relationship.

### **2.9.2.1 Parenting**

The school helps families to establish and provide a conducive home environment that supports learning for learners at home. For example, the school could develop a programme that addresses relevant issues with regards to a child's development stages to teach parents how to support a child during all the development stages, helping develop in learners a more comprehensive and appropriate attitude toward learning and school. On the other hand, parents help a school to understand the family background, culture and educational goals.

### **2.9.2.2 Communication**

The school designs and maintains effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programmes and children's progress. The school needs to keep parents informed of children's educational progress.

### **2.9.2.3 Volunteering**

The school recruits and organises parental help and support. Parents volunteer to assist teachers with routine tasks and learners at school, as well as to help organise school events such as fundraising, parent's day, and sport.

### **2.9.2.4 Learning at home**

The school provides parents and families with information and ideas on how they can best assist children at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

### **2.9.2.5 Decision-making**

The school includes parents in school decision-making, governance, and advocacy, developing parent leaders and representatives on school committees (Epstein, 2010).

### **2.9.2.6 Collaborating with the community**

The school identifies and integrates resources and services from the community to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning and development. This may

include making use of the expertise within the community like sport personnel to coach sport, local church pastors to conduct devotion and spiritual talks, business enterprises and other community services at their disposal.

In summary, Epstein's Six Types of Involvement (2010) highlights the important factors for promoting parental involvement. All six factors provide parents with learning opportunities and the opportunity to gain knowledge and consequently provide their children with the necessary learning experiences, support and conducive learning environment that promote academic and school success.

Moreover, parental involvement in each of these areas as described above is dependent upon the family, teacher, and the school climate. Parenting programmes should focus on creating open communication opportunities for the parents and the school to share their experiences and information with each other pertaining to children's schooling (Kerr, 2005).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored literature related to parental involvement in school governance through a School Board in the Namibian context. I presented a brief discussion on the definition of parental involvement and school governance. Thereafter, attention was paid to the significance of parental involvement followed by a brief historical background of apartheid education and the current education situation after independence and how School Boards came about. I then looked at how the Constitution and the Education Act underpinned and supported the idea of parental involvement.

Research shows that parental involvement in school governance is critical and has been linked across the globe and written into school improvement plans as a predictor for student achievement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Niitembu, 2006; Erlendsdittir, 2010). The influence parents have on their children's academic success has been acknowledged by researchers, policymakers, and educators alike. Moreover, a significant body of research indicates that when parents take part in their children's education, the result is an improvement in learners' achievements.

Moreover, researchers point to the numerous benefits of parental involvement in education not only for the students but also for the parents themselves, the school and the community at large. It also improves schools and strengthens school relationships with parents and parents

get to know their children better as well as the school and its policies and procedures (Fullan, 2007; Epstein, 2001; Gordon & Louis, 2009; Hamunyela, 2008).

Furthermore, researchers has found that parental involvement is related to a host of learners' achievement indicators, including improvement of grades, attendance, attitudes, expectations, motivation and lower dropout rates. The second section of this chapter described Bourdieu's social capital theory and Epstein's model of parental involvement.

This study draws on Bourdieu's work, social capital in particular. Parental involvement is regarded as a form of social capital simply because it provides the School Board with access to resources that may be exchanged or reproduced via social networks in the school.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's social capital in this study is used to help explain and understand the relationship between parents and teachers as well as learners (School Board members) and the practice thereof within the school context i.e. the norms, values and rules and the manner in which the practice occurs, since the primary function of social capital is to enable all stakeholders to access all forms of social capital, school resources and support (Dika & Singh, 2002; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Social capital help schools to maintain social relationships and network with parents, learners and teachers. However, Bourdieu uncovers inequality in the amount of social capital parents acquire from the social networks as a result of the variation of habitus that results from individuals' backgrounds and past experiences that make them act differently and vary in participation (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the social background shapes individual's participation or actions (Murariu, 2010; Hamunyela, 2008 ) meaning that the extent to which schools encourage parental involvement through the School Board depends on the degree of resources that may be acquired through the individual interaction with the school. For instance, when a parent's disposition is coherent with the school norms, values and practices and the school culture acknowledges that all parents, learners and teachers have social capital, probably both sides (parents and the school) will enjoy social advantages (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Finally, Epstein's typology is used as a framework for data analysis, since it provides a structure around which a school can organise, implement and evaluate its efforts to involve

parents and communities in children's education. It will also be used as a tool for comparing whether the interview and document analysis data expose parent School Board members' views and understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regards to school governance. In addition, it will also be used to find out whether their roles fall within the typology set forth by Epstein. This model is therefore useful as it can influence the design and implementation of parental involvement programmes (Smith & Wohlsetter, 2009) - therefore, the Epstein model has been selected as a basis for this study. In the next chapter, I present the methodology of this study.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Methodology denotes the way in which scholars approach problems and seek answers. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) refer to methods as “a range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction” (p.47). Kaplan (in Cohen et al.) suggests that the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry, but the process itself (ibid).

Based on this background, this chapter summarises the research design and strategies used to investigate and describe parental involvement through the School Board at a secondary school in the Otjozondjupa region. In this chapter, I discuss the approach that I used, describe the research site, discuss the data gathering procedure, data analysis, validity, ethical aspects of research and sum up with the conclusion.

### **3.2 Research goals and questions**

The goal of my study was to investigate and describe parental involvement in school governance through the School Board, at a secondary school in the Otjozondjupa region. To achieve this goal the study asked the following research questions:

1. What are the views of parent School Board members regarding their roles and responsibilities in school governance, and where do these views originate?
2. What are the challenges experienced by School Board members in executing their roles?
3. What could be done to address these challenges?

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

I operated within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm. I am of the opinion that an interpretive paradigm is an appropriate approach for this study since it is one of the approaches used in

descriptive studies such as this one. It also seeks to understand the social interactions and the situation by seeking to describe and understand the role of the School Board in school governance by exploring participants' views, perceptions and experiences with regards to school governance. According to Stake (1995) the interpretive paradigm seeks to describe, understand and make meaning of reality (p. 44).

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) share similar views that the interpretive paradigm focuses on the understanding of individual participants' experiences and perceptions of their professional roles as experienced in their day-to-day working environment, from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds" (p. 21). Based on this proclamation and to gain an understanding of the views of participants regarding the phenomenon of the case, I worked with participants from different backgrounds, occupying different positions and with varying experience of parental involvement through the School Board.

### **3.4 A case study approach**

I used a case study method because my research is based on a particular case within a real life context. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 289) state that a case study deals with a single instance like a child, a class or a school and it also provides a unique example of real people in a real situation. They further stress that "a case study recognise and accept that there are many variables operating in a single case" (ibid). A case study allows the researcher to understand, in depth, how the subject under study functions by studying the actions of that particular subject (Berg, 2007, p. 283). In addition, Rule and John (2011, p. 7) point out that a case study is flexible and it allows one to make use of different types of data collection and data analysis methods depending on what is suitable to the case. Although Yin (2009) acknowledges a case study's uniqueness, he further argues that a case study may lack rigour simply because sometimes researchers do not follow systematic procedures. As a result they allow their personal views on the subject to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions. Furthermore, he stresses that a case study "provides little basis for scientific generalisation" because the results of a single case cannot be generalised due to the fact that scientific facts result from multiple cases (pp. 14 -15).

To address the challenge of rigour, Rule and John (2011) argue that a case study as a process "involves following a number of steps such as identifying a case, reading around the

case and its context, gaining access to people, documents and places, gathering information about the case, analysing the data, writing it up and presenting it' (p. 5). They further state that the process of conducting a case study often involves interacting closely with other people and developing relationships with them (ibid). Following a series of steps in a systematic way can go a long way towards strengthening validity and rigour in case study research.

Cohen et al., (2011, p. 289) define a case study as a system “which 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” (p. 253). In addition, they argue that “it is important in case studies for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 253).

One of the main objectives of this study was to consider the participants' perceptions and experience of roles and functions as School Board members. Hence I chose to use instruments that enabled the respondents' voices to emerge.

My study employed the strategy of a single case, which was based on interviewing, observing and analysing documents from one school in one circuit, with the intention to understand and describe parental involvement through the School Board with regards to school governance.

### **3.5 Research site**

I now identify and provide a description of the case school as this would “help others to draw conclusions about the extent to which findings might be generalised to other situations” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 136). The research was undertaken in an urban secondary school situated in Namibia. The school is situated in the garden town of Okahandja within the Otjozondjupa region in Namibia.

#### **3.5.1 Physical setting of the school**

The school grounds provide a very welcoming first impression; there are some flowers and beautiful plants at the entrance of the administration block. The school is bounded by a long

fence with two gates; the big gate is for vehicles while the small gate is for the pedestrians. Within the school grounds are shady trees, verandas and a parking lot for staff and visitors' vehicles. The school environment is well maintained, tidy and conducive to support learning.

The school accommodates approximately 623 learners ranging from grade 8 - 12, from all ethnic groups. Learners come from advantaged and semi-disadvantaged backgrounds, in terms of socio-economic class. English is used as a medium of instruction and a first language, while Afrikaans is taught as a second language.

The school is comprised of 24 teaching staff and four non-teaching staff members. Most of the teachers are qualified teachers and hold a formal teaching qualification from institutions of higher learning. The school's management team (SMT) consists of four members. It is made up of three Heads of Department (HoDs) and the Principal of the school.

The learner attendance rate is at 90%, as provided by the SMT, and the school is a day school (no hostel) and most of the learners come from all suburbs in Okahandja. Learners' dropout rate is also minimal. Most dropouts are due to teenage pregnancy, while very few boys cannot cope with the pressure of schooling.

The school is a cluster centre school catering for 12 satellite schools within the Okahandja circuit. The cluster centre system was introduced in 2000 as part of the decentralisation procedure. In the Namibian context, a cluster as described by Dittmar, Mendelsohn and Ward (2002, p. 4) "is a group of schools that are geographically close and accessible to each other".

The school at the centre of the group that is easily accessible and well-resourced becomes a cluster centre.

The school is a well-resourced urban and non-racial school. With regards to the infrastructure, the school has adequate classrooms, a library, and a computer and science laboratory although they are not well resourced. The Principal, the three Heads of Department (HODs) as well as the school secretary all have offices. There is a school hall where most of their functions take place e.g. parent meetings and there is also a photocopy room where all copy machines are kept.

### 3.5.2 The history of the school

Opened in 1921, Victorious (pseudonym) secondary school is one of the oldest schools in Okahandja. It is a former Afrikaans school, named after the first Inspector of Education in the Okahandja district during the colonial era. The school operates under the motto *Opwaarts* meaning “rise up”. The school has a long history of excellence in terms of learners’ performance and extra mural activities. This is manifested by the numerous trophies and medals displayed in the Principal’s office (field notes). The table below illustrates the Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examination pass rate in percentages (%) over the past 7 years respectively.

| Year | %    |
|------|------|
| 2012 | 61.5 |
| 2011 | 63.4 |
| 2010 | 79.6 |
| 2009 | 94.8 |
| 2008 | 97.4 |
| 2007 | 92.7 |
| 2006 | 83.8 |

### 3.6 Sampling and participants

A sample is a limited number of elements selected from a population to be representative of that population. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) elucidate that “more often, qualitative researchers are intentionally non-random in their selection of data source. Instead their sampling is purposeful: They select those individuals or objects that yield the most

information about the topic under investigation” (p. 147). The sampling of the school as well as the participants for this study was informed by the purposive preference in qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009) purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”.

I purposely chose to conduct my research at Victorious secondary school because I observed that it has a high level of parental involvement. One of my colleagues at work is the School Board chairperson and I noticed that in most cases she leaves work to attend to parental issues at the school. It is also a successful school in the sense that learners produce good results. Besides, the school was also chosen out of convenience because it is near my workstation and it is easily accessible. Berg (2007, p. 43) points out that convenience sampling relies on available sources. Merriam (2009) refers to convenience sampling as “selecting a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents” (p. 79).

Participants in this study were the Principal, an HOD, two teachers, three parents, and two learners all from the case study school. Rule and John (2011, p. 63) point out that it is impossible for a researcher to consult everyone in the school; therefore the researcher has to choose individuals who have the relevant knowledge and experience to be able to shed light on the case.

I interviewed the Principal and a Head of Department. The latter has served the school for a longer period of time than other teachers. Both have considerable experience of parental involvement. I also worked with five School Board members, three of whom are parent members of the School Board. The other two are teacher members of the School Board. I selected the head boy and girl because they are members of the Learners’ Representative Council (LRCs) who also represent other learners in the School Board meetings. I purposely chose the participants because each of them was able to provide me with information on the role of the School Board in school governance since they are involved and are witness to events that are relevant.

### **3.7 The data gathering process**

In order to find answers to my research questions, I employed different types of data collection tools to gather my data namely: interviews, observation and document analysis. The data collection process took a period of five weeks. I believe these tools enabled me to gather in-depth data on the question under study. Also, the use of different kinds of data collecting tools was to enhance validity. It was also used for triangulation purposes. According to Coleman and Briggs (2002, p. 68), “Triangulation techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint”. The data collection methods are explained in detail in the following sub-sections.

#### **3.7.1 Semi structured interviews**

According to Rule and John (2011) semi-structured interviews includes “a set of preset questions which initiate the discussion, followed by further questions which arise from the discussion” (p. 65). I used semi-structured interviews as one of my primary data collection tools to capture participants’ perceptions and experiences of parental involvement in school governance (see Appendix 1). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe for clarity and allowed participants to elaborate (Berg, 2007, p. 95). According to Cohen et al., (2011), “Interviews enable participants, be they interviewers or interviewees, to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (p. 409).

I used face-to-face semi-structured interviews and it provided me with an opportunity to communicate directly with the participants who provided me with rich data on the subject under study. According to Kawana (2007, p. 29), semi-structured interviews “allow respondents to talk freely about their experiences and feelings without the researcher losing track”. The interview questions were piloted before the real interviews to confirm relevance and enable editing. Interviews were conducted with all the research participants i.e. the Principal, HOD, teachers, parents and learners.

The interviews were conducted in English because most of the participants are able to express themselves in English even though it is not their home language. The conversation

was recorded on a voice recorder with the permission of the participants and afterwards transcribed. The aim of using a voice recorder is to ensure accuracy, and to capture participants' views and feelings for accurate quotations in the final report. The interviews focused on the respondents' understanding of parents' roles as School Board members, and the challenges they face.

### **3.7.2 Observation**

Observation was one of my secondary data collection tools that I used to complement the interviews and documents analysis. Observation enabled me to acquire information that I could not elicit in an interview (Yin, 2003, p. 76). It also provided me the opportunity to gather live data during the interaction between parents and the school *in situ* instead of relying on second hand information. In other words, "observation provided a reality check" which enriched my findings (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 456). I tend to agree with Walliman (2005) who argued that observation methods are more powerful for gaining insight into the situation" (p. 287). Through observation I was able to gain a deep understanding and knowledge of the context in which events occurred, in other words I witnessed events and activities that School Board members were engaged in; for example, I got a clear picture of what happens at the parents' meetings, what kind of decisions were made and by whom.

I sought permission from the Principal to attend parents' meetings, School Board meetings, disciplinary committee meetings, fundraising committee meetings, board and departmental meetings and to attend morning assembly at the case study school.

As a practice of observation, I followed Foster's (1996, as cited in Moodley, 2012) advice to gain access. I asked the Principal for the school calendar of activities and I drew up an observation schedule which facilitated the observation and I allocated time to attend some of the activities that were likely to occur concurrently, like parents' meetings, School Board meetings, prize giving awards, disciplinary committee meetings and parent days. Nieuwenhuis (2010) further defines observation as "a systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them" (p. 84). Hence I designed an observation schedule (Appendix 2) where I recorded and noted interactions that I considered noteworthy

and related to the case under study for example; I asked the school secretary to note down the reasons for parents' visits to the school. I also kept observation notes in a journal. Observation helped me to verify and complement some of the data gathered through interviews and document analysis (Rule & John, 2011, p. 68).

### **3.7.3 Document analysis**

Many scholars have indicated that document analysis has been demonstrated to be a very valuable source of data. Based on the above statement, McEwan and McEwan (2003) explain that "document analysis can fill in some missing data pieces or it can raise a host of new questions regarding the accuracy of observation and interpretations" (p. 82). In a similar line, Barzun and Graff (cited in Bell, 2005, p. 133) affirm that documents are useful because, as one studies sources, one will gradually gain insight and detailed knowledge which give one a "higher common sense" which will, in turn, permit a fuller appreciation of the worth of evidence. In line with these scholars, document analysis provided me with a clear insight of what was happening in the case study school with regard to parental involvement through the School board. Furthermore, it helped me to uncover information, which was not revealed during interviews and observation. This is in line with Shank and Brown (2006) whose views are that "material analysis looks at the 'stuff' that cultures generate and use in day-to-day life. These materials are often fascinating and windows into the types and roles of meaning we might find within a given culture" (p. 63).

Merriam (2001, p. 133) refers to "public records, personal documents, and physical material as the three major types of documents available to the researcher for analysis".

In the context of this study, I examined the minutes of the disciplinary committee meetings, parents' meetings and School Board meetings and disciplinary and school financial policies (see Appendix 3). Working with these minutes I confirmed comments, suggestions made and decisions taken by the School Board as well as the nature of activities they are/have been involved in. The minutes revealed the history of parental involvement in the school. Besides the above, I also looked at different ministerial and school internal policies that

address the roles and purpose of School Boards. The information obtained from document analysis has provided a basis of comparison with what participants' revealed in interviews and what emerged from observations (Rule & John, 2011; Yin, 2009). Therefore, I believe documents can provide relevant and accurate information since they have not been prepared for the purpose of research and would at the same time save time, as they are readily available and accessible.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

I made use of a qualitative approach to data analysis. To give clarity to this, Nieuwenhuis (2010) regards qualitative data analysis as "an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not merely a number of successful steps" (p. 100). Furthermore, he explains that the process of data analysis "tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon" (ibid).

Keeping this in mind, I started with data analysis right at the beginning of the data collecting process until the end. I started with the transcription of interview data since the interviews provided me with a large amount of data. According to Cohen et al., (2011, p. 539) "early analysis can reduce the problem of data overload". I listened to tape-recorded data several times to familiarise myself with the data.

After transcribing my interviews, I immersed myself in my interview, observation and document analysis data. I then compared and contrasted data from all three sources and put them into categories which I labeled with different colours (coding) to be able to identify them (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 130). Maxwell (2005), explains the aim of coding as "... to fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitates comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (p. 96).

The categories were interpreted in terms of answers to my research questions, which led to the identification of themes that corresponded with Epstein's model of six types of parent involvement (Bower and Griffin, 2011). The Epstein model was helpful here since the

model provides categories which are indicators of the kind of involvement of parents in school governance. As noted earlier, all of the six Epstein elements were relevant to this study and they served as themes. However, the Epstein model fails to account for hidden forces, such as the locus of power. Hence, I used Bourdieu's social capital theory as a lens to examine the School Board's practice in school governance since Bourdieu's social capital theory appears to be more powerful in understanding inequality of practices associated with parental involvement through the School Board (Ho, 2009). Thus, themes emerged from the data that were in line with Bourdieu's social capital theory.

### **3.9 Ethical aspects of research**

According to Bell (cited in Sikes & Potts, 2008, p. 84) no researcher can demand access to an institution or an organisation. My supervisor sought permission from the Ministry (Appendix 6). I sought permission (Appendix 4) to conduct the research from the Director of Education in the Otjovondjupa Region, before approaching the school. Furthermore, I recognised Namukwambi's (2012) views, that social science research always involves people and that researchers need to exercise proper care when dealing with people.

Furthermore, Cohen et al., (2011) explain that "consent protects and respects the right of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research" (p. 77). I sent consent letters to all participants (Appendix 5). In the case of learners I wrote indemnity letters to their parents asking for permission for the learners to participate in the study. The participants were informed in detail of the nature of the study and how information would be used. I also assured participants' confidentiality and anonymity in order to protect their identity, and for this reason I explained that they would remain anonymous and that their names would be represented by codes. I also explained to them that the information would be confidential and it would only be used for the purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 81).

### **3.10 Validity**

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the study, firstly, the interview guide with open-ended questions was discussed with the supervisor to ensure their appropriateness (Polit et al., 2001). In addition, I also did an internal validity test on the data collecting tools by

piloting them on my supervisor and a colleague who did the same course. In relation to the above, Cohen et al., (2007) clarify that internal validity “seek to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by data” (p. 135).

Case study research is often suspected of being too subjective and not able to be generalised in a statistical sense (see 3.4.). One of the strategies used to combat this is triangulation which in this case involved using different data collection methods (Cohen et al., 2011). It was important to find out whether the set of data were similar or different. Besides, it was also used to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Another strategy employed by qualitative researchers is reporting and using rich data, verbatim quoting. In other words, the data consisted of words in the form of rich verbal descriptions, which allows the voices of the respondents to emerge. This strengthens believability and validity because data was presented by quoting exactly what the participant said during the interview.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has outlined the steps that were pursued throughout the research. A case study methodology was used since my research was qualitative in nature. The chapter also includes the issue of access and the description of the context of the case study school. A variety of data collection methods were used to answer the research questions namely: interview, observation and document analysis. Afterwards, the data analysis procedures were also specified.

Finally I must say, this was a learning experience to me as a novice researcher. The research exposed me to the phenomenon of research.

In the next chapter, I present and analyse data and discuss the findings.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation, analysis and discussion of data**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents data gathered from the three techniques used namely semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Observation data in the form of field notes and analysis documents such as School Board minutes, disciplinary committee minutes government policies and the Education Acts were used to complement data gathered from the interviews.

As already indicated in chapter 3, the sample was composed of the Principal, a Head of Department, three parent School Board members of which one is the School Board chairperson, two teacher School Board members and two learners (the head girl and boy). The interviews were conducted in English since it is the official language and the medium of instruction used in the school. Besides, most participants are fluent in English and chose to be interviewed in English. Only one School Board parent member struggles with communicating in English but she also opted to be interviewed in English.

This study set out to investigate parental involvement in school governance through the School Board at a secondary school in the Otjozondjupa Region. The interview questions focused on and probed the School Board and their school governance roles, participants' views and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the challenges experienced by board members.

The Epstein typology of parental involvement discussed in Chapter 2 provides a framework to analyse the behaviour of the School Board. Some themes are broken into sub-themes to make the data more comprehensible to facilitate the presentation and discussion of findings. However, to gain insight into the underlying forces driving parental involvement it was necessary to create themes drawn from Bourdieu and other literature and these are presented after the Epstein themes.

Themes drawn from Epstein:

1. Volunteering
2. Collaboration:
  - 2.1.community
  - 2.2.teachers
  - 2.3.learners
3. Decision-making
4. Communication: Parents, Teachers and Learners
5. Parenting

Other emerging themes from data that are not in line with Epstein elements:

1. Roles/ functions of School Board
2. Training or induction
3. Challenges
4. Power relations
5. Suggestions for improvement
6. Benefits/advantages from School Board

In respect of ethical concerns, the names of participants and the school were replaced by pseudonyms such as Victorious Secondary School. For the interviews, data participants were referred to using codes and numbers, for example teacher School Board member- TSB 1, Teacher School Board member - TSB 2, Parent School Board member 1 - PSB 1, Parent School Board 2 - PSB 2, Head boy - HB, Head girl - HG, Principal - P, Head of Department; HOD and the School Board chair person - SBC.

Observation data are coded as field notes (FN) and dated, and documents are coded as D1, D2, and D3 as shown below.

- |    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| D1 | School Board minutes           |
| D2 | Disciplinary committee minutes |
| D3 | Parents' meetings minutes      |

## **4.2 School context**

The school was a former Afrikaans medium school, formerly reserved for the white racial group. Since the end of apartheid the school has become an English medium school because they have enrolled learners from all racial and ethnic groups of which the majority are black learners. English is also the official language in Namibia. This school is situated at the centre of the town in a racially integrated location (suburb). The socio-economic situation of parents vary from poor to well established middle to high-class. The school is relatively advantaged in terms of infrastructure and offers a wide range of academic subjects.

## **4.3 Respondents' profile**

I begin by providing a brief profile of the respondents because their personal characteristics may influence their thinking and responses. The findings may also reflect on their experiences.

### **School Board Chairperson (SBCP)**

She is employed as a programme officer. She has grade 12 and a diploma in business management. She has been a Board member and a chairperson of the School Board since 2010. She has served on the board for 3 years and her term expires this year.

### **Parent School Board 1 (PSB 1)**

She is unemployed. She has a grade 10 certificate. She serves as an additional member of the Board and also serves on the finance and fundraising committee. She was elected / appointed as a member of the School Board in 2013. She has experience because she served as a School Board member at a different school before.

### **Parent School Board 2 (PSB 2)**

He is a businessman and is self-employed. He is the chairperson of the disciplinary committee. He has been a member of the School Board since 2013. He has 6 years of experience obtained from being a School Board member at different schools before the current school.

### **The Principal (P)**

He has been the Principal of the school since his appointment in 2008. He has a teaching qualification from a higher institution of learning. He was a Head of Department (HOD) at his previous school before his appointment to this position at the current school. He is an experienced teacher.

### **Teacher School Board 1 (TSB)**

He is a qualified teacher with a teaching qualification from a training institution. He is an experienced teacher who has served on the Board for about six months now, but he has been a teacher School Board member for a period of three years at his previous school.

### **Teacher School Board 1 (TSB 1)**

She is a Head of Department at the school serving as a teacher School Board member. She has a higher teaching qualification from a training institution. She serves on the school disciplinary committee as the secretary of the committee. She has been a member of the School Board since 2010.

### **Head of Department (HOD)**

She is one of the long serving teachers at the school since 2002. She is a qualified teacher with a higher teaching qualification. She is not a School Board member. She serves on the school's financial committee.

### **Head boy (HB)**

He has been a learner at the school since grade 8. He is currently in his final year, grade 12. He was a prefect during his junior school years at the school.

### **Head girl (HG)**

She has been a learner at the school since grade 8. She is also in her final year, grade 12.

## 4.4 Data presentation

Here I present the findings obtained from raw data. Data are organised into themes/categories, which served as main headings and sub-headings, as is evident in the subsequent discussions below. During the deliberations, relevant verbatim quotes extracted from the raw data are used to elucidate important findings.

### 4.4.1 Parenting

Parenting usually involves assisting families with child rearing, providing the child with support, food and nutrition, health and safety as well as providing a conducive learning environment that supports learning.

It emerged from the data that the School Board assists parents with some parenting tasks for example the “*soup kitchen*” started by PSB 1. The soup kitchen was proposed, deliberated and decided upon by the School Board as is indicated in D 1, (07.10.2013). Furthermore, PSB 1 sees her role in the School Board as going beyond those duties. She stated “*I am a mother for the kids and teachers*”. To complement the role of motherhood, she indicated, “*I also work very closely with the life skills teacher to help out with children with problems*”. Furthermore, she prepares the soup at home and brings it to school every school day. Her soup kitchen also caters for vulnerable learners at another Secondary School within the vicinity of their school. Similarly, D 3, (17.03.2014) acknowledges a discussion where parents were cautioned about the learners’ ill health at school. Parents were advised to make sure that learners are in good health before sending them to school and to make sure that they had something to eat before they come to school.

PSB 1 indicated that some parents are supportive - sometimes they approached her to confirm if it is really true that their children did what has been reported, as the children did not behave in that manner when they were at home.

PSB 1 confirmed that, “*Yes, they acted differently. I have seen it with my own eyes. The parents went back to ask the children at home and the kids admitted that it was true*”.

Another emerging parenting activity is expressed by SBCP when she stated that the School Board provides opportunities for parents, together with their children, to meet with a specific teacher. “*Parents are informed and called in to discuss the learner’s behaviour and ways to*

*help reinforce good behaviour*". FN, (14.07.2014) confirmed the above claim. On the same day some learners who transgress and dodge lessons were sent back home to call their parents and some came back with their parents immediately. The Principal and the life skills teacher had a meeting with them. Similarly, the minutes D3, (23.07.2013) pointed to issues of discipline. According to the said minutes *"The principal informed the parents about disruptive behaviour among the learners. He told them that the school cannot allow learners to do as they want because without discipline success is not possible. He urged parents to help discipline their children before they send them to school"*.

In support of SBCP on the issue of parents being informed of learners' behaviour at school, TSB 2 pointed out that, *"They also come in to observe if discipline is in place and other activities"*. She also stressed some of the other parenting roles that they carry out at school *"If learners do not do their homework, the learners will get detention. If a book is not covered or homework is not done then we punish with detention"*. She explained that detention refers to keeping the learner back at school after others have left, so that the learner can do outstanding work.

This parental activity is in line with Epstein's framework. Epstein's framework emphasises that the basic obligation for parents is to provide their children with the basic needs namely health, nutrition and safety. The School Board also play these roles; they help parents meet learners' basic needs by providing a meal (soup) to the vulnerable group of children. The School Board also helps parents to identify learners with problems and inform the parents and offer counseling where necessary. In addition, the school also embarked on the practice of addressing parents during parent meetings. Parents were informed about the general behaviour of learners and were encouraged to place the emphasis on good morals and discipline of learners at school.

The findings reinforce the idea of Siraj-Blanchford et al., expressed by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) in chapter 2, 2.5. They emphasised that if the teachers and parents desire to educate a child in totality they have to join forces to instill attributes that will encourage and motivate a child to finish school. Children can only do this when they are provided with parental support, guidance and supervision.

#### 4.4.2 Communication

This activity involves the designing and the use of effective forms of school-home communication and vice-versa. The school communicates about the school programmes as well as learners' progress and their general well-being at the school.

##### 4.4.2.1 Parents

Respondents' responses revealed the presence of two-way communication between the home and the school through various communication strategies.

Both P and the SBCP indicated that the School Board has an open door policy and welcomes visits and complaints either from the teachers, parents and learners.

The HOD confirmed this as she tried to explain how she rated the SB-SMT relationship. She said that the *"open door policy always plays a big role"* and that *"the Principal has meetings on a regular basis with the SBC"*.

P agreed that *"it is open. They can call in any time on any member not only the Principal and they can discuss anything with us"*. To complement P's responses TSB 1 pointed out that *"They come and talk to the School Board when there is an issue related to the school"*.

PSB 1 explained that parents could visit the school any time he or she wished to do so and when summoned to school by a teacher. *"We had an issue with one of the teachers that was punishing kids and most of the parents came to me to talk and for understanding"*.

It also emerged from the data that the school uses various strategies to communicate with the parents ranging from meetings, telephone calls, text messages and invitation letters (written).

This clearly came out of TSB 2's response: *"The parents are called in; they can be informed about the matter through SMS. The School Board calls in that parent through a letter or phoning"*.

SBCP indicated:

*There are different meetings that take place at the school. There are the normal School Board meetings, then we have the parents-teachers meetings and we have the school meetings where all parents come together and the one where all the subject teachers are there.*

The HOD also confirmed this notion that *“They call in on behalf of other parents”*.

FN, (22.07.2014) acknowledged the use of invitation/information letters termed by the school as a *“letter of transgression”*. Through this parents are informed or invited to the school to attend the hearing or listen to the school’s concerns. The school has made it a routine at the beginning of the year to invite all the parents of the new learners to brief them on the school rules and school activities. D 1, (07.10.2013) bears testimony as it reads *“New learners need to be called for a meeting together with their parents to be informed about the rules of the school”*.

#### **4.4.2.2 Teachers**

Parental communication with teachers often concerns the child and problems with the child’s school work.

The data revealed that effective communication prevails between the parents and the teachers. Parents are informed on a regular basis about the progress of the learners and other issue concerning their child in the classroom. Communication could be informal or formal.

This was noted in the SBCP’s response, referring to different types of meetings they have *“where the subject teacher is there and you come with your child to speak to the teacher so that you are informed of the child’s progress”*. Furthermore, TSP 1 indicated that *“Teachers complain to the representatives”*. In relation to the above, the entry for FN, (23.07.2014) indicated that each class teacher has a class discipline file where each learner in the class has a disciplinary form where subject teachers keep records of any transgressions. The forms are reviewed weekly by the class teacher and she can make reference to the disciplinary committee where recommendations are made either for the parents to be informed or be called for a disciplinary hearing or the learner is to be reprimanded by the class teacher or disciplinary committee depending on the nature of the case.

Communication between the School Board, teachers and the parents is in line with Epstein’s framework. Epstein regards communication as a basic obligation for the school to ensure that parents are informed of all the school programmes and learners’ progress as well as their general well-being at school. Likewise, the homes (parents) give feedback on similar aspects. The respondents’ responses point to the presence of regular two-way communication between the school and the home (parents). Various forms of communication methods are in place and

the school touches base with the parents on a regular basis through telephone calls, SMSs, written notices\invitations and meetings. Parents are being informed about learners' progress, disciplinary issues, school events and other academic related issues in the class where a meeting is organised for the teacher to speak with the learners and parents. It is fascinating to note that communication between the School Board and parents was not only about problems and the needs of the school but also about issues regarding community general welfare and awareness e.g. immunisations, health and municipal issues, and criminal activity. This encourages and motivates parents to engage more in the School Board activities because they feel the school shares and reinforces common values.

#### **4.4.2.3 Learners**

Parent communication with learners often concerns behaviour, schoolwork and their general well-being at school. The data indicated that there is communication between the learners and the School Board. It also became apparent that communication in most cases is based on face to face meetings and is mainly about complaints and misbehaviour. These views are contained in some of the respondents' responses as follows:

PSB 1 says that *"The Principal is here the whole day with the teachers and the kids and they bring their problems to the Principal"*.

PSB 1 also noted *"The first child comes to complain and then another one - then we must know something is wrong"*.

TSB 1 noted that this was *"so we can air our complaints to you"*.

#### **4.4.3 Volunteering**

Parents' willingness to volunteer for additional work for the school emerged as a theme.

Two respondents indicated that they have been offering their services to the school of their own free will as parents even before they became members of the School Board. This is evident from the SBCP's responses where she stated, *"I have always been involved in the school without being asked. When the school has activities, I always go there and assist where ever I can, whether its sports activities..."*

Data also revealed that School Board members' volunteering go as far as contributing/providing refreshments for the School Board meetings out of their own pocket. The SBCP noted, "*When we have meetings the School Board members provide the refreshments for the meeting from their own pocket or the Principal will provide the refreshment for the meeting from his pocket*".

This was also supported by the PSB 2 and TSB 2. The latter said that School Board members attend many school activities of their own free will - even in the weekend. PSB 1 bears testimony to this issue as she stated that, "*I also started a soup kitchen for those learners that did not have something to eat*". Additionally, FN 15 (19.07.2014) noted the presence of PSB 1 patrolling the school ground.

TSB 2 and TSB 1 confirmed the presence of volunteers at the school. She explained that the school has many activities that are spearheaded by the School Board members especially the parents namely - sport events, beauty pageants, grade12 farewell parties, and fundraising events for example, selling food and other items.

One good example of volunteer work that emerged from FN, (17.07.2014) is the volunteer service offered by a pastor who is a parent and a former teacher. Apparently he has been teaching high level Additional Mathematics to some of the grade 12 learners who have registered to write Additional Mathematics at higher level. He teaches them during the afternoons. In the same vein, according to D1 (31.01.2012) one of the parents has volunteered to make *fanges* (homemade sweets) to be sold in the school tuck-shop and the school takes 75% of the profit.

According to Epstein volunteering refers to parents taking part in school activities of their own free will. This includes parents' volunteering to assist teachers on academic issues. A good example that transpired at the school is the local pastor who volunteered to offer afternoon extra classes for the grade twelve high level mathematics, the soup kitchen and the parent who makes fudge. It is also recounted by respondents that parents offer their services at various activities such as attending sport events, organising beauty contests, cultural events and farewell parties. These activities also match with the parental activities discussed in Chapter 2.2.5.

#### 4.4.4 Learning at home

It became apparent that parents volunteer to assist when and where they can even though the school does not have a schedule for volunteering as suggested by Epstein and the SBCP responses above confirm the claim. In contrast to Epstein's suggestion, I support the idea of the school operating without a volunteering schedule because it might prevent parents from coming up with innovative ideas that the school might not have thought of. The data indicates that *volunteering and participation* is a top priority for the parents on the School Board. This is in line with Erlendsdittir (2010) notion that parental involvement should top the list of the school's priority. Thus, volunteering qualifies parental involvement as a *partnership* activity as alluded to by many scholars in the field (Young et al., 2013).

Learning at home involves the school encouraging parents to facilitate learning at home, by helping children with school/curriculum related activities and by motivating them to study.

The data revealed that the school provided information and ideas to parents about how to help learners study and how to assist them do their schoolwork. With regard to how the school assists parents to be able to help the learners learn at home SBCP noted, "*Parents are informed and shown the textbook or exercise book of the child and where the problem could be for the parent to assist where possible*". This view correlates with the observation in D1, (07.10.2013) where the Board suggested and agreed to introduce homework books to be signed by parents and teachers, where parents could also write comments. It reads, "*Starting from next year there must be a home work book which the parent and the teacher should sign and it should be a compulsory thing*".

According to FN (17.07.2014), one of the topics discussed during the parents' meeting was helping learners to study for examinations since learners only had a week to go before the August examinations started. Parents were urged to supervise learners at home, provide them with a quiet place where they could study and also to help them draw up a study schedule at home. Parents were also urged to relieve learners from some of the house chores during examination time so that learners could concentrate on their studies.

These findings resonate with Fullan (2007) and Bower and Griffin (2011) who indicate that one of the parents' roles is to assist learners with their homework (see page 12, Chapter 2). In this sense parents are also teachers, or "*partners*" in their children's schooling. It is also in

line with the Customer Service Charter declaration discussed in Chapter 2, 2.3, which regards education to be a shared responsibility between the home and school.

#### **4.4.5 Decision-making**

This activity is about the involvement of the School Board in decision-making, governance and advocacy of school welfare.

The data indicated that parents are involved in making decisions at the school on issues that affect all stakeholders and that involve school development.

It emerged from all respondents' responses that the School Board contributes to the decision-making processes to a certain extent, with regard to substantial decisions that affect the business of the school. TSB 2 claimed that "*Parents are really involved, especially in making decisions on behalf of the school, on whatever the school or the ministry requires them to do*".

TSB 1 affirmed this as he acknowledged that:

*The School Board is an advisory body, the highest decision-making or governing body of the school. When conflicts reach the highest level, it always has to reach the attention of the School Board and they have to decide on how to resolve the conflict.*

Furthermore, respondents point to major aspects where the School Board's voice is likely to be heard the most such as: recommendation for appointment of teachers; administrative decisions, such as, budgeting and utilisation of school fees; purchasing of educational materials and payment of services. They also handle major disciplinary cases of both teachers and learners and other issues pertaining to school development.

P pointed out that "*The School Board decides on the annual contributions to the school development fund*" and furthermore, "*whatever decisions taken should be for the development of the school*".

D1 (07.10.2013), confirmed that the School Board is involved in taking decisions on school governance on behalf of the entire parent body to a certain extent. At the same meeting, various issues were discussed and decisions were taken ranging from - appointment of

teachers to act as Heads of Department as there were two vacant HOD positions; deciding on the knocking off time for non-teaching staff; academic issues, for example, the School Board decided that the school establish a *“homework book system to be signed by both teachers and parents”*; teachers study leave authorisation and plans on how certain teacher`s subjects will be taken care of, were put in place.

In addition, D2 (07.06.2013) exhibited different cases of disciplinary hearings where the learners` parents were also present at the meeting. The School Board opted to suspend the learners from attending school and the matric farewell party for slapping and insulting a fellow learner as well as tearing the letter that he was supposed to take to his parents to inform them about his transgression. On the same day (D2, 07.06.2013), another case of discipline was also tabled of a learner who stabbed another learner with a stick. The School Board decided to send that specific learner to a *“wellness centre and to see a psychologist while on suspension from attending classes because he was becoming a danger to other learners”*. The HOD agreed that while the School Board makes decisions, she feels that sometimes they fail to consult the teachers on matters that affect them and the learners.

Generally all respondents indicated that the School Board is active, that they are involved in decision-making processes and governance at the school and their input is taken into consideration. They make decisions on matters concerning the school finances, major disciplinary cases, knock off time for non-teaching staff, recommendation of teachers and non-teaching staff. The School Board operates within the democratic principle that recognises equal participation of all stakeholders in decision-making (Chapter 2, 2.6). For this reason, learners, teachers and parents are represented in the School Board. Moreover, democracy means that all members should be included in the decision-making process. Therefore, the School Board`s practice in terms of decision-making is in line with The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001. The act gives legitimacy to the School Board to address specific aspects alluded to above. However, the School Board`s practice is somehow in conflict with the principles of democracy which recognise the inclusion of all members of the governing body in the participation and decision-making process, simply because it sometimes fails to consult with the teacher representatives and learner representatives before it takes decisions as emerged from the HOD, HB and HG responses. I did not present data on the responses of the HG and HB more often, because they were kind of silent and not really expressing themselves on their role as School Board members due to the fact that they did not

take part in any School Board meetings as evident in the HB and HG responses. The HG was reluctant to discuss further on whether learners benefit from the School Boards decisions. She noted, “No, I would rather not say much, they don’t benefit.” HB confirmed, “We do not really know what goes on there because we were never invited to attend any School Board meeting.” He continues “We did not participate in any of the School Board’s decision making even those concerning learners”

HG related to a decision that was taken without their consent “I remember the issue of grasshopper (shoes), we were just informed that the School Board has decided that grasshopper shoes should not be worn at school anymore”

#### **4.4.6 Collaboration with the community**

Collaboration involves the creation of partnerships, identifying and integrating resources and services from the community in order to reinforce the school programmes and practices.

##### **4.4.6.1 Community**

The data pointed out that the school has opportunities to collaborate and involve the community in many ways, for instance, inviting them to attend school events such as meetings, award ceremonies, fundraising activities, sport activities, school concerts, renting of the school hall and cultural and sports days. In this regard, TSB 1 emphasised the importance of *“the creation of a positive relationship between the school and the parental community”*, further stating that the current group of the School Board linked with the community with regards to *“disseminating information”* on activities taking place at school *“because they live in the community, they can easily take up information and convey it to the school”*. The HOD concurred, *“They must still be there to link the school, parents, teachers and the community”*.

It also transpired from the data that in most cases the community members offer transport to the school to transport learners for sport activities and other educational trips. This was noted by the SBCP, *“When it comes to transport, when we have to travel for sport activities or whatever it may be, we have members of the community who are really supportive and they give us discount on transport”*.

In a similar line, data revealed that the business people in the community support the “*soup kitchen*” that provides food to the vulnerable learners at school as indicated by PSB 1. D1, (14.06.2011), attested to the claim about community support; it reflected “*Mr. X had donated an old fence. The idea is to brainstorm on a way to involve skilled parents for this purpose and other plans - for the renovation of the school especially the hall. And possible sponsorship from Telecom Namibia as then they may paint the school for free*”.

Furthermore, the data revealed that the School Board acts like a bridge that links the community and the school. PSB 1 disclosed, “*I can say I am the one between the school and the board*”. Likewise, TSB 2 pointed to the same idea “*I think they link up with the community with regards to dissemination of information on issues taking place at school*”.

To supplement the interview data, minutes of the School Board meetings have corroborated the presence of comprehensive collaboration between the School Board, the parents, the community and the school. D1 (20.06.2014) indicated that “*The Principal briefed the School Board members on the progress and outcome of school activities as per the school calendar of activities and other emerging programmes and Ministerial Circulars*”.. These alone are signs of collaboration between the School Board and the school. Besides, it was also noted that the school’s Teenagers Against Drug Abuse (TADA) group work hand in hand with social workers from the Ministry of Health and Social Services to facilitate the group activities and The Star for Life group also help with coaches to assist learners in various sporting codes and also hold workshops with the learners (D1, 14.06.2011).

#### **4.4.6.2 Teachers**

Data revealed that there is proper collaboration between the School Board and the teachers. The various sub-committees established by the School Board to steer the work of the School Board are composed of both teachers and the parent School Board members as indicated by most respondents. The observation notes (FN, 18.07.2014) confirm the presence of various committees in the school through the list of committees and its members displayed on the notice board in the staffroom. In addition D1 (14.06.2011) pointed to the election of the sub-committees among parent members of the School Board of which the chairperson of each committee should be a parent.

Data revealed that collaboration between the teachers and the School Board has been extended further to the classroom. PSB 1 stressed that *“I work closely with the life skills teacher to identify learners with problems”*.

TSB 2 concurred when she indicated that some unemployed School Board members are always available at school to *“observe whether the learners are on time, teachers are doing their job, discipline is in place”*.

Furthermore, emerging from the data, it is noted that teachers are accorded the opportunity to contribute to the School Board meeting’s agenda through the teacher representative on the School Board. SBCP highlighted that teacher representatives on the School Board *“discuss with the teachers and get their input for the School Board’s agenda’s consideration”*.

TSB1 in support of SBCP indicated that the teacher representatives *liaise* with the teachers and the teachers register their complaints. In addition, PSB 2 pointed out that *“if the teachers have problems with regards to discipline they consult me”*. To complement these views, PSB 1 indicated *“I am just here to see that everything is running smoothly and listen if there are problems. Like now one of the teachers said that when I am finished I should see him”*. Likewise, FN 15, (19.07.2014) showed that I observed the presence of PSB 1 at school, moving around and talking to learners during break time.

The School Board makes an effort to involve parents - they believe in an African proverb that says, *“It takes a community to educate a child”*. The School Board recognizes and utilizes the resources and knowledge the community possesses through involving the community in the school’s affairs. Fullan (2007) and the *Customer Service Charter* (Namibia, 2010) comment on the same idea as they regard the school community as an *asset, a source of information and knowledge* that the school can draw from in order to supplement the teachers’ efforts. This is a case in point, as it was mentioned by the respondents that the School Board acts like a bridge that links the community and the school.

#### **4.4.7 Emerging themes**

##### **4.4.7.1 Roles/functions of the School Board**

Almost all the respondents’ responses reflected the variety of roles/functions of the School Board related to the substantial decisions over the business of the school. SPCP confirmed,

*“They do not have to involve us in everything, but we are kept informed about serious cases or things that we need to know”*. The role and functions of the School Board as indicated by the respondents include the following:

- Decision-making on behalf of the school
- The recommendation of teaching and non-teaching staff
- Financial accountabilities i.e. budget allocation, purchasing of educational materials and payment of services
- Offering support, guidance and advice
- Setting up of school rules and regulations for both teachers and learners
- Attending to disciplinary issues of both teachers and learners
- Liaising with and linking the community and the school
- Organising events e.g. fundraising activities, parent meetings.

To validate these claims, respondents’ responses, field notes and various minutes of the School Board meetings as well as that of parents’ meetings reflected on different School Board activities related to their roles and functions as listed above.

TSB 1 pointed out *“We set up the school rules and the School Board approved the school rules and they can make changes if necessary. We help the management with the smooth running of the school; for instance we look for where we can get things like the photocopy machine”*.

D1 (20.06.2013) indicated that members discussed innovative strategies to raise funds and an annual Olympic fun day was slotted in as a way of raising funds and involving parents.

SBCP also testified to that, referring to the key roles, which inclusively, *“is to support the SMT in the running of the school and also to be involved in the discipline of the learners and the teachers. I also make sure there are funds available for the school to be able to run”*. D1 (14.06.2011) captured a deliberation on the renting out of the hall to the community for individual functions and the operation of the school tuck-shop also appeared in the discussion where the School Board member`s agreed to outsource the operation of the tuck-shop.

PSB 2 explained that *“our main aim is to maintain the passing rate and to up-lift the school for example and that is why... discipline is enforced. Finances of the school and maintenance*

*of the school buildings is also important*". D1 (14.06.2011) highlighted the renovation of *"the long awaited working room for teachers"*. The issue of discipline also appeared and it was agreed upon that disciplinary cases should be dealt with immediately as it occurred and it was also agreed to review the school disciplinary policy. Concern about the financial management of the school fees and a need for a treasurer was discussed, *"SBCP reiterated her concern about the proper running and reporting of the finances and pointed out the urgency for an appointment of a treasurer"*.

The HOD added *"They are to liaise with the teachers and assist us with duties beyond our limits especially when it comes to discipline and also when it comes to fundraising activities, when we need to get the public involved"*.

P summarized it in the following way, *"They are responsible for the recommendation of teaching and non-teaching staff, advice, the development fund, what parents should contribute, checking of books and signing of cheques"*. D1 (17.01.2014) focused on the recommendations of teaching staff; it also highlighted the financial overview and a proposal was made *"to look at ways to get income"*. D1 (20.06.2013) highlighted a discussion based on current vacancies that needed to be filled and measures to curb disruptive behaviour (discipline). In addition, FN (29.07.2014) acknowledged the presence of the SBCP who came to sign cheques to pay for learner's transport, who were going to take part in sport events.

However, Mncube (2009) indicates that part of the School Board's roles includes the formulation of the school's mission and vision which indicates why the school exists. It seems like the respondents' attention is focused on rules and control rather than general planning and school development. This suggests a narrow view of their roles.

The issue of discipline emerged strongly. Good discipline in schools contributes to fewer disruptions of the teaching programme and to a healthy and safe school environment. This suggests an awareness of the importance of control, which is also a strong theme in the literature (see page 10).

#### **4.4.7.2 Training or Induction**

Training/induction provides an opportunity for individual parents (School Board) to acquaint and familiarise themselves with the aspects pertaining to school governance.

Lack of training or induction of School Board members emerged as the strongest theme. All respondents pointed to a lack of training/induction as an obstruction to effective participation of School Board members, especially the parent members. All respondents indicated that they got to know about their roles and functions through reading the Education Act, and other guideline materials. Furthermore, some respondents pointed out that they learned through interacting with experienced individuals at their meetings who had served on the School Board at other schools. To confirm these claims TSB 1 explained:

*I acquainted myself with some guideline documents which are in place, explaining the duties of the School Board members. Also from time to time during our meetings my role is emphasized, especially my duties as a teacher representative member.*

TSB2 added:

*I did not go through any training on the School Board. I was assigned to different committees during the old School Board. We handled matters such as discipline, finances, fundraising, transport and others. When we were in meetings with other experienced members, I learned what some of my roles were...*

SBCP explained that there was no induction of any kind during their first year in office as the School Board members, “What we got to know was from asking and also the people that served in the previous School Board informed us of our roles”. However, in 2011 she requested an induction workshop from their Circuit Inspector of Education which was offered on a small scale at the school’s expense.

SBCP also confirmed the availability and distribution of different booklets and the training manual that assists the School Board “With the new School Board we did something small [and] focused because up to now we have not had any training from the Inspector’s side even though there was a request to do that”.

PSB 1, PSB 2 supported the notion by indicating that they received guideline materials for example, The Education Act, from the SBCP to orientate themselves. Moreover, D1 (20.06.2013) validated the claims, “The Chairperson urged the members to read the Education Act because it is very important to know the rules of education, so that they can take responsible decisions”.

It is evident from the respondents that the competency of the School Board was influenced by their experiences, personal knowledge, skills, knowledge regarding policies and other school related issues.

This problem, that lack of training can hinder performance, is highlighted by Caldwell and Spinks (as cited in Coleman & Bush, 1994, p. 226) who argue that the fact that parents are given the right to participate in the education of their children does not necessarily equip them for their roles. They point out that there needs to be “empowerment of people *inside* schools (ibid.)”.

#### **4.4.7.3 Power relations**

The findings pointed to traces of tension in the power relations between the school management team (SMT) and the School Board. This is evident from P’s views as he expressed, *“When parents and SMTs do not agree, I think parents should have another sort of entity that they can go to and talk about their concerns and issues that they have”*.

Data pointed out that sometimes the School Board do not know or understand the limits of their functions and responsibilities. Therefore, they infringe on the professional, and day to day running of the school which is the responsibility of the Principal and SMT. This was noted particularly in the HOD’s responses. The HOD stressed, *“I do not appreciate when the School Board decides on things without consulting the stake holders within the school environment”*. She referred to a practical example where the School Board took a decision on the professional matter of the SMT. *“They decided we should not have assembly every day. There are certain things that I think are part of our day to day running of the school and I think they should not decide on those things”*.

TSB 1 supported this:

*What they have put in place has to be executed by the teachers through the committees but sometimes their co-functions and the teachers’ co-functions overlap. The teachers are sometimes overloaded with work and they cannot attend to other duties which they are also allocated by the School Board.*

TSB 1 further stressed, *“When a teacher Board member comes in and looks at certain things and tries to guide the activities that the teachers are carrying out, then that is where there can be conflict and teachers may have a negative perception about the School Board’s roles”*.

The data confirmed the conflicting roles between the School Board and SMT. The power struggles were noted by some respondents. It appeared that teachers and the SMT feel left out of the decision-making process as they are not always consulted, especially on matters that affect their professional programmes. This is evident in HOD, P, and TSB 1's responses above.

According to The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, the day to day management (running of the school) and other professional related activities of the school are the responsibility of the Principal and SMT, and not of the SGB. According to Mncube (2009) expressing the view of Deem, Brehony and Heath (1995) "*Power relations are central to any understanding of the practices and processes of school governance*", regardless of the social context in which they occur.

In accordance with the Education Act, parents constitute the majority of members on the School Board which has the legitimate power to mobilise resources. Due to this fact, they become the dominant group within the School Board. According to Bourdieu, views that are conveyed by Lee and Bowen (2006), authority always lies within the dominant class. Through the interaction within their social network they accumulate social capital as well as power and opportunity that allow them access to resources. As a result the dominant class has the ability to influence decisions related to the activities of the Board due to the political power that they possess. This scenario represents the reproduction of power as advocated by Bourdieu and is at play in the School Board.

#### **4.4.7.4 Relationship between the school management team and the School Board**

The data revealed that the school (SMT) has maintained a good working relationship with the School Board and they respect each other's views although there is still room for improvement. The principal confirmed these views:

*I think it is very professional. They can discuss anything any time with us. We are really a group of people that are currently working very well together, and have a very good working relationship.*

PSB 1 agreed, "*We have a good relationship and with all other teachers as well. We do not agree at all times, but we look for solutions*". SBCP also concurred with PSB1, "*We do not always agree but we respect each other's views*". The HOD rated the relationship "*three out of five. We (SMT) have open communication with the School Board. The Principal has*

*meetings on a regular basis to discuss issues". SCBP added, "I would say there is room for improvement. We do not necessarily have a day to day relationship with the management because the management discusses with the Principal and the Principal discusses with the School Board. The Principal is the spokesperson for the management most of the time. But the management also has access to the School Board. They are not restricted from speaking and the School Board also has access to the management".*

These findings complement Bourdieu's notion that social capital is an integral part of the structure of the relationship. Therefore, the School Board needs to build a strong social connection with the parents, teachers and the community in order to acquire and accumulate social capital that will enable them to enhance parental involvement in the school's activities. In the context of this study the School Board facilitates the network and provides the opportunity to members of all classes to interact, mingle and exchange ideas even though the ideas and views of the group with less social capital may not be emphasised and integrated into the school development (Mitchell, 2008 - see p. 25 in Chapter 2.

Bourdieu emphasised that the education system recognises and acknowledges the presence of social network due to the nature of hereditary sanctioning.

#### **4.4.7.5 Positive effects of the School Board**

It emerged from data that School Board involvement in the governance of the school has positive benefits for the school, teachers and parents. Most respondents pointed to the School Board linking the school and the community and resolving disciplinary cases as parents have a better knowledge of handling disciplinary cases with sympathy, and also being mediators between the school and the parents as well as organising fundraising events for the school.

The HOD indicated, *"They must be there to link the school, parents, teachers and the community"*. TSB 1 supported this view, *"The creation of a positive relationship between the school and the community is important. They convey the motives of the school to the community"*.

TSB 1 pointed out:

*They come with initiatives and innovations on how the Board can further advance the school. The funds that are raised during the fundraising events are used for various school activities and the school also benefits through the guidance they give to the management or to the Principal.*

TSB 2 added, *“The School Board is helping out especially to maintain discipline, they are helping the learners to behave properly. Learners are really positive because the school is involving parents”*. P added:

*Sometimes you find that individual parents are very difficult to deal with and if you have a parent body like the School Board that they have elected, parents looks at issues more objectively, so then it easier to come to an agreement. Sometimes you might sit with sensitive cases and parents might love to deal with that on that level.*

Scholars in the field have identified the benefits of parental involvement in the education of their children. In this study benefits pointing to all stakeholders are also evident. In relation to this view, Haung and Mason (2008) (see chapter 2, 2.5, p. 11) indicate that parental involvement is a win-win situation for all involved. It is also noticeable in this study that the involvement of parents helped them take *ownership* of the school, which is visible in how parents embarked on activities at school and created and added input into policies. In spite of these facts, I still think the current level of participation does not lead to the achievement of the desired outcome to the maximum. There is still a need to revamp their programme to cater for all parents, teachers, learners and the entire community no matter the social class.

#### **4.4.7.6 Challenges**

The data elicited various challenges experienced by the School Board which may be hindering factors or barriers to effective performance of their roles and functions as governors of the school. Most respondents highlighted the following factors:

- **Lack of training/induction**

Lack of training emerged strongly across all participants' responses. They pointed out that the School Board members did not undergo any kind of induction.

P stated, *“They did not receive proper training. If they can go through a proper induction they can really become productive”*. TSB 2 supported this statement, *“I think if training was given they could have a better understanding”*.

PSB 1 confirmed, *“We did not have training, now some of us have some problems. It is not easy... if you do not have a clue of what is happening around here it is difficult”*.

Most of the evidence that points to this claim has already been discussed in 4.7.

The findings here correlate with those discussed already in section 4.4.7.2 (p. 62). In addition, the respondents pointed out that there are School Board Training Manuals in their possession which they used to acquaint themselves with their roles. This means provision of training is made available however, the Ministry somehow fails to carry out the responsibility of offering training to the members of the School Board.

Lack of training contrasts with Epstein's views, that all parents serving in the School Board undergo training to enable them to perform their duties effectively (Epstein, 1997).

- ***Time constraints***

Data revealed that many parent School Board members are full time employees and they do not always have time to attend meetings. The following responses bear witness to this claim. TSB 2 said:

*Time is also very short. Whenever a meeting is called, some of the parents who work in Windhoek cannot attend. The parents that are working do not always fulfil their roles because of their working conditions. The ones who do not work are fulfilling their roles as they are available when ever required.*

TSB 1 concurred: *"Time constraints are a problem as most of our parents are working parents and find it difficult to attend meetings at all times"*.

Lack of time is regarded as a hindering factor to parental involvement and is a concern to employed parents as well as to teachers. Lack of time makes it difficult for parents to attend meetings especially those who work outside the town. Consequently, meetings are in most cases arranged to take place in the evenings which is also a problem for parents because they still have to rush home to take care of the family.

- **Negative perceptions from the general parent body and some teachers**

Some respondents were of the opinion that some teachers and parents have no interest in participating in school activities especially the activities that are initiated by the School Board.

TSB 2 remarked referring to the teachers, *"Sometimes they are negative because they feel it is only the school body that needs to be respected."* She continued:

*Some teachers are negative about issues. There is really a lack of support from the school side. Some teachers are not happy sometimes with the decisions taken by the School Board. The management also does not always support the decisions taken by the School Board.*

She also felt that parents are also not always supportive, placing emphasis on the issue of parents being unhappy when learners are punished for not doing their homework as discussed already under 4.7. Data also revealed that some parents do not support the school in terms of learners' discipline.

PSB 1 pointed out that, *“Parents are just complaining. There is not one thing that they say the school has done for them. The Principal will call them in but they will be uncooperative”*.

TSB 1 indicated that some parents who perceive it as not important, do not take part in the School Board activities.

SBCP emphasised that, *“Sometimes we do not even have support from the parents of a particular child with a discipline issue. Parents will come back and start scolding us and just make a noise”*.

Some negative attitudes were cited by some of the respondents as constituting a barrier to parental involvement through the School Board. The negative attitudes of some teachers and the lack of support from the SMT were noticed. Some of the teachers believe that only the School Board decisions are to be respected and the SMT does not support some of the School Board decisions. While some parents were said to be overprotective of their children's behaviour and sometimes uncooperative, they refused to offer support in reprimanding bad behaviour but chose to scold the school and also refused to take part in School Board activities. The School Board assumed that those parents and teachers did not appreciate their efforts neither did they recognise that they have the competency to positively influence school activities.

Dika and Sign (2002) commented on a similar idea. They state that Bourdieu's approach predicts variation within the social relationship, to which the School Board is not immune. In the context of this study, variations are probable amongst the parents, teachers and SMT due to the level/degree of capital and habitus each group possesses as a result of their personal and educational background. Hence, each group i.e. parents, teachers and the SMT are in

possession of their own unique habitus that could be exchanged with other members of the School Board. The fact remains, the disadvantaged group's possessions are not always recognised and valued - they can also bring about change. As result, the advantaged group will have access to key resources while the other group feels left out. Niitembu found that parents and teachers had conflicting understandings of their role and understanding of educational matters and attendance.

- **Language barriers**

P stressed that, *“The language issue might be a problem; English is a problem in a sense that some of the parents are struggling to express themselves in English”*.

Likewise TSB 2 expressed the same concern that *“Language is a problem. Some parents understand Afrikaans better than English and others understand English better than Afrikaans”*.

TSB 1 also pointed to language a barrier, *“Not all parents are conversant in English. Some may need what is said to be interpreted for them into vernacular or Afrikaans”*. I bear witness to this claim. At the meeting (D3 17.07.2014) that I attended, the Principal and teachers had to use both languages i.e. Afrikaans and English in order to accommodate all parents and parents were allowed to speak in a language that they were fluent in (FN, 17.07.2014). In addition, one of the School Board members that I interviewed is also challenged by the English language used as a medium of instruction (FN, 15.07.2014).

The change in languages (medium of instruction) from Afrikaans to English in the school may be a barrier preventing many parents from participating in school activities. The fact that the school is currently multicultural i.e. it caters for learners from all ethnic and racial groups, makes it difficult for the School Board to communicate effectively and for all parents to sufficiently participate especially those parents who are not fluent in either language.

The school practice is in contrast with Van Wyk (2004, p. 54) who argues that School Board *“workshops should be done in the language they (the parents) understand, not in the language that suits the providers”*. However, the school has a provision for interpreters, to interpret in a language that particular parents understand.

The findings resonate with Bourdieu's notion of social reproduction expressed by Perna and Titus (2005) and Lin (2001). According to this notion the dominant class of individuals in a social network use their social capital attained through their historical background to sustain their dominant position (See Chapter Two, 2.2.9.1). In this context, it is apparent that the advantaged parents in terms of education, those that are fluent in English or in both languages and parents who served in the apartheid system who are proficient in Afrikaans will dominate the disadvantaged parents, especially the group that may not be fluent in any of the languages. Therefore, the decisions or meeting outcomes will in most cases represent only the views of the dominant group - this means power is at play.

The truth is that the school appreciates and values the participation of all social classes of parents; the school recognises that the low social class also have networks, experiences and skills as a result of their unique social experiences and background and the school can utilise them to effect change within the school even though they may not be highly valued in comparison to that of the dominant group.

- **Lack of support from the business community**

The data revealed that the school lacks financial support as a result of its previous economic status. The school accommodated learners from families who were able to support the school in terms of financial and material resources.

SBCP explained that:

*When it comes to searching for funds from business people, our school is in a predicament because I have to say it was a white school before. So when we source funding it is always said our school is more developed than other schools. So it is very difficult for us to get financial support from business people and locally even outside.*

PSB 2 also attested to this claim: "You know when the whites were here there was money but people still think there is money ..." In terms of Bourdieu's notion of social capital the school is unable to draw on social relations as potential sources of income because of the transition from being a 'white' school to its current situation. In relation with the above, Gordon and Nocon (2008, p. 323) regard social reproduction theory as a *deterministic factor* because it creates an impression that high income families and, educated families possess capital

historically valued by the institution of schooling, therefore the success of the educational system is assured. These views reflect on the current situation at the case study school as indicated above. The school is viewed through the historical lens and it is presumed that the school maintained the status quo to date because of the belief that social capital can be reproduced and preserved.

Consequently, the school is in a predicament as mentioned already by SBCP. The School Board could be facing a situation which Perna and Titus (2005, p. 489) referred to as *network closure* which is preventing it from accessing community resources. Network closure refers to “Intergenerational closure” (ibid). My sense is that the school has not chosen this path – it has been forced upon them by past events and people’s perceptions.

They further argue that “network closure promotes effective communication within the network and strengthens social norms, shared expectation, goals and values”. On the other hand, Perna and Titus (2005, p. 489) assert that, “Bourdieu suggests that network closure is required for the dominant class to preserve its dominant position” but in the case of this case study school the question is not one of dominance – that is why in this case the closed network works against school development.

The School Board (dominant group) needs to reconnect and build on a new social network with the social world in which it exists. The dominant group needs to create a link with persons with similar perceptions and socio-economic background in order to obtain additional resources and increase revenue.

In relation to these views, it was already noted in this chapter the SBCP responses, which were confirmed by D1, that the dominant group within the School Board tries to retain its social relations by creating new social networks within its well-to-do social group such as business people and close family members, in order to maintain its dominating power.

- **Insufficient number of parent members in the School Board**

Emerging from the data, respondents expressed some concerns resulting from insufficient number of parents on the School Board. They said it could contribute to low parental involvement and also cause distress within the school. The School Board activities could

become an additional burden for teachers having to deal with an increasing workload. Owing to these claims the following respondents' responses bear witness.

TSB 2 confirmed, *"We have fewer parents on the School Board which also contributes to lack of parental involvement"*.

P shared the same concern: *"Sometimes I feel the parent members are not enough, but I also understand that they are full time workers. There are times where people cannot attend a meeting due to the condition of their work"*.

TSB 1 also suggested that:

*More parents can be involved in the committees to carry out the day to day functions of the committees. Sometimes their co-functions and teachers' co-functions overlap and sometimes teachers are overloaded with work; they cannot attend to these extra duties which they are also allocated by the School Board.*

- **Discipline**

The issue of discipline emerged strongly across all respondents' responses and in most themes. It became apparent that learners' discipline is one of the major concerns the school Board is experiencing. Pointing to the above, SBCP remarked: *"We have a big challenge, it is a challenge all schools face, discipline. Some parents do not discipline their children and then the problem is sent to school and then the teachers and management are left to discipline that child"*. The problem of ill-discipline among learners was also in the forefront in a meeting where decisions were taken to revamp the disciplinary school policy, to include strict measures that may lead to suspension of learners in a hope that behaviour would change.

According to the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, one of the roles of the School Board is to establish a safe and orderly environment by communicating their high expectations for learners' behaviour since you cannot have high student achievement when student misbehaviour is tolerated. Based on this, I noted that the School Board is trying its best to curb this problem by punishing and suspending learners. It also introduced various measures to help control learners' disruptive behaviour such as, having a meeting with parents of the new learners' right at the beginning of the year to discuss the school rules (disciplinary policy) and learners' expectation. The suspension of learners and expelling those with severe

cases of misconduct is in line with The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 which states, the School Board may, after a fair hearing on reasonable grounds and as a precautionary measure, suspend a learner who is suspected of serious misconduct pending a decision (disciplinary hearing) and recommendations to the Permanent Secretary (PS) as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school or not. On the other hand, Mncube (2009) expressing the views of Brody, Flor and Gibson (1999) believe that parental involvement can influence positive behavioural outcome, including improved discipline and increased ability to self-regulate behaviour. Therefore, the School Board involvement can be effective in instilling good behaviour amongst the learners.

#### **4.4.8 Suggestions for improvement**

On this issue most respondents suggested that the School Board members undergo training/induction in order to be well prepared and acquainted with their duties. In some instances respondents singled out areas of focus to be considered during the training as they appear to be problematic. Some respondents also urged the Ministry of Education to prioritise some activities and act on the implementation of recommendations that resulted from conferences, surveys etc. Based on the above, TSB 2 remarked:

*School Boards need to be trained. They do not know everything. They need training so that they can be actively involved. Finances are really a problem and a School Board needs training on money issues, as to what needs to be done with money.*

TSB 1 noted in support of the induction that, “*Some induction is needed for people to understand the content and depth of their duties and roles*”. P, the HOD, and the rest of the respondents also advocated the idea of having all Board members undergo training/induction and that the Ministry should make it a priority as discussed already under 4.7. P. said “*It should be a priority that they should be inducted properly*”.

Another recommendation that emerged from the HOD is that the School Board should have more general meetings with parents, “*There should be more general meetings with parents and the School Board then many problems will be discussed and solved without parents going to the radio stations and newspapers*”.

Furthermore, the data also suggested that some of the legal policy directives and guidelines should be relaxed, referring to the issue of who is to be elected to the School Board. This emerged from P's response in reference to the issue of who (parent) is to be nominated and elected to serve in the School Board. He suggested that the policy guidelines:

*should be relaxed, we should be able to identify people in the community whether it is a parent who has a child at the school or not. As long as we think they will be of value to the school and to the development of the school.*

TSB 1 also suggested that:

*There should be more parents in the School Board and other committees established by the School Board so that the teachers can be there to advise, as they cannot be expected to do much as they already have the curriculum activities i.e. teaching.*

SBCP suggested that “government institutions support one another. When a school comes to the government institutions there should be no cost involved, especially when the request has been made in advance”. She made reference to The Namibian Defence Force (NDF) tents that are usually rented by the schools.

In relation to the above suggestions, Cox-Peterson (2011, as cited in Matse, 2014) states that all obstacles which act as a challenge to the development and sustainability of education partnerships will have to be acknowledged, addressed and overcome in order for partnerships to excel. Respondents suggested that parental involvement could be improved through various ways as suggested above namely:

- The Ministry of Education should prioritise essential issues that act as hindering factors to education and also act upon the recommendations and outcomes of studies and conferences
- The School Board should be provided with training/induction to familiarise themselves with their roles
- The School Board should have more general meetings with parents' body instead of the one meeting per term as prescribed by policies
- The legal policies should be relaxed and be made more flexible to fit the school context, with special emphasis on who (parent) should be nominated to stand for election on the School Board and on the number of parents in the School Board perceived to be minimal

- Government institutions to render assistance to schools where necessary and for free.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

It emerged from the data that the School Board's practices corroborate with Epstein's framework of six types of parental involvement activities. There are patterns of parental involvement practices through the School Board activities within the school. The School Board members are committed to roles as governors and educators, they take on their parental obligations as required as outlined in the six typologies of parental involvement.

Furthermore, The School Board also acknowledged that they are the voice of the community and the bridge in the network that links the community and the school as well as facilitating the connection and the flow of information. In relation to this, their activities reflect the views and aspirations of the parent body and the community.

The work of the School Board is not an easy task though; they are expected to account for good governance of the school, to be familiar with The Education Act, as well as school policies, rules and procedure. They are also expected to be creative in order to propose ideas that contribute to the school development and to have financial and problem-solving skills.

These are challenging activities for working parents since they already have their workload at their work places. In addition School Board members were not thoroughly prepared for their roles.

Bourdieu's notion of social capital focused on the social class (School Board) inequality that exists within the school system and how it is perpetuated (Murariu, 2010). In relation to this view, the study points to the existence of social capital inequality amongst the social class's network structure (School Board). This is due to different possession of social capital and unique habitus each member possesses, accumulated from their social background. These disparities caused variation of ideas and perceptions among the School Board members with regards to parental involvement activities simply because the members of the School Board with a high level of social capital dominated the opposite group. This has resulted in network closure so that the dominant group is able to maintain their power. It could also be the possible reason for the parent School Board not consulting the teacher representatives on

some decisions and also for not involving the learner representatives in School Board activities.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I presented data that emerged from the interviews, document analysis, as well as observation. In the same chapter, I also discussed the findings on each of the themes based on Epstein's typology and some emerging themes which I linked to Bourdieu's social capital theory in order to help provide an in-depth understanding of the subject under study and provide answers to my research questions. They were:

- What are the views of parent School Board members regarding their roles and responsibilities in school governance, and where do they originate?
- What are the challenges experienced by School Board members in executing their roles?
- What could be done to address these challenges?

According to Voss et al., (2009) data analysis in qualitative research can happen in two ways. The first is concurrently done at the research site during data collection and the second data analysis can take place away from the site, after data collection. In this study data analysis occurred in both ways. During interviews and observations in the field tentative categories and interpretations often emerged but still the bulk of the more formal analysis occurred off site. In this way it was an iterative process engaging with and between the various elements: that of the emerging data, the emerging patterns and themes, the tentative hypotheses considered against the evidence, the chosen Epstein typology and Bourdieu's social theory, and conversations between myself and my supervisor.

I was conscious of the need to examine, reduce, label, interpret and present the raw data that I collected from the field. Cohen et al. (2007) recognise that qualitative research by nature and scope is likely to produce large amounts of data, especially when the researcher uses a triangulation of methods. In this study that was the case. The transcribed raw data and field notes from observation and document analysis were analysed using categories that initially emerged from the research questions and checking for regular patterns of events and themes (De Vos et al., 2009). This was done by coding and sorting into categories. De Vos and Fouché (1998, p. 203) refer to this approach to data analysis and interpretation as "a process

of breaking data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions and to test research hypotheses". The data and broad themes that emerged from this first stage were then juxtaposed and allowed to interact with Epstein's framework of parental involvement and Bourdieu's views. From this dialogue new themes and insights emerged. Extracts from raw data were selected and either paraphrased or quoted to illustrate the patterns.

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the key findings drawn from the themes which were discussed in the previous chapter. It also outlines the significance of the study and findings. Based on the findings, recommendations for further research and for parental involvement in the School Board with regards to the school's governance practice are also presented for the case study school, which may also be relevant for other schools. Finally, the limitation of the study and conclusion close the chapter.

## **5.2 Summary of key findings**

This research has revealed important issues about the practice of the School Board at the selected case study school. The key findings are outlined below.

The study revealed that the School Board has an open door policy that provides all stakeholders i.e. parents, teachers and learners, a structure to engage, communicate and collaborate with each other. It was clear from the data that this connection between the stakeholders fosters a feeling of good will.

It is apparent from the study that the Principal, teachers and some of the parents are well aware that they are partners and are tools or resources which can be utilised to support the school's activities and to promote the reputation of the school in the wider community. However, not all parents have this view. Some parents do not support the school and are critical of what the school tries to achieve.

It was also revealed that the school has adopted good communication practices with the parents and the community; communication is two-way, between home and the school. However, the communication in most cases tended to focus either on negative issues, such as learners' behaviour, incomplete homework, bunking of lessons, late coming or other discipline cases, or events that benefit the school. This can sometimes make parents feel inadequate and encourage the belief that learners' behaviour is a result of their upbringing.

The study found that School Board members have an understanding of their roles and functions in line with The Education Act of 2001 and other legislation that mandates and supports parental involvement in school governance as mentioned in Chapter 2. Most respondents are familiar with their main roles that they consider to be important. However, the School Board seems not to be clear on some of their roles especially with regards to engaging in school activities that have to do with the school development such as, drawing up a School Development Plan (SDP).

The study shows that the School Board is made up of parents of different class and backgrounds i.e. employed, unemployed, and business persons, with different levels of education. In other words the board has both lay people and professional members. These members create a network that represents the voices of parents from different social groups, even though they have different levels of social capital.

The study also reflected on power relations between the School Board and the school management. I believe that misunderstanding of the power relations between the School Board and SMT will occur especially if boundaries are not clear. It also became apparent in this study that the School Board is not really clear on how far their responsibilities and power stretches. As a result they sometimes encroach on the day to day professional running of the school.

The school lacks a well-coordinated system for utilising the available resources as well as community expertise for the benefit of the school.

The study also showed that parents on the School Board participate democratically in decision-making processes. Ironically, teacher representatives on the School Board were not always consulted on some decisions and learner representatives were not even invited to the Board meetings, neither were they consulted on decisions that affected them. Instead they were just informed of the outcome and then had to inform the learners of the school. This practice is in conflict with the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001.

The study also identifies some obstacles that may serve as limitations to effective parental involvement in school governance such as:

- Lack of training/induction. The majority of the respondents in this study agreed that School Board members of the case study school were not provided with sufficient

training about their roles and responsibilities, in spite of the fact that they were entitled to receive training following their appointment as governors and partners of the school.

- Lack of support and unwillingness of some teachers and parents to engage in School Board activities. It is evident that some teachers and parents only support and engage in aspects that they consider important and fail to see the 'bigger picture'.
- Language barrier: some parents cannot communicate fluently in English, the official language of parents' and School Board meetings.
- Time constraints. Most parents are full-time employees, which mean they have little time to attend to school activities during school hours.

### **5.3 Significance and value of the study**

In my professional capacity as an Education Officer I was aware that the selected case study school had high levels of parental involvement but I had been wondering how it managed to achieve that. I have now acquired some insight into how the School Board manages to involve parents in the school's activities. This will doubtless enrich my own work in schools and enable me to provide stronger guidance and advice on this thorny issue.

Parental involvement is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and it was also recommended by the national conference that was held in 2011. Hence, I anticipate that the study will be useful to the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) consortium within the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in the formulation of the parental involvement and School Board programmes and the development of materials designed to enhance parental involvement through School Boards in schools. This should contribute towards the ongoing wave of education reform that is currently underway in Namibia.

The study can also contribute to the body of knowledge on school governance and also provide a platform for future research on this topic since it has not yet been abundantly explored in Namibia, according to my information from the National Institute for Education Development (NIED).

It is my hope that the findings of this study could serve to give guidance and direction to educators and other stakeholders in Namibia and beyond. I also hope that the findings of this study might inform policymakers and institutions responsible for teacher training, as well as teachers themselves, of some variables related to parental involvement in school governance.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

This section proposes some recommendations for future research on governance and on practices to enhance parental involvement through School Boards.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for future research**

This study investigated how School Board members of one case study school view and understand their roles and functions in school governance. A similar case study on a larger scale could be undertaken either at circuit or regional level targeting secondary schools in urban areas. This would provide a broader sense of the state of parental involvement and what schools are doing to promote this practice. The few studies carried out so far have focused on rural schools in the belief that the problems would be more prominent there. But schools in urban areas are surely experiencing problems in this area as well and these need to be identified.

The use of Bourdieu has added a layer of analysis to this study, and I would recommend that the influence or impact of power relations between members of School Boards on their roles needs to be investigated.

The role of the Principal as an actor in maintaining and utilising network resources reproduced through the social network (School Board) interaction and how it impacts the overall functioning of the School Board would be a useful topic for research.

The study has shown that teacher and learner members of School Boards may be even less empowered than parents. This would be a rich area for research.

### **5.4.2 Recommendations for practice**

The Ministry of Education through the circuit offices needs to provide training to ensure that all School Board members receive training before commencing their duties as school governors and partners in education to provide them with the necessary skills and enable them to function effectively. The training should include but not be limited to the following: problem handling and conflict resolution, identification and implementation of school improvement programmes.

Power is one of the critical and very sensitive issues that emerged in the School Board's relationship with the SMT. Therefore, the extent and limits of the School Board's power and authority at school should be clearly outlined and emphasised. Moreover the policies and manuals should also be specific on issues pertaining to the School Board's functions, so that they do not encroach on the day to day professional management, authority and responsibility of the school SMT.

Teachers should adopt a situation where their report includes positive events as a way of encouraging parents and complimenting parents for a job well done on their parenting obligations. According to Hall (2014) teachers who take time to inform parents about the positive side of a child build a strong foundation that results in a strong relationship and opens up room for an exchange of social capital. In addition, if a child realises that the parent has a strong relationship with the teacher, they are likely to improve their behaviour and pay more attention to school work.

It is apparent from the study that the principal, teachers and parents are well aware that they are partners and tools or resources which can be utilized to support the school activities and to promote the reputation of the school to the wider community. However, only those parents who understand the concept of resource and have an appropriate knowledge base are really active in the School Board activities. However, the study recommends that the school could design a more structured programme and strategy to facilitate the Board's various interactions with the community and parents.

The School Board needs to realise that creating a strong social network has a positive impact on school activities. Therefore, the School Board should extend the level of interaction with the parent community by increasing general parent meetings from once to twice per term.

The study recommends the relaxation of the Education Act of 2001 allowing the school to have more parent members on the School Board and sub-committees which are now dominated by the teachers. This will also allow teachers time to concentrate on professional matters than the current situation. Similarly, they should allow any parent to serve on the Board even if that parent has no child attending at that particular school.

## 5.5 Limitations of the study

The fact that this study was a one-year programme also made it very difficult to carry out a larger study as everything was very condensed and time was limited. This study is a half-thesis that focused on a single secondary school (grade 8-12) in an urban town Okahandja in Namibia. I paid particular attention to a small team of nine participants which included two learners, two teachers, the school Principal, one HOD and three parents, all members of the School Board. I am well aware that the main focus of the study was on the parent members of the School Board and yet I only focused on three parent members. This is because I was aware and confident that these particular members would provide me with relevant information to be supplemented by the document analysis and observation data. Due to this limitation with regards to the site and number of parent participants who are the main focus, the study makes no attempt to generalise its findings beyond the information studied. Therefore the results would be limited to this school, in other words, the findings cannot be generalised. However, there is the potential that “others (readers) may act on it in their own school and circumstances” (Bassey, 1999 as cited in Moodley, 2012, p. 58) if “the interpretation of context is similar to that to which is being applied” (Cohen et al., 2011. P. 243). Thus a kind of ‘reader’ generalisability exists.

I have established a good relationship with the teachers during their visit to the Resource Centre at the Institute for Educational Development NIED where I work. I also have an open working relationship with my colleague, the chairperson of the School Board. I recognise that the degree of acquaintance was a challenge in a sense that participants could have opted to provide information which they think I already know about the school. I may also have developed biases which I had to guard against.

The fact that they know that I work for NIED was another potential limitation to this study. NIED is the curriculum and professional development directorate of the Ministry of Education in Namibia. The fact that I am responsible for CPD programmes related to the case under study, they could have decided not to disclose important information thinking that I might use it to judge the school in the professional capacity. I tried to avoid the situation by making a clear introduction that I am at the school in the capacity of a student and not a NIED official. Furthermore, I explained the purpose of the study over and over again and ensured the respondents’ confidentiality in the utilisation of the information.

Another possible limitation to the study was that one of the parent School Board members could not express herself fluently in the official language. I tried to arrange for her interview to be conducted in Afrikaans, the language that she is fluent in but she did not want to be interviewed in English for the reason that School Board meetings are always conducted in the official language, but still she managed to follow quite well. This situation prevented her from providing rich data since she could not express herself fluently.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This study's aim was to investigate and describe parental involvement in school governance through the School Board at a secondary school in Okahandja, Namibia.

The study found out that the School Board is involved, understands their role and are sometimes passionate about fulfilling their parental obligation in the education of the children. They are also aware that their involvement is mandatory by law. The study has also observed that the School Board is the major definer and steering wheel of parental involvement practice at the school. The school's historical social capital aspect also shapes the practice and how parental involvement in school governance through the School Board is defined by the teachers, learners and the entire parent community.

The study also identified numerous challenges and possible solutions that might hinder effective parental involvement in the education of their children.

Finally I truly hope that the findings and recommendations may help schools in Namibia and the Ministry of Education in particular since it has the mandate of formulating relevant policies and of developing School Board programmes that enhance parental involvement in education. In addition, I also hope that the findings and recommendations made will be valuable and useable by education development partners with an interest in education to enhance their parental involvement programmes.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview schedule

### School Board Profile

Name-----  
-----

Occupation-----  
-----

Educational back ground-----  
-----Portfolio in the school board-----  
-----

Year of appointment-----

Years of Experience-----

### Parents

1. How did you become a school board member?
2. What are your roles as a school board member?
3. What do you think are the key roles of the school board?
4. How did you get to know your roles? Did you undergo any training and how effective was it?
5. According to your experience do you think parents on the school board understand their roles in the school board? (Why, why not ...?)
6. Does the parent body as a whole know about the school board and what it stands for?
7. When does the School Board meet?
8. How is the agenda drawn up?
9. Does the school board get any support? If yes, what kind of support and from whom?
10. What are the challenges experienced by the school board?

11. To what extent is the school board involved in the school governance and management?
12. Are your contributions and decision taken into consideration by the school management?
13. What is the school board's relationship with the SMT?

### **Teacher School board**

1. How long have you been at this school?
2. How did you become a school board member?
3. How did you get to know your roles as a school board member?
4. What is your experience of parental involvement in the school board?
5. What are perceptions of parents, teachers and learners about the School Board at your school? Explain in few words.
6. According to your experience, do you think parents fulfil and understand their roles in the school board? Why or why not?
7. What are the obstacles or challenges facing parents in the school board?
8. How does the school benefit from the school board?
9. [What challenges/problems are encountered by the Board in trying to manage change at school?]

### **Principal/ HOD**

1. What are your roles in the school board?
2. How do you see the key roles and functions of the school board?
3. Do you think school boards are needed in the school? Why?
4. According to your experience, do you think parents understand their role in the school board?
5. What are the issues/problems experienced by working with the school board?
6. What should be done to improve the current situation?
7. What is the school board's relationship with the SMT?
8. When does the School Board meet?
9. What issues are discussed in these meetings? (Please explain).

## Learners (LRCs)

1. What are your roles in the school board?
2. How did you get to know about your roles in the school board?
3. Do you think the school board is necessary in the school?
4. How do the learners benefit from the school board's decisions?
5. Do you think it is necessary to have learners on the School Board? Why, why not?

## Appendix 2 - Observation schedule

| <b>Meetings</b>                                    | <b>Date</b> | <b>Time</b> | <b>Comments on</b> |
|--|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| School board meeting                               |             |             |                    |
| School development committee meeting               |             |             |                    |
| Disciplinary Committee meeting                     |             |             |                    |
| Fundraising meeting                                |             |             |                    |
| School Development Committee meeting               |             |             |                    |
| Parent meeting                                     |             |             |                    |
| Price giving & awards organising committee meeting |             |             |                    |
| Parent day   |             |             |                    |
|  |             |             |                    |

## Observation for the meetings

| Numbering | Themes   | Observation notes |
|-----------|--|-------------------|
| 1.        | <p><b>Meetings: Parents school board members:</b> How is Parents attendance rate? Are the parent board members engaged in the discussion? Are they taking a lead in the discussion? Are they making positive contribution and suggestions? Are they taking initiatives? Are they taking decisions? What are their reactions towards the teachers and SMTs contributions?</p> |                   |
| 2.        | <p><b>SMTs in the meetings:</b> are they dominating the meeting? Are they engaged in the discussion? Are they taking the parent`s input in consideration? How do they respond to questions</p>   |                   |
| 3.        | <p><b>Teacher school board members:</b></p> <p>What are their roles in the meeting? Their level of contribution in the meeting. Are they fully engaged in the discussion? Are they giving suggestion and supporting the parents?</p>   |                   |
| 4.        | <p><b>Learner (LRCs):</b> what are their roles in the meeting? Are they engaged in the discussion and to what extent? Are they making any suggestion? Are they supporting the parent`s decisions? How are their reactions toward the final decisions taken in the meetings</p>   |                   |
|           | <p><b>Parent school board members: and the School interaction:</b> are parents school board members visiting the school; how</p>   |                   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | often? What is the reason for their visit? |  |
|  | <b>Other Issues:</b>                       |  |

### Appendix 3 - Document Analysis Guide

Document to focus on:

- a) Ministerial Policy e.g. Circulars on school boards  
(Expectations of parents' roles ...)
- b) School Board minutes  
(Parents' roles – contributions – “petty” things like behaviour, or bigger issues. Policy, Finance ...)
- c) Parent meeting minutes
- d) Disciplinary Committee minutes
- e) Finance committee minutes

# Appendix 4 – Permission from director

07-JUL-2014 17:13

FROM MIN OF EDUCATION

TO 062509073

P.01/01



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**  
**OTJOZONDJUPA REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION**

Tel: 264 67 308000  
Fax: 264 67 304871  
Enquiries: Mr. N W Eiman  
Email: nickeyelman@gmail.com

Private Bag 2618  
Otjiwarongo  
NAMIBIA  
07 July 2014

**TO: PROFESSOR H VD MESCHT**  
**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
**P.O.BOX 94**  
**GRAHAMSTOWN**  
**6140**

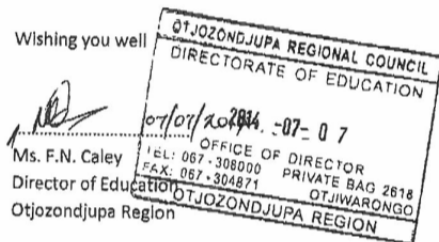
**ATTENTION: MRS VICTORIA SHIKWAMBI**

**SUBJECT: PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH AT**  
**OKAHANDJA, OTJOZONDJUPA**

With reference to your letter dated 23 June 2014 on permission for post-graduate study, the Director of Otjozondjupa Education Region does acknowledge the importance of research in our country and its contribution towards development and improvement in our educational system.

Permission is hereby granted for your research to be done at *Okahandja* Secondary School in Okahandja, Otjozondjupa Region. The principal should be informed about the said research and the information should be treated with the highest confidentiality. The arrangement for the research should be done in such a manner not to cause any disruptions to the normal school program.

Wishing you well



TOTAL P.01

## Appendix 5 - Teacher declaration

I, ..... [Full name] hereby confirm that  
I understand the content of the letter and the nature of research study. I understand that I  
reserve the right to withdraw at any time from the project.

Signature of participant

Date.....

## Appendix 6 – Letter from supervisor

23 June 2014

Ms F. Caley  
Director of Education  
P Bag 2618  
Otjiwarongo  
Otjozondjupa Region  
NAMIBIA

Dear Ms Caley

### Permission for post-graduate study

**Mrs Victoria Shikwambi** is a registered Master's student in the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. Mrs Shikwambi is doing a degree in Educational Leadership and Management and has reached the stage where she needs to collect data in order to write her thesis. The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission and support for her research.

Mrs Shikwambi is investigating the role of parents in the School Board. She will need access to XX Secondary School in Okahandja where she will need to interview staff members, learners and parents, carry out observations and examine documents. Some of the documents she would like to see may be of a sensitive nature, but I would urge you to encourage the principal to allow her access on the understanding that the research is conducted according to the highest ethical standards of confidentiality and respect for people.

I humbly request that you open doors for this researcher as research is hard work and she will need all the help she can get! Thank you in anticipation.

Sincerely

(Prof) H v d Mescht  
(Supervisor)