

**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS' RESOURCE CENTRES FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL MANAGERS AND TEACHERS**

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the role played by the Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC) in Namibia in helping schools to provide quality education.

The TRC concept began in Britain in the 1960s, where it was introduced as a means of supporting the professional development of teachers and giving them access to a range of educational resources. From the 1970s, the concept was promoted further afield as an effective strategy for dealing with teachers' needs.

TRCs emerged in Namibia in the 1980s under the auspices of the then Department of Education of the South African government. By 1989, only four TRCs were in existence, namely, Katutura, Tsumeb, Otjiwarongo and Rundu, plus one in the whites-only training college in Windhoek.

In September 1991, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in Namibia produced a five-year plan that led to the diversification of the TRC network in Namibia. Yet, despite the now widespread existence of TRCs, little is known of whether and to what extent their services are helping teachers to provide quality education. This constitutes a gap in the literature that this study hopes in part to fill.

The study was conducted using a case study approach in three schools in the Kavango region of Namibia. It made use of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and data analysis to gather and interpret data.

The study's finding is that TRCs are indeed beneficial to schools in their vicinity, despite their current limited capacities. However, TRCs should be better able to redress the poor quality of education in many schools due to a lack of resources, de-motivated teachers and other factors. This study therefore recommends that enough funds be made available for the TRCs to acquire the resources they need adequately to support quality educational processes. Furthermore, the study found that it is imperative for individuals in TRCs and schools to learn how to facilitate relevant transformation in their organisations' efficiency and effectiveness. Thus the study recommends a transformational leadership approach as most appropriate for managing learning and bringing about successful change in these organisations. The significance of this research is that it sheds some light on the effectiveness

of TRCs as a strategy for supporting teachers in the delivery of quality teaching. It also suggests potential areas in which stakeholders might usefully cooperate in their endeavours to realise quality education.

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## ACRONYMS USED

AT	Advisory Teacher
BETD INSET	In-service Basic Education Teacher Diploma
DADIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DVD/CD	Digital Versatile Disc/Digital Video Disc /Compact Disc
ELM	Education Leadership and Management
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme
FGD	Focus Group discussion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MBEC	Ministry of Basic Education and Culture
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
OD	Organisational Development
REO	Regional Education Officer
SAT	Senior Advisory Teacher
Tech/Na!	Technology /Na!
TRC	Teacher Resource Centre
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figures.....	xii
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
1. Overview of the study.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Context of the study .....	1
1.3 Research motivation.....	3
1.4 The potential value of the study.....	4
1.5 Research goal.....	4
1.6 Methodology.....	5
1.7 Structure of my thesis.....	6
CHAPTER 2 .....	7
2. Literature review .....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Rationale for Teacher Resource Centres .....	8
2.2.1 The background of the TRC concept.....	8
2.2.2 The emergence of the TRC and its purpose in Namibia.....	9
2.2.3 The structure and culture of the TRC network.....	12
2.2.3.1 Administrative authority.....	12
2.2.3.2 Technical support/professional communication .....	13
2.2.3.3 Acquisition, organisation and lending of materials .....	13

2.2.3.4 Communication and reporting .....	14
2.2.4 Functions and roles of the TRCs .....	14
2.3 Professional development theory .....	16
2.3.1 Continuing development of teachers' professional skills and subject knowledge .....	18
2.3.2 Provision of professional qualifications to under- and unqualified teachers .....	19
2.3.3 Orientation and skills improvement for all the teachers and managers, and introducing teachers to professional self-improvement.....	20
2.4 Organisation and leadership theories .....	21
2.4.1 Learning organisation: TRCs as a learning organisation and its role.....	21
2.4.1 The implications of learned TRCs for schools as organisations .....	24
2.4.2 Transformational leadership.....	27
2.4.2.1 The role of transformational leadership in TRCs and schools .....	27
2.5 Conclusion .....	33
CHAPTER 3 .....	34
3. Methodology .....	34
3.1 Introduction.....	34
3.2 Research design.....	34
3.2.1 Research paradigm.....	34
3.3.2 Sampling .....	34
3.3.4 Research process and gaining entry/access.....	35
3.3.5 Research methods and tools .....	36
3.3.5.1 Document analysis .....	36

3.3.5.2	Semi-structured interviews .....	37
3.3.5.3	Questionnaires .....	38
3.3.5.4	Focus group discussions (FGD).....	38
3.3.5.5	Observation.....	39
3.6	Analysis of data.....	39
3.7	Ethical issues.....	40
3.8	Validity .....	40
3.9	Conclusion .....	40
CHAPTER 4	.....	41
4.	Presentation of research findings.....	41
4.1	Introduction.....	41
4.2	Presentation of findings.....	42
4.2.1	TRCs service awareness and marketing among schools.....	42
4.2.2	Expansion of TRCs network .....	43
4.2.3	TRCs linkage with schools.....	46
4.2.4	Access to TRCs by teachers .....	46
4.2.5	Experiences of school managers and teachers of the service of TRCs.....	48
4.2.5.1	Provision of teaching resources and production of teaching aids.....	48
4.2.5.2	Library, photocopy service, internet and computer facility .....	51
4.2.5.3	Professional development provision through workshops, training and meetings .....	52
4.2.5.3.1	Learning through information communication technology in education (ICT) training and workshops .....	53

4.2.5.3.2 Learning through In-Service Basic Education Training Diploma (BETD INSET) .....	55
4.2.5.3.3 Learning through Meetings at TRCs .....	57
4.2.6 School managers' learning and their role in their staff/school learning .....	58
4.2.7 Acquisition of resources and their relevance to schools .....	60
4.2.8 Professional development and human resource provision at TRCs .....	62
4.3 Conclusion .....	63
CHAPTER 5 .....	63
5. Discussion of findings .....	64
5.1 Introduction.....	64
5.2 Discussion of findings .....	64
5.2.1 Understanding and significance of TRCs as learning organisations .....	64
5.2.1.1 Capacity building or improvement in schools .....	66
5.2.1.2 Accessibility of TRCs service and its impact to schools .....	67
5.2.2. Organisational leadership responsibilities towards quality achievement .....	69
5.2.2.1 Learning leaders for learning organisations .....	70
5.2.2.2 The transformation leadership role in learning organisations .....	72
5.2.3 Improved TRCs capacity and linkage with schools .....	75
5.2.3.1 The essence of learning among TRC individuals and as organisations .....	75
5.2.3.2 The essence of improved learning and teaching resources at TRCs.....	79
5.2.3.3 The essence of a strong and active link between TRCs and schools .....	80
5.2.4 The TRCs support system and challenges .....	81
5.2.5 Conclusion.....	82

CHAPTER 6 .....	83
6. Conclusion.....	83
6.1 Introduction.....	83
6.2 Summary of findings .....	84
6.2.1 Improved leadership and diversification of TRCs.....	84
6.2.2 The need for learning at TRCs .....	85
6.2.3 A sign of progress .....	85
6.3 Significance of the study .....	85
6.4 Recommendations for practice .....	86
6.5 Suggestions for future research.....	88
6.6 The limitations of the study .....	88
6.7 Conclusion .....	90
References .....	90
Appendices .....	96
Appendix A: Interview questions for school Managers .....	96
Appendix B: Interview for TRCs managers. ....	97
Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers.....	98
Appendix D: Questionnaire for TRCs network managers.....	99
Appendix E 1: Proposed plan for the research process. ....	100
Appendix E 2: Provisional Data collection and transcription schedule .....	100
Appendix F: Consent forms for the research participants .....	101
Appendix G: A thank you letter to the participants of the study .....	102

Appendix H: A letter requesting permission to the region/schools .....	104
Appendix J: A letter for permission to do research to the region and schools .....	105

### **List of figures**

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Distribution of TRCs Network in Namibia .....	11
Figure 2: The structure of the TRC Network .....	12
Figure 3: Production room (picture taken, August 12, 2009).....	49
Figure 4: TRC computer lab (picture taken, August 10, 2009).....	52
Figure 5: BETD INSET modules (Picture taken on August 12, 2009).....	55
Figure 6 and 7: 200 donated PCs (picture taken, August 11, 2009) .....	61

# CHAPTER 1

## 1. Overview of the study

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the thesis. In this chapter, I present the context of my study, the motivation for the research, my research goals, and the potential value of the study. This chapter also presents a brief account of the methodology used and how the thesis is structured.

### 1.2 Context of the study

This study aimed to investigate the role played by Teachers Resource Centres in Namibia in supporting teacher development and providing them with resources to promote quality education. I use the terms ‘professional development’ and ‘learning’ interchangeably in this thesis.

The concept of a TRC began in Britain in the 1960s where it was regarded as a very effective way of supporting professional development for teachers and providing them with access to a range of education resources (Knamiller, 1999, p. 16). In the 1970s, this concept was promoted further afield as an effective strategy to respond to teachers’ needs. In some countries, they operated as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) to which teachers and schools affiliated for support (Graig, Kraft & du Plessis, 1998, p. 138).

In September 1991, the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) in Namibia produced a five-year plan that outlined the strategies for meeting the critical needs of teachers. One of the recommendations of that report included provision for a National Teachers’ Resource Centre network (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. i). This need was recognised earlier by the national policy document (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 162) which stated, “It is essential that there be an effective system of schooling and teacher support”. The TRC in Namibia was established with the purpose of providing an infrastructure of skilled people, facilities, media, and materials to support the education reform process, especially with respect to the professional development and upgrading of teachers (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 3). However, despite the considerable growth in the number of TRCs in the country,

there is scant information about the extent to which their services help teachers to provide quality education. This constitutes a gap in the literature that this study hopes to target.

Internationally TRCs have been the subject of some research. A study conducted by a team from the University of Leeds on the effectiveness of the TRC strategy in the developing world (Knamiller, 1999) reported how difficult it was to attribute change in teachers' behaviour to a TRC intervention. Hoppers (1998) who investigated the local TRCs' autonomy and educational change in Southern Africa also acknowledged a lack of sufficient data about the impact of TRCs. Neither of these studies focused on the experience and perceptions of principals and teachers of the role of TRCs in schools. This indicates that this area is under-researched, especially in Namibia. With the current reform in the Namibian education system, the necessity of professional development and support is crucial. Hoppers as quoted by Knamiller (1999, p. 92) claimed that "professional support services for teachers have come to be seen as indispensable for an education system that wishes to maintain or promote quality, improve relevance, and increase efficiency in the use of resources". This reform dictates that teachers be professionally supported to equip them to learn and acquire knowledge that would enable them to participate in the reform process and deliver quality education. Organisational learning has come to be regarded as an essential characteristic of organisations that seek to adapt to changing environments. Senge (1990, p. 218) describes learning as "a process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire". According to Moloï (2005, p. 34) this would "help individuals and organisations to have the ability to anticipate environmental change and adapt their thinking and action quickly". I believe that the teaching career is a continuous process of development, adaptation, and growth among the individuals of the organisation. Change in any organisation, including schools, is inevitable and for the organisation to be competitive, learning should take place continuously. According to Bush and Bell (2002, p. 106), "the centrality of teachers' work and professional development to the management tasks of head teachers is evident from international research and experience". Moreover, professional development is accepted as central to the way principals manage schools, in at least two respects: as an instrumental leader, the principal is expected to coordinate the professional development of staff members and secondly, to manage learning as a whole using development as part of school change (Bush & Bell, 2002). As instrumental leaders, school managers are responsible for managing learning and creating conditions that encourage learning for their teachers if they want to improve quality in their schools, for example, by

providing them with the support they need to learn. It is also important that they put in place a systematic approach to enable them to facilitate learning in their schools, by “organising necessary and relevant developmental activities for teachers” (Namibia, MoE 2005, p. 26). A key developmental opportunity to tap into is the work of the TRC and it is here that the leadership of the principal is a crucial factor.

The role of school principals to ensure professional development among their staff can be understood through contemporary leadership theory, particularly transformational leadership. Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, p. 9) argue that the central focus of transformational leadership ought to be the commitment and capacity of organisational members. Bush (2003, p. 78) further suggests that transformational leadership is consistent with the collegial model in that it assumes that leaders and staff have shared values and a common interest. According to Senge (2006, p. 321), “leaders of learning organisations should be seen as designers, teachers and stewards”. In schools for example, they are responsible for managing the school vision for the benefit of learners and the broader school communities. As teachers, they are responsible for ensuring that an environment conducive to learning is created for their staff members to develop. In addition, as designers, they design policies, strategies, and systems, which can help their schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, no learning organisation can exist without the commitment of its leadership. As transformational leaders, school managers are also responsible for creating links with the relevant institutions to solicit the necessary support for their schools. The school managers are in a better position to know the type of support their schools need and work with the TRCs in the critical areas of intervention. In this case, they are expected to visit the TRCs and arrange for the relevant support that their staff need. They should also encourage their staff to make the best use of the resources available at the TRCs.

### **1.3 Research motivation**

This research was motivated by two factors, namely personal and professional interest, and the insufficient evidence of research done on the TRCs specifically concerning the views of the school managers and teachers in Namibia.

My background as a teacher, school principal and now as a TRC manager puts me in a better position to see the existing gap. This omission is caused by an absence of feedback between schools and TRCs, a lack of strong links, and a lack of knowledge about the role of TRCs

among teachers in schools. In addition, as a regional coordinator of the activities of the TRC in Kavango education region this research will enrich my knowledge on issues surrounding the TRCs' operations and give me access to information on how the users experience and perceive the TRCs service.

#### **1.4 The potential value of the study**

The significance of this research is that it will shed some light on the effectiveness of TRCs as a strategy for supporting teachers to deliver quality teaching. The outcome of this research may provide relevant information to policy makers on critical areas of intervention to enable TRCs to render appropriate and relevant support to schools. In addition to that, potential areas for cooperation between schools, clusters, circuit offices, and the TRCs would be revealed. It will also help the entire TRC network in Namibia, specifically those who find themselves in similar situations, to reflect on their performance and restructure accordingly.

Moreover, this study expects to add to the existing body of literature in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) in general and on the TRCs specifically. The findings of this research may serve as a baseline for further research in the area. The main outcome of the study would also bring to the surface the imperative of contemporary leadership theories for an organisation that wants to achieve growth.

#### **1.5 Research goal**

This research aims to investigate the role of the TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education. The following six questions need to be answered:

1. How do school managers and teachers experience the effectiveness of TRCs in terms of professional development and resources support?
2. What kind of support do school managers and teachers get from the TRCs?
3. What professional development support do teachers get from the TRCs?
4. How do these help the teachers to improve the quality of teaching in schools?
5. What do school managers do to encourage professional development among staff members by using resources at TRCs?

6. To what extent do the TRCs make a significant contribution to improve resources, which could support quality teaching and learning in schools?

## **1.6 Methodology**

My research was located within the interpretive paradigm. The purpose of this interpretive research was to understand phenomena and to interpret meanings as they occurred naturally. The interpretive paradigm is an appropriate tool for understanding events and how the school managers and teachers experience and perceive them. This research also used a qualitative approach to target people's thoughts and feelings (Maxwell, 2005, p. 75). Thus, it was possible for me to comprehend situations and processes and develop contributory explanations (Maxwell, 2005).

In conducting this qualitative case study, I used document analysis, observation, questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGD), and semi-structured interviews as tools to collect data. As a multi-method approach, case study research allowed me to penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 253). This approach is important especially for obtaining and understanding issues from more than one angle.

The process of data collection started with the analysis of documents, followed by observation of teachers' activities at the TRCs. The observation continued throughout the data collection process of my research. Thereafter, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with school managers and teachers at the selected schools and questionnaires were sent to TRCs.

The analysis of documents was done to gain useful data for my research topic. I analysed the available documents from the TRCs and the three selected research sites. This was important for me to complement my other data collection tools (McEwan & McEwan 2003, p. 82). Document analysis is also useful for streamlining research ideas.

Questionnaires were sent out to the identified TRCs in other regions of the country (Namibia). The questionnaires attempted to obtain their ideas on how they feel they are supporting schools to achieve quality education and the extent to which they are improving their service to ensure quality professional support for schools. Questionnaires have the advantage of producing a wide range of objective responses. As the distance between

regional TRCs in Namibia is on average 250km, questionnaires were a particularly economical way of gathering information.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three selected participants consisting of school managers from the three selected schools, and one TRC manager. The three school managers were selected based on their knowledge of the role of TRCs. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were able to yield rich information. However, interviews have the weakness of being time consuming.

I also held three focus group discussions with teachers of the selected schools to obtain their group ideas on their experience and perceptions on the role of TRCs. Focus group discussions are group interviews with people who share similar characteristics or a common interest. In this study I conducted three FGDs. FGDs allowed me to generate rich and insightful data through interactions, extensive probing, and follow-up questions (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004, p. 214).

I also made use of observations during the process of my research at the TRC. I observed how teachers used the TRC service. The observation tool allowed me to obtain information on activities as they occur in a natural setting. Thus observation gave me insight into how things happen on the ground, which the interviews could not reveal (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 304).

However, these activities overlapped with each other. For example, document analysis and observation continued throughout and notes were made on any interesting issue I came across concerning my topic.

This research was conducted with the blessing of the Regional Director, school principals and the individual participants. I obtained their consent for their involvement in this research.

## **1.7 Structure of my thesis**

My research will be presented in six sections, namely, introduction, literature review, methodology, data presentation, discussion, and conclusion. These sections are presented in chapters as follow:

Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study. I give a brief account of the research context or background, motivation, research goals, methodology used and the structure of the thesis..

Chapter 2 presents the rationale behind the concept of the TRC and its purpose in Namibia. It includes a review of the literature and discusses the theories behind TRCs as organisations. Thus, professional development, learning organisation, and transformational leadership theories are discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the methodology used during this study. The methods and the research design used are described in detail in terms of their usefulness, strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the issues of validity and ethics are discussed in this chapter.

The data presentation or presentation of findings appears in Chapter 4. The information collected during interviews and group discussions is analysed in categories in this chapter.

After the presentation of data, a discussion follows in Chapter 5 through the themes that emerged from the data presentation.

Lastly, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 6.

Next, I present the review of literature pertaining to my study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The chief purpose of this chapter is to develop the theoretical framework that would serve as a lens to examine the influence of the role of the TRCs in supporting schools to achieve

quality education. However, it is also necessary to provide information on TRCs as organisations in order to contextualise the study.

Hence, the first section presents the rationale behind the TRCs' establishment. Here I discuss the background of the TRC, its emergence and purpose in Namibia, its structure and culture, functions and role. The second section presents professional development theory focusing on the three main components of the Ministry of Education and Culture's (MEC) five-year development plan as identified by Shaw in Douglas (1997, p. 114). This post-independence plan led to the promotion of TRCs across the country.

The third section discusses organisation and leadership theories that help to make sense of the data I generate in order to gain an understanding of the role of the TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education. The TRCs are organizations whose main purpose is to provide a locus for professional development by ensuring that the necessary facilities, resources, and training are made available to teachers. I feel strongly that learning organisation and transformational leadership theories provide an appropriate theoretical framework. I argue that TRCs need to exhibit the characteristics of learning organisations in order to develop learning among schools, for example by providing the latest and most relevant resources to promote learning among individual teachers and schools as organisations. It is equally important that the management and leadership of these organisations encourage activities that deliver quality service. Hence, TRC managers and school principals, as transformational leaders, are expected to motivate teachers to participate in professional growth, which in turn leads to quality education. I present the rationale for the TRCs in the next section starting with their historical background.

## **2.2 Rationale for Teacher Resource Centres**

### **2.2.1 The background of the TRC concept**

According to Hoppers (1998, p. 229), TRCs provide a meeting point for teachers and other stakeholders involved in education. They are the places where teachers come together to discuss matters that concern their work and where teaching and learning resources are housed (Knamiller, 1999, p. 27). They are also seen as "strategies" that offer professional service to teachers to help them perform well in the classes (DANIDA cited in Knamiller, 1999). Some researchers described TRCs as strategies that aim to provide professional support to teachers

to enable them to perform effectively in their classrooms (Knamiller, 1999). TRCs are places where professional and academic support is provided and where teachers discuss their problems in an attempt to improve the quality of their teaching. According to the discussions from a regional workshop on TRCs that took place in Arusha in 1996 ( Knamiller, 1999):

TRCs provide opportunities to discuss national curricula goals, to translate these into relevant learning experiences and to develop the necessary instructional materials ...TRCs provide systematic access to modern teaching techniques, new ideas and updated teaching and learning materials. (p. 42)

The TRC strategy started out as an effective way of supporting teachers in Britain. It was then widely promoted abroad including the developing world as a way of supporting teachers to develop professionally and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Inspired by its success in Britain, the teachers' union in the New York district of the United States of America promoted the concept in the 1970s. In 1984, the State Government of New York established funding for TRCs and training centres for computers (Giordano, 2008) and passed a law that guaranteed this funding. Currently TRCs are an essential part of the New York district educational landscape with more than 126 centres serving the district state schools.

In Southern Africa, the idea of TRCs emerged between 1970 to early 1980. In Zambia for example, the first TRC was established in 1977 and many other countries in Southern Africa followed suit in the 1980s. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, the concept of TRCs was born out of nationwide consultations on education reform and the perceived need for access to nationwide resources in an effort to bring about relevance and effectiveness in education (Hoppers, 1999). Thus, Kealy (in Drankenberg, 2001, p. 202) in her paper, "The development of Teachers in Sweden", argues that TRCs have tremendous potential for improving the quality of teachers' professional development particularly if they are "planned and implemented in a truly collaborative manner". These centres are established to serve as places where teachers' needs and challenges are discussed, examined, and planned for, while deficiencies are aired and ways of correcting practice are discussed (Newton, cited in Drankenberg, 2001). In the next sub-section, I discuss the emergence and purpose of TRCs in Namibia.

### **2.2.2 The emergence of the TRC and its purpose in Namibia**

Just like in other Southern African countries, the concept of TRCs in Namibia emerged as Teacher Centres in the 1980s in the colonial era under the Department of National Education

(which was responsible for black education administration) and Whites administration (which was responsible for whites education administration), which was controlled by the South African government. According to Douglas (1997, p. 114) in 1989 only four TRCs were in existence namely, Katutura (1987), Tsumeb (1988), and Otjiwarongo (1989) under the Department of Education and one was established in a whites-only training college in Windhoek in 1988. According to a former TRC manager, Rundu TRC was also established within the same period (in 1987), which makes it the fifth TRC. After independence in 1991, the new Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) promoted the concept of TRCs to other parts of the country through its five-year development plan for teachers' improvement in-service programme strategy. Shaw cited in Douglas (1997, p. 114) identified the following three important components of that plan as:

- Orientation and skills improvement for all the teachers and managers, and introducing teachers to processes of professional self improvement
- Provision of professional qualifications to under- and unqualified teachers
- Continuing development of teachers' professional skills and subject knowledge

These three aspects describe a very important component of the role of the TRCs in Namibia, that of professional development which forms the basis of my discussion on this topic later in this section. The aim of the five-year development plan strategy of the Ministry was to spread the national network of the TRCs across the whole country to support the in-service training effort of the Ministry.

Currently, there are 35 TRCs in Namibia, including a resource centre in Windhoek and a community centre in Tsumkwe. The distribution of the TRCs across the country can be seen on this map as adapted from Douglas (1997, p. 115).

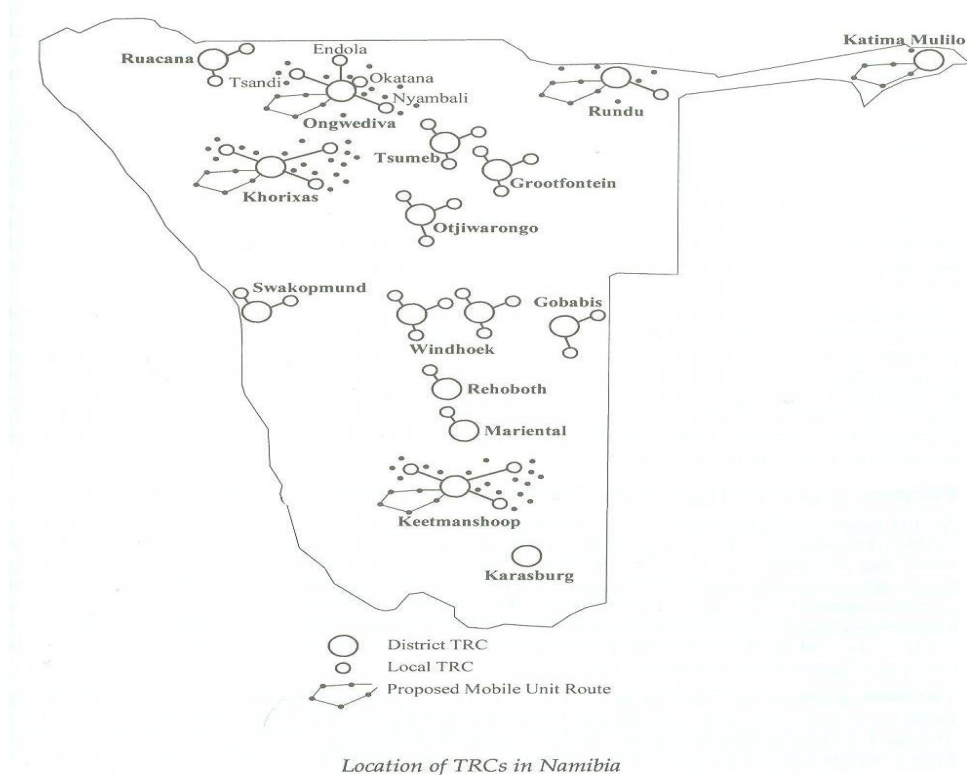


Figure 1: Distribution of TRCs Network in Namibia

The main purpose of the establishment of the TRCs in Namibia was to provide the locus for professional development by providing facilities, which have an atmosphere conducive to growth and experimentation by teachers (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 4). These centres would give teachers the opportunity to interact, share resources and exchange ideas in order to improve the quality of education. The establishment of TRCs in Namibia was further necessitated by the need to improve teacher support and to respond to conditions characterised by the challenges of a lack of adequate resources, capacity, equipment, and expertise in schools that prevented teachers from performing as expected.

In Namibia, TRCs coordinate and facilitate the professional development activities of the teachers, specifically, they facilitate the upgrading and in-service training of teachers, and provide them with a greater exposure to technical assistance and variety of resources to enrich the process of education. This aspect is presented in the function of TRCs, which I discuss at a later stage. Next, I present the structure and operation of the TRC network.

### 2.2.3 The structure and culture of the TRC network

I move on to present and describe the connections between and around the TRC network structure in order to provide a sense of the line of authority and communication. In specific terms, the diagram below shows the interconnection of role players in terms of the line of administrative authority, and technical/professional, communication and support. I also use the diagram to explain some important aspects of the TRC network, namely, administration, technical support/professional communication, programming and budgeting, acquisition, organisation and lending of materials, and coordination and net working. The structure is adopted from the National TRC network policies and procedure manual, 1996.

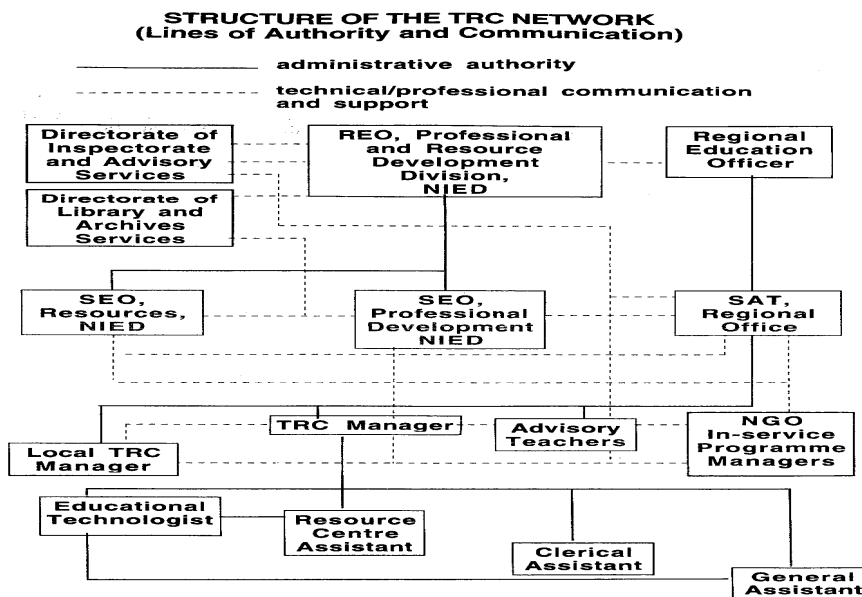


Figure 2: The structure of the TRC Network

#### 2.2.3.1 Administrative authority

As shown by the solid line in the diagram, the administration and logistical support of the TRCs is a responsibility of the respective regional offices of education. The regional offices of education are therefore responsible for funding the programmes of activities and the logistical arrangements of the TRCs in their regions. For example, the budget of the regional offices provides for ICT training, workshops, transport, acquisition of materials, expansion of TRCs etc.

At the regional level, the Regional Officer (REO) or the Senior Advisory Teachers (SAT) are responsible for the TRCs. In addition, the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of TRC activities is undertaken by the TRC committee which consist of five to ten members which are selected from different interest groups in the education community. This committee could consist of, for example, TRC manager, teachers, librarians/media teachers, advisory teachers, community members, local professionals, principals, REO/SAT, and school boards.

Each TRC has a manager who is responsible for the effective and efficient operation of the TRC. A staff consisting of an education technologist (also called Education Resource Office), a resource centre assistant (also called library assistant), a clerical assistant, and a general assistant/cleaner assists the manager (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, pp. 5-6). The TRC manager is also responsible for overseeing the professional work of the advisory teachers and non-governmental organisation in-service manager when the TRC is used as a venue; he/she is also responsible for professional development and support of local TRCs. The local TRCs are situated at a distance from the regional TRC to provide support to teachers of the surrounding schools in the remote areas.

### **2.2.3.2 Technical support/professional communication**

As shown by the dotted line in the diagram, the responsibility of technical and professional management and coordination of TRC network lies with the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 5). The implication of this is that they are responsible for organising the professional development programmes of the TRCs network staff. The Chief Education Officer (NIED) is ultimately responsible for the standards of professional management of all TRCs.

### **2.2.3.3 Acquisition, organisation and lending of materials**

As mentioned earlier, some TRCs acquire materials through the regional office's budgetary provision. Most of the professional materials are secured through donations and via Namibia

Institute for Education Development (NIED). Each TRC is in charge of organising their activities in the region in accordance with their year plan. Currently TRCs draw up their year plan and programmes in accordance with the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). ETSIP is the programme of the Ministry of Education that is aimed at improving the quality of education in Namibia. The different TRCs are expected to have their own institutional policy on how to manage their resources, including the loan of materials to users.

#### **2.2.3.4 Communication and reporting**

In each region, TRCs managers are accountable for the TRC activities to their regional office (SAT/REO). However, there is a vigorous communication line with NIED and activities that are carried out by TRCs in regions are reported to NIED in the form of annual reports. In addition, the national network of TRCs meets annually to ensure that planning occurs on a co-ordinated basis in accordance with the Ministry of Education's plan.

#### **2.2.4 Functions and roles of the TRCs**

As I mentioned earlier in this section, the TRCs, like other organisations, were created to fulfil a certain purpose, to provide space for in-service training and provide professional development support for teachers in order to achieve quality education. In more specific terms to discharge the following functions (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 4):

- To provide a network of locations where all who are involved in the education system may meet in a neutral and supportive environment that is conducive to the process of reform in both the philosophy and mode of teaching and learning.
- To support both the current educational reform process and the ongoing teacher upgrading programmes in Namibia through a two way system of communication and monitoring (linked to NIED and the MBEC head office) for the introduction of new materials and methodologies into the education system.
- To establish the widest network that is feasible throughout the country to enable the individual TRCs to be linked as closely as possible to the classroom. In this way, the TRC network may effectively keep its finger on the pulse of the reform process.

- To facilitate change through exposing teachers to new ideas and more effective teaching practice. This function will take place largely through in-service activities organised at both national and regional levels. However, it will also take place through the spontaneous daily activities of the individual TRCs themselves as they attempt to meet the immediate grass-roots needs of teachers in their service areas.
- To monitor reform and provide feedback to the regional office, NIED and the Ministry of Education as a whole. This function will always be done openly and in collaboration with the teachers so as not to jeopardise the healthy relationship and mutual respect that every TRC should strive to foster among its users.
- To provide teachers with access to the widest range of up-to-date printed and audio-visual educational resource materials. This would include access to computer-based teaching materials, databases, basic desktop publishing facilities, microteaching equipment and production facilities for producing teaching and learning aids of all kinds.
- To provide lecture and conference facilities for teacher groups to meet and exchange ideas, support each other and convene study groups for the enrichment of the profession.
- To provide office space for a variety of services in addition to regular TRC operations including teacher advisory services, adult and continuing education, literacy programmes and library services. The eventual plan is to operate the TRCs as “multi-functional centres” supporting both Ministerial and NGO initiatives.

The intention of these functions is that they will fulfil the overall purpose of the TRC. In order to realise the overall purpose of the TRCs, the staff members at the TRCs “should be people of unusually varied talents” (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 3). This is how it is described in the TRC policy and procedure manual:

These people should have the ability to challenge the ordinary and stimulate the exceptional. They must always be striving to keep abreast of developments in education and be catalytic in bringing about change.

This means that the staff of the TRCs should be engaged in learning that would enable them to serve the teachers appropriately while using the latest ‘technologies’.

The belief is that if the TRC network and individual TRCs successfully execute these functions, the professional development of teachers would be ensured and quality education could be achieved.

## **2.3 Professional development theory**

Professional development can be defined as the professional growth that teachers achieve due to the experience, knowledge, and understanding gained by a thorough and systematic examination of their teaching and beliefs through a process of critical reflection (Robinson, 2006, p. 1). Considering the meaning of professional development in the technological age, Grant, in *Professional development for teachers* (n.d) suggested a broader definition to include the use of technology as follow:

Professional development ...goes beyond the term training with its implications of learning skills, and encompasses a definition that includes the formal and informal means of helping teachers not only learn new skills but also develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice, and explore new or advanced understandings of content and resources. This includes support for teachers as they encounter the challenges that come with putting in to practice their evolving understandings about the use of technology to support inquiry-based learning...Current technologies offer resources to meet these challenges and provide teachers with a cluster of supports that help them continue to grow in their professional skills, understandings and interest. (p. 1)

This definition confirms the professional development that TRCs offer. The TRCs provide professional development support that includes a formal and informal experience (Villegas-Reimers, 2001, p. 11). The formal experience includes workshops, professional meetings, in-service courses like the Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) that is offered at some TRCs centres. It includes Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training that is facilitated by the TRCs. Formal learning can also be described as inquisitional and individual learning, vertical and within the educational institutions settings (Malcolm, Hodkinson & Colley, 2003, p. 314). The informal experience at the TRCs include the reading of professional publications and books, viewing educational television programs, informal subject group meetings, searching for educational information on the internet and in the library, etc. This learning happens through everyday embodied practice, horizontal knowledge and non educational settings (Malcolm et al., 2003, p. 314).

Both these forms of professional developments are important for teachers' growth. When teachers continue to learn, the goal of quality education becomes attainable. Thus, if any reform in education system is to succeed, teachers need to use various opportunities for learning and continuous professional growth (Jurasaitė-Harbison, 2009, pp. 299-300). This is why the document *Professional development for teachers (1994-2009)* argues that the biggest asset of any education system is its teaching force and the most important investment that an education system can make is to ensure that teachers continue to learn. Besides the financial gain that teachers acquire as a result of professional development opportunities, professional development has a positive impact on teachers' beliefs and practice, students' learning and on the implementation of education reforms (Villegas-Reimers, 2001, p. 19). It is believed that professionally developed teachers would be fully qualified and committed to providing learners with competent, relevant, meaningful, and quality education. In addition, their beliefs and practice improves. More importantly, it keeps teachers up to date on new research on how children learn, emerging technology tools for the class and new curriculum resources (*Why is teacher development important?*, 2008, p. 2).

Furthermore, for the purpose of quality education, the *Professional development for teachers (1994-2009)* identifies the following factors which professional development initiatives should accomplish:

- Professional development should deepen and broaden knowledge of content.
- Professional development should provide a strong foundation in the pedagogy of particular disciplines.
- Professional development should provide the knowledge about the teaching and learning processes.
- Professional development should be rooted in and reflect the best available research.
- The content of professional development should be aligned with the standards and curriculum teacher's use.

- Professional development should contribute to measurable improvement in student's achievement.
- Professional development should be intellectually engaging and address the complexity of teaching.
- Professional development should provide sufficient time, support, and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and to integrate this knowledge and skills in to their practice.
- Teachers in cooperation with experts in the field should design professional development.
- Professional development should take a variety of form including the one that we have not considered.
- Professional development should be job embedded and site specific.

A discussion of the aspects of professional development that use the three important components of the five-year development plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture follows. These are:

- Orientation and skills improvement for all the teachers and managers, and introducing teachers to processes of professional self-improvement.
- Provision of professional qualifications to under- and unqualified teachers.
- Continuing development of teachers' professional skills and subject knowledge.

### **2.3.1 Continuing development of teachers' professional skills and subject knowledge**

As mentioned previously, professional development takes different forms; it can be either an informal or a formal experience. One of the roles of the TRCs is to make teaching and learning materials and resources available to teachers with the primary purpose of enriching the educational process (Giordano, 2008, p. 97). The availability of a variety of resources supports the professional development of teachers to enable them to deliver quality education in schools. These resources include reference materials, ICT and internet facilities, library services, printed and audio materials, micro teaching equipment, science equipment and

teaching aids, production facilities and conference rooms. These resources provide teachers with an informal learning experience when they use them in their own time. This results in teachers developing new skills and subject knowledge, such as when teachers do a course to improve or upgrade their qualifications.

Thus, the TRC network was established throughout the country to link the TRCs service as closely to the classroom as possible, thereby enabling them to provide appropriate support to many schools. It is believed that the enhancement of quality and relevance at school level through resources provision would enable teachers to develop professionally (Hoppers, 1998, p. 237). Another form of professional development that I discuss is the upgrading of qualifications.

### **2.3.2 Provision of professional qualifications to under- and unqualified teachers**

Another form of professional development is achieved by further study. Teacher development and training constitute a major component of TRCs (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 4). In Namibia, some TRCs facilitate an In-service Teacher Training programme for the Basic Education Teachers Diploma for teachers who want to upgrade their professional qualifications. This form of professional development is an example of formal learning. This programme facilitates change through exposing teachers to new ideas resulting in teaching practice being more effective (Namibia, MBEC, 1994, p. 4). Thus, a programme such as BETD-INSET is facilitated by the TRCs to enhance teachers' professional development. The BETD in-service programme is a "unified general preparation for unqualified and partly qualified teachers in the basic education, with the opportunity for specialisation in relation to the phase (e.g. primary or secondary) of schooling and subject areas e.g. mathematics and integrated natural science education (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 1). The main aim of this programme is to develop their professional expertise and competencies, which will enable the teachers to optimise the new basic education for the learners, and to be fully involved in promoting change in education reform in Namibia (Namibia. MoE, 2006, p. 3). The BETD in-service equips teachers with pedagogical skills and knowledge based on democratic principles which promotes learning through understanding and practice. The design of the BETD INSET curriculum aimed to relate to and reflect the curriculum implemented in schools.

### **2.3.3 Orientation and skills improvement for all the teachers and managers, and introducing teachers to professional self-improvement**

This form of skills development and self-improvement occurs by means of short workshops and training. A workshop on the use of databases in the library or an introductory training to basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills would benefit both the teacher and the school. For example, they would be able to use the internet or database to search for relevant information and as a result, their skills and knowledge are improved. These programmes are facilitated by the TRCs to assist teachers develop professionally by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical skills to enable them to handle challenges and teach effectively.

As Robinson (2006, p.1) correctly observes, “The preparation of teachers for the challenges they are likely to meet throughout their careers requires ongoing provision of accessibility and affordable opportunities for them to learn, as well as a culture of motivation to learn”. For this reason, TRCs appear in many education systems as a device for increasing teachers’ access to training and improving their capabilities to offer quality in schools (Robinson, 2006, p. 4). As a former teacher and principal, I observed that many teachers and school administrators dedicate themselves to working hard under demanding conditions. These conditions range from a lack of proper accommodation, long walking distances to their work place, lack of resources, all of which frustrate teachers. Notwithstanding, the nation-wide demand for quality education is high so it is important that teachers and school managers are supported to keep them motivated and focused, to give them the courage to explore, learn, and develop so that they can deliver a high quality service. I believe that until our teachers get the support they need to do the job we have no moral standing to make extensive demands on them for quality education.

It is in this context that TRCs are expected to play a supporting role. The prevailing idea is that when teachers are involved in professional opportunities, it has a positive influence on their beliefs, practices and attitudes and may become part of the implementation of education reforms. For instance, when teachers are educated and provided with ICT equipment for tools in teaching, they will develop the confidence to use it to access new resources for learning and development, interact with each other beyond the boundaries of their schools, develop as learning communities, and develop best practices (Robinson, 2006, pp. 1-2). However, as I discussed earlier, in order for the TRCs to successfully achieve the goal of

professional development, the TRCs needs to have people of “unusual varied talents”, those that are “able to keep abreast of developments in education and be catalytic in bringing about these change” (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 3). Therefore, it is imperative that TRCs and their members must be engaged in continuous learning. In the next section, I discuss learning organisation theories.

## **2.4 Organisation and leadership theories**

In the previous section, I discussed TRCs as organisations that support professional development of teachers through providing resources and training, with the purpose of helping them to achieve quality education in schools. In this way, TRCs ensure continuous learning among teachers and schools. Therefore learning organisation theory could provide a framework to discuss TRCs and schools as organisations. At the same time, the success of learning in an organisation should be accompanied by leadership, which is committed to transforming the organisation. Thus, transformational leadership theory will form part of the review of literature in this section. I discuss these theories in two separate sub-sections.

### **2.4.1 Learning organisation: TRCs as a learning organisation and its role**

A learning organisation is an organisation where members are continually learning new strategies of working, seeking new trends through research, reading, workshops, outside experience and organisational development (OD) programmes. According to Senge (1990, p. 218), the learning organisation is “a process of aligning and developing the capacity of individuals in the team to create the result which its members want”. Argyris and Schön (in Silins & Mulford, 2002) characterise a learning organisation as “one that learns, readily adapts to change, detects and corrects errors and continually improves” (p. 427).

Henceforth I will be referring to TRCs as well as schools in this section because of the complementary role they play. The TRCs as organisations exist to support schools to achieve quality education. I therefore believe that learned or “learning” TRCs would have the capacity to render effective and quality professional support to teachers and schools as organisations. The TRCs as learning organisations must have as a central principle, the commitment to help teachers to embrace change (Senge, 1994, p. 11). Therefore, individuals at the TRCs and the TRCs themselves must first learn to improve their capacity in order for

them to render appropriate support that would ensure an environment, which promotes learning among individual teachers and schools as learning organisations.

According to the national policy (Namibia, MBEC, 1996, p. 3), this would enable them to deliver the most up-to-date and relevant service to schools. Through their individual learning, the TRCs become a learning organisation. According to Coad and Berry (1998, p. 164), “the role of individual learning in an organisation is at once obvious and subtle”. Due to the fact that every organisation is made up of individuals, an organisation therefore can learn as a result of any of their individual member who learns but cannot learn when none of its individuals is learning. Marks et al., as quoted in Silins & Mulford (2002, p. 427) associate a learning organisation with five important concepts, namely, identifying and correcting problems, learning from experience, acquiring new knowledge, processing issues on an organisational level and changing the organisation. Therefore, for the TRC to achieve the purpose for which they were created, they have to align themselves with these concepts.

The significance of this alignment is that it places them in a better position to provide the support that improves the capacity of individual teachers and schools as organisations. It helps them to encourage, nurture the new thinking model of teachers, and encourage shared aspirations leading to the attainment of their organisational goal (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

Change in any organisation is inevitable, and for the organisation to be competitive in times of change, learning should be a continuous process. Many reforms are taking place in education; for example, curricula are continuously changing to align with external needs and challenges, and technology is changing rapidly. As a result, teachers experience many challenges, which make it difficult to deliver the expected quality in education.

Therefore, it is important that the TRCs become learning organisations so that they are on a par with latest development in education, to offer the necessary context that encourages teachers to continuously learn and grow, and be able to handle the challenges they face. The effectiveness of the role of the TRC as an organisation depends on its continuous learning rather than being ‘traditional’ (organisations that only maintain the status quo). This means that they should engage in a paradigm shift from the traditional organisational way of functioning to that of a learning organisation.

The essence of this paradigm shift towards a learning organisation is that “organisations must nurture a propensity to learn, adapt and change by weaving in or embedding a set of core

processes or disciplines that expand the ability of the firm to shape the future” (Jamali, Khoury & Sahyoun, 2006, p. 341).

This shift helps the organisation to be more ‘pro-active’ rather than ‘reactive’. Reactive learning takes place when members learn by reacting towards certain situations or when they try to solve the problems. For example, the number of teachers that use the service of the TRCs increases when their schools are to be visited by the external evaluators and quickly drop again when the evaluation is over. They come to TRCs to prepare teaching aids to for use during the period of evaluation. However, it is important that schools and Teacher Resource Centre are pro-active. They need to engage in research to acquaint themselves with their future needs and challenges, and prepare themselves for anticipated problems and challenges. This continuous quest for excellence helps TRCs to keep abreast of new developments in education and to become learned individuals and organisations. In this way, they can provide the stimulus for teachers’ professional growth. As Johnson (2002, p. 241), puts it, learning organisations are “designed to anticipate and react to changing external and competitive environments in a positive and pro-active manner”.

Moloi (2005, p. 31) sees learning organisations as places that are designed for learning. She highlights the four levels where learning takes place as: individual level, team level, organisational level and the society level. It is at these levels that learning needs to be facilitated if TRCs and schools want to become learning organisation. The importance of learning is that it enhances organisational capacity for innovation and growth. For the purpose of this research, only the first three levels are discussed (individual, team, and organisation).

The individuals within the organisation learn when they engage in activities that advance their knowledge or skills to enable them to perform their job effectively and efficiently. Usually this happens when an educator detects problems and works on correcting their teaching strategies (Moloi, 2005, p. 23). I argue here that learning occurs when one increases or advances knowledge in the field. As mentioned before, organisations where individual members are learning develop into a learning organisation (Francis, 1997, p. 170). At the TRC, learning at this level occurs when individual teachers do research in the library or on the internet to look for relevant information. In the school context, a teacher does research from reference materials or experiments with methods of teaching, and as a result makes useful discoveries. However, learning at this level requires honesty in assessing the current

reality from which the development of a shared vision of a future plan of action can be drawn (Francis, 1997, p. 177). Therefore, I believe that any individual who engages in continuous inquiry starts to move a gap towards the realisation of a learning organisation. Individual learning is a starting point for team and organisational learning.

Team learning occurs when individuals come together in one place to share knowledge and experiences. Teachers meet at TRCs during workshops, when they prepare teaching aids, attend subject committee meetings, or departmental meetings. During these meetings, they exchange ideas, experiences, and knowledge regarding their areas of interest, thereby developing better strategies or tools to improve their performance in the classroom. Moloi (2005) believes that team learning plays a role in increasing the effectiveness of a team. It is, however, imperative that during team activities, team members “suspend their individual assumptions and enter into genuine thinking together, and align themselves to a common group idea” (Moloi, 2005, p. 62). Team learning leads to organisational learning and this happens when individuals in the organisations’ teams are committed to learning.

According to Dixon (cited in Moloi, 2005, p. 24) learning takes place when learning processes at individual, team and organisation level transform the organisation in a direction that is satisfactory to its stakeholders. The significance of organisational learning is that it increases the organisation’s capacity to take the right actions (Moloi, 2005). As mentioned earlier, TRCs are expected to take actions or lead discussions that benefit schools. When they become learned, they are in a better position to acquire appropriate resources and technologies that encourage learning among schoolteachers. Continuous learning therefore is important for individuals and organisations if they are to provide an environment conducive to learning and that fosters learning among teachers and schools as organisations. What follows is a discussion of the implications of learned or learning TRCs for schools as organisations.

#### **2.4.1 The implications of learned TRCs for schools as organisations**

A learned TRC is required to create a conducive environment for teachers to learn and for their schools to become learning organisations. This process can bring about quality service delivery in schools. Moreover, this learning helps individuals and organisations to have the ability to “anticipate environmental change and adapt their thinking and actions quickly” (Moloi, 2005, p. 34) so their practices are aligned with the organisational vision. The learned

TRCs encourage schools to continually seek information from the environment making them open to learn from their previous experience (Johnson, 2002, p. 242). The TRCs and schools as learning organisations are expected to work in a collaborative manner to support and empower teachers as professionals to continue to motivate them to increase their capacities for growth and success (Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 431). According to Fullan (cited in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 431), when teachers are empowered in an area important to them, they become learners who continuously engage in enquiry, reflect on their practice and engage in continuous problem solving, and at the same time build capacity. The successful learning TRCs therefore encourage schools as organisations to adopt a culture that helps them to handle any transformation that may affect their organisation.

Senge (1990) attributes the success of organisations in becoming learning organisations to five learning disciplines namely: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and system thinking. According to Senge (1994, p. 194) and Moloï (2005, p. 40) the word “mastery” comes from the French word ‘maitre’ which means a person who is “exceptionally proficient and skilful”. However, this word ‘mastery’ does not only mean to produce results but also to master the principles that anchor the way you produce results (Senge, 1994). It may include among others, strategies or technologies employed, commitment and willingness, and attitudes to learning. In ensuring that this learning discipline takes place, TRCs offer an enabling environment. The TRCs offers professional support through formal and informal experience, they provide many different materials, facilities, training and workshops, meeting infrastructure etc. that can give individuals teachers and schools various learning experiences. Moreover, TRCs motivate schools to learn by creating an organisational environment that promotes the development of all its members to achieve their chosen goals. However, in order to achieve these objectives it is important that a collaborative relationship exists between TRCs and schools.

This relationship would motivate the school management to create and promote the necessary environment in schools to motivate teachers to use the available services at the TRC and to continue to learn because the quality of education relies heavily on their capacity. Thus, Chang and Lee (2007, p. 165), argue that personal mastery is “the true inclination and vision in mind with the process of continuous refocusing and self enhancement”.

Therefore mastery leads to development in a mental model, which results in people sharing the vision. The sharing of the vision leads to team learning which brings system thinking into the entire organisation.

The mental model develops when members of the organisation spend time reflecting upon, clarifying, and improving their internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape their actions and decisions (Senge, 1994, p. 6). Senge (1994) believes that when all the teachers in a school engage in continuous learning, their mental model improves, making it easier for them to understand their purpose in the organisation and therefore share the vision of their school. In the same vein, Senge (1990, p. 206) noted that:

At the heart of the building of shared vision is the task of designing an evolving ongoing process in which people at every level of the organisation, in every role can speak from the heart about what really matters to them and be heard by senior management and each other. The quality of this process determines the quality and power of the result.

According to Senge, this will help them answer the question, “Why we are all here?” In support of this idea Moloi (2005, p. 57) asserts that the success of transformation in an organisation depends on a powerful and shared vision. Shared vision brings about dialogues and discussions through which educators share knowledge. I therefore argue that building a learning organisation takes individuals who are committed to participate in learning and to building up a learning team.

Team learning has to do with transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members’ talents (Senge, 1994, p. 6). Chang and Lee (2007, p. 165), see team learning as an “integrating process for members of development teams to offer their overall coordination and the capability to materialise their common goals”. At the TRCs, groups of teachers come to use resources to complement their teaching; some hold meetings to share ideas in their subject areas, and other group activities. The result is that these individuals educate each other and in the end become a team that has learned. Team learning thus improves processes in teams that in turn, increase its effectiveness (Moloi, 2005, p. 62). Team learning is one of the components that lead to system learning.

The bigger picture of how persons, teams, systems, and organisation are interrelated, depend on each other and influence the organisation is reflected in the discipline of team learning. It is evident in the TRCs how different activities and projects for example ICT literacy training,

library service, production of teaching aids, BETD-INSET training etc. are facilitated at the TRCs for the purpose of addressing the entire professional development of teachers.

This is the same in the school context; for example, there are educational activities, and projects that take place and these initiatives deal with smaller components of the whole system in order to achieve the overall goal of the organisation of delivering quality education. However, the success of these activities is built around the notion of learning in both the individuals and the organisation.

In order to ensure that learning takes place in the organisation, the leadership must be able to make it a reality (Senge, 1990, p. 22). Therefore, as organisations for professional development of teachers, TRCs should also engage principals in the leadership and management workshops to equip school managers with the knowledge to promote learning in their schools through new but realistic tasks. This type of workshop would help them to practise effective delegation of tasks, which could also encourage their staff members to learn within the school. According to Johnson (2002, p. 35), this practice would contribute to continuous improvement and transformational change. As mentioned in the introduction of this section, in order for organisations to transform into learning organisations, to be sustained and grow, they need transformational leadership.

## **2.4.2 Transformational leadership**

### **2.4.2.1 The role of transformational leadership in TRCs and schools**

The concept of transformational leadership is essential for TRCs that want to bring about an improvement and restructuring to the support to schools. The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns in 1978 in his descriptive research on political leaders. According to Burns, Bass and Avolio (in Stone & Russell, 2004, p. 350), transformational leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morality and motivation. According to Burns (in Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009) transformational leadership is a moral argument as it works towards improving the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and the led, thus affecting both sides. Contrary to the *transactional style*, it is not based on a "give and take" relationship, but on the leader's personality, traits and ability to make a change through vision and goals. (p. 350)

Transformational leadership brings relevant change to the organisation to enhance their capacity. I believe that when the TRCs become capacitated, they will have a positive impact on teachers and schools. This process is supported by an inclusive collaborative structure and learning focused leadership (Johnston & Cadwell, cited in Wilkins, 2002, p. 122). These include leaders that provide good examples of professional learning that emphasise co-learning, flexibility of roles between team members, and opportunities for individual and groups to assume multiple roles. Therefore, the TRC managers, as transformational leaders, must ensure that they create the structures and environment that support the shared vision, communication, learning, collaboration and participation among members. Moreover, Mark et al., (in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 428) argued, “leadership in the context of transformational change requires a learning leader”. Such leaders foster a learning culture in the organisation; they detect “dysfunctionality” and encourage transformation (Schein cited in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 428).

Yuen and Cheng (cited in Wilkins, 2000, p. 120) recommend a leadership frame that supports and promotes action research by the teachers. The essence of this frame in the organisations such as TRCs is that it would help to foster a learning culture, enhance theoretical knowledge and skills, and provide intellectual stimulation in the organisation. It is in this vein that Senge (1994, p. 199) suggested that the leadership of learning organisations invest time, money and energy to improve resources that would encourage the continuous development of their members.

In order for professional development to be successful, a culture of support must be created (Villegas-Reimers, 2001, p. 119). Lieberman (cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2001) outlined the factors that are necessary to build such a culture:

- Develop norms of collegiality, openness, and trust.
- Create opportunities and time for disciplined inquiry.
- Provide opportunities for teachers’ learning content in context.
- Rethink the functions of leadership, and redefining leadership in an organisation to include teachers.
- Create and support networks, collaborations and coalitions.

These factors are significant for all organisations that want to become successful learned organisations. Therefore, it is essential that learning organisation leaders take cognisance of these factors and ensures a fair and equal contribution from all its members. Hence, open participation of all members, consultation, a shared vision, and respect for people's dignity, caring, transparency, and social justice underpins learning in the organisation. Through these factors, an organisation's effective development becomes the responsibility of every individual in the organisation. The realisation of this aspect however, depends on the ability of leadership to pioneer the creation of the environment that encourages members to learn, and participate fully. Thus, TRCs leadership is expected to emphasise the significance of a person and personal traits in bringing about cultural and social change within the organisation (Crowther & Olsen, 1997, p. 8). It is for this reason that TRC managers and principals involve other staff members in the development and implementation process of goal setting, needs identification, planning, and evaluation. This would help their organisation to set up a shared vision and the implementation of programmes that lead to its achievement. It is believed that there is a strong relationship between learned organisation and transformational leadership in relation to quality results. Equally true, education leadership that has not taken the participation of members and their professional development seriously found it hard to succeed (Villegas-Reimers, 2001). It is therefore an organisation manager's moral responsibility as a transformational leader to help the staff define and develop their organisation as a learning community (Starratt, cited in Greenfield, 2004, p. 181). This would help them to make meaning of their 'world' and develop their mental models. It is for this reason that TRC and school managers need to have strong ethics in order to promote professional values, which could serve as a highly reliable foundation for teachers and schools' commitment to learning and thus accomplish change within their organisation (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999, pp. 145- 146).

Transformational leaders also need to enhance the teachers' "perceptions of self efficacy or confidence, as well as their developmental potential", (Avolio & Bass, cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 19). According to Burns (cited in Boje, 2000, p. 9) TRC managers as transformational leaders should recognise and exploit the existing needs or demands of the potential members and schools, they should seek to satisfy their needs and engage them fully. This is achieved through conducting a needs assessment in schools and at the centre itself. In this way, the TRCs leadership promotes the environment that engages the members in improving their personal mastery, their mental models and subsequently system thinking as a whole. To

enhance the change process aimed at improving professional development of teachers, it is important that the TRCs involve teachers, school managers and other relevant players. In this way the TRCs, as transformational leaders, encourage members to become self empowered, and change agents. I believe that effective professional support of schools by the TRCs depends on individual members who are committed to learning, to gain knowledge and to improve the quality of their service. It is for this reason that Avolio and Bass (cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 25), associated transformational leadership with “motivating associates to do more than they originally thought possible”. Cashin, et al. (2000, p. 1) supported the argument that transformational leadership is a process in which “motivational maturities” are increased and personal interests are aligned towards the vision of the organisation. The TRC managers as transformational leaders with the collaboration of school managers are expected to make the organisation succeed in a collaborative manner, through the “definition of the essential purpose of teaching and learning, and then empowering the entire organisation to become energised and focused” (Liontos, cited in Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9). Furthermore, Leithwood in (Cashin et al., 2000) argues that the leadership is expected to facilitate the redefinition of the mission and vision of its members, and a renewal and restructuring of their systems to achieve quality education.

However, transformational leadership must be grounded in a moral foundation. Through the process of morality, leaders and follower share motives and goals, and make it their responsibility to realise them (Bass, cited in Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000, p. 212). Transformational leadership is anchored by four traits, which many scholars refer to as the four I’s. According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1998), these traits are, Idealised influence (II), Inspirational motives (IM), Intellectual stimulation (IS), and Individualised consideration (IC). The TRC managers and principals as transformational leaders must fulfil these four functions if they want to succeed in bringing about the desired change in their organisations (Martin, Cashell, Wagstaff & Breuning, 2006, p. 17).

Through idealised influence, a leader becomes a role model to the follower (Boje, 2000, p. 18). The organisation leaders motivate followers by involving themselves in ongoing professional development, boosting confidence and setting high standards for emulation (Bass & Steidlmeier, cited in Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9).

Inspirational motivation has to do with team spirit, motivation of the team, and provision of meaning, and challenges (Boje, 2000, p. 18). It provides followers with challenges and

meaning for engaging in shared goals and understandings (Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9). This also encourages followers to have confidence in the leadership and makes it easy to accept change. This can be achieved through motivational speeches, conversations, highlighting positive outcomes and stimulating teamwork (Kelly, cited in Hay, 2006, p. 6).

Intellectual stimulation has to do with creativity and innovation (Boje, 2000, p. 18). It is about questioning the current assumptions and generating creative solutions to problems by members of the organisation (Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9). Here the TRCs leadership does not only encourage members to participate in creative decision-making but also motivates them to participate in continuous research that could enhance their creativity in solution searching.

Individual consideration has to do with mentoring and coaching individual staff members to help them grow professionally (Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9). In transformational leadership, it is the responsibility of a leader to make time to support development amongst their individual followers. Transformational leadership always strives to offer individualised support to its staff members, teachers, or schools based on their individual needs. In this way, the leadership of the TRCs respond to the specific and unique needs of followers, teachers, or schools (Simic, cited in Hay, 2006, p. 7).

Furthermore, Cashin et al., (2000, p. 9) made an interesting observation that each of these four traits suggests morality and ethics in transformational leaders. The expectation of transformational leaders is the promotion of ethical policies, procedures, and processes within their organisation. In addition, the inspirational motivation suggests that leaders focus on getting the best out of followers. Based on that reasoning, Bass and Steidlmeier (cited in Cashin et al., 2000, p. 9) argue that leaders are transformational when they help to “elevate followers’ needs for achievement and self actualisation”, when they encourage moral maturity and motivate followers to go further than their self interest for the sake of their organisation.

According to Cashin et al., (2000, p. 10), transformational leaders will identify “the core values and unifying purposes of the organisation and its members, liberate their potential and encourage multiple leadership and satisfy the followers”. It is important that TRC leadership should always strive to help staff members to develop and maintain a collaborative professional work environment, and foster teachers’ development and help teachers to solve problems more effectively (Leithwood, cited in Cashin et al., 2000, p. 10). It is the responsibility of the leadership of both TRCs and schools to spearhead the creation of the

enabling environment for continuous research for teachers and motivate them to make maximum use of the resources available in TRCs to find better solutions to problems.

As transformational leaders, TRC managers should also encourage restructuring that enables the staff in the organisation to work together to provide the kind of leadership the organisation needs to grow and ensure quality education. This restructuring could contribute to the attainment of the shared vision among the members. It is also important that leaders who are ready to create a learning organisation be ready to be learners themselves. In this way, they set a good example to the other members. In the same vein, Bass and Avolio (cited in Coad & Berry, 1998, p. 166), argue that transformational leadership increases awareness of key issues in followers to achieve growth and development, and stimulates the members of the organisation to encourage them to come up with new ways of solving problems. The TRCs leadership should enhance the ability and potential of the members, and motivate them to go beyond self-interest in order to benefit individual teachers and schools that they are meant to support. It is also important that leadership be “rooted” in the TRC’s staff members as well as in the school community, because leadership is about learning together, constructing meaning and knowledge collectively, and collaboratively (Lambert, cited in Hayes et al., 2004, p. 521). The TRCs should focus on learning by mobilising professional learning communities and aligning their practices with pedagogies of development and support. It is for that purpose that Hayes et al., (2004, p. 524) noted that one of the important characteristics of a productive leader is “a commitment to leadership dispersal which supports the spread of leadership practice and collaborative decision making process in building common vision and purpose”. As noted by Russell (cited in Senge, 2006, p. 351) “the most important measure of how good a game I have played, is how much better I made my team mates play”.

As transformational leaders, therefore, TRC managers as well as principals should practise the type of leadership that raises both leader and other members of the organisation to “higher level of motivation and morality” Burns (in Johnson, 2002, p. 243). They should involve other organisational members as they continue to strive for change in their organisations. According to Johnson (2002, p. 243) transformational leaders share the following important characteristics:

- They identify themselves as change agents and take responsibility for change.
- They are courageous and take risks.

- They believe in and trust people.
- They have clear values and are value-driven, they are lifelong learners.
- They can deal with complexities, ambiguity and uncertainty; and they are visionaries and share their vision.

Hence, it is important that TRCs managers inhabit these characteristics in order to render appropriate support to schools, teachers and principals to enable them to handle effectively the changes that are taking place in schools.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The TRCs are appropriate organisations established by the Namibian government in order to respond to the country's most pressing 'deficits' in the education system. In specific terms, they were created to deal with issues in the country's education system characterised by poor equipment, lack of resources and de-motivated teachers. This chapter discussed theories that support the role of the TRCs as organisations, namely professional development, the learning organisation, and transformational leadership. In the following chapter, I present the methodology used to conduct this research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In Chapters 1 and 2, I gave a contextual background and the literature review for my study. This chapter describes the methodology and methods used in an attempt to get a response to my research question of understanding the role of TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education. I explain the paradigm in which this study is located and the methods I used to gather and interpret data. I also address the issues of ethics and validity.

#### **3.2 Research design**

##### **3.2.1 Research paradigm**

My research was located within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretive research seeks to understand phenomena and to interpret meanings within the social and the cultural context of a natural setting. According to Janse van Rensburg (2000, p. 17), “the focus of the interpretivist researcher is on unveiling the complexities of social life as they and the research subject experience it”. This paradigm was therefore appropriate for my research, as I wanted to understand events and the experiences of school managers and teachers of the selected schools regarding my research topic. The fact that this research was interested in people’s thoughts and feelings also suggested a qualitative approach. According to Maxwell (2005, p. 75), qualitative research helps in “understanding meanings for particular participants in the study, of events, situations, experiences and actions they are involved in”. Maxwell argues that a qualitative approach also identifies unexpected or unpredicted issues and their influences. This helped me to understand particular contexts, processes and consequently to develop contributory explanations (Maxwell, 2005).

##### **3.3.2 Sampling**

The driving force of qualitative research is to obtain useful information on a chosen case and understand it. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 114), in selecting a case, “a researcher hand picks the case to be included in the sample according to typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought”. For my study, I purposefully selected

three schools based on familiarity and accessibility. These three selected cases consisted of one senior secondary school, one junior secondary school, and one primary school. In each case I interviewed one school manager (the principals) and held one focus group discussion with teachers. The purposeful selection of the three cases was based on the complexity of the tasks being carried out at the different educational levels. The perception in Namibia is that the higher the grade in a school, the more complex the tasks are for the teachers. In addition, the teachers at high grades are required to have higher qualifications (a degree) than those at lower grades (a diploma) and as a result, the levels and type of support they need would be different. For example, the lower primary teachers may need more posters to produce teaching aids where as at junior and senior secondary levels teachers may need support in terms of reference books, old question papers and pedagogical support. It was therefore important for me to engage all three levels to obtain their perceptions. I believe that this move also added depth to my research data.

### **3.3.4 Research process and gaining entry/access**

At the beginning of the research process, I made an appointment with the Regional Director of education to explain the details of the research. I also submitted a letter requesting permission to access the sites of my research.

Secondly, I set up appointments with the school principals and teachers to explain the purpose and potential value of the research and hear their concerns. I set dates for the interviews and focus group discussions and presented my permission letter from the Director.

All three of the selected schools were involved in the research.

The following issues were experienced:

- In two of the schools' focus groups only three members participated instead of the five scheduled.
- Some delay was experienced in the interviews with the principals. This was caused by the work related problems.
- The research participants were open to speaking about the type of support offered and the shortcomings of the TRCs.
- The TRCs were provided with questionnaires to obtain their input.

- The transcription went smoothly and transcripts were sent to the participants for member checking.

### **3.3.5 Research methods and tools**

This study was a qualitative case study. This method allowed me to make a holistic and in-depth study of my research topic. In order for me to do this, I used document analysis, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and observation as tools to collect my data. According to Cohen et al., (2007, p. 253) case study research has the strength to “penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis”. This is because it uses multi-methods in collecting information about a chosen topic and this helped me to obtain information from more than one perspective. In addition, Stark & Torrence (2005) argue that,

The strength of case study is that it can take an example of an activity, an instance in action and use multi methods and data source to explore and interrogate it. Thus it can achieve a rich description of a phenomenon in order to prevent it from the participants’ perspective. (p. 33)

I collected data at each of the selected sites during my scheduled appointment dates for interviews and focus group discussions. I started my data collection process with an analysis of the existing documents in order to get an informed understanding of the context and framework of my research. Secondly, I made appointments with the participants and explained the research topic and the issues that I was going to cover during the interviews and focus group discussions. I included my letter of permission from the regional director, and showed them the questionnaires so they could see the goal of my research. I explained the potential value of the research in order to gain their trust and acceptance. Thereafter I posted the questionnaire to the 10 selected regional TRCs.

#### **3.3.5.1 Document analysis**

According to McEwan and McEwan (2003, p. 82), “document analysis can fill in some missing data pieces or can raise a host of new questions regarding the accuracy of observations and interpretations”. This was helpful to me as a researcher, as this guided me through the restructuring of my questions. According to Smith in Topnaar (2004, p. 38) documents provide:

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

These documents included policy documents, year programmes, lending registers, annual reports, meetings, and other relevant documents.

However, despite efforts to contact the different TRCs I only managed to get hold of some documents from two TRCs. Others promised to have their plans and reports organised (as they were still in rough format) before they could make them available to me but this did not happen. At schools, I was unable to obtain documents that would give me an idea of the role of the TRCs. However, the lending register at one of the TRCs shows many items signed out by the different schools.

### **3.3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews**

During my research, I also used semi-structured interviews as one of my data collection tools. I interviewed three selected participants consisting of school managers from the three selected schools, and one TRC manager. These interviews focused on their experience and perceptions of the role of the TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education. The strength of interviews as a research method is their ability to yield rich information. According to Gillham (2000, p. 65), semi-structured interviews can be the richest single source of data. In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 267) describe interviews as “flexible and adaptable; responses can be probed, followed up, clarified, and elaborated to achieve specific accurate responses”. I conducted interviews with one TRC manager to discover what the Centre does to support teachers and the extent to which the TRCs are making a significant improvement in terms of resources which support quality teaching and learning in schools. I provided all the participants with the interview schedule beforehand to help them prepare for the interview.

However, interviews have an inherent weakness of being time consuming. It took me about three weeks to interview all my targeted participants because of their work related commitments that kept interfering with the interview appointments.

### **3.3.5.3 Questionnaires**

Due to insufficient data from one TRC, I thought that it was necessary to get some more input from the other TRCs across the country (Namibia). I wanted to ascertain what support they offered schools in terms of training, resource provision, and other professional development programmes and whether they made an effort to improve these resources.

In order to overcome the problem of distance and the high cost of travel, I sent out ten questionnaires for them to complete of which seven were returned. One of the advantages of questionnaires is that they offer a wide range of responses that are not influenced by possible pre-determined answers. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001, p. 257) questionnaires are relatively economical; they present the same questions to all subjects and can ensure anonymity.

However, studies on research collection instruments have found that, no matter how careful you are in the design of data collection instruments such as questionnaires, there is always the possibility of ambiguity in questions. One or more question may not be clear and may not yield a good response. This was my experience to a certain extent. A shortcoming noted by Gillham (2000, p. 79), is that people “often ignore them or don’t complete them properly”. This method also falls short when an exploration of issues or clarity is needed in understanding why the respondents believe what they do.

### **3.3.5.4 Focus group discussions (FGD)**

I also held three focus group discussions with teachers to obtain their group ideas on how the TRCs support them to achieve quality education. Focus group interviews involve people who share similar characteristics or a common interest. I used a focus group discussion to understand ‘nuances’ of attitudes, beliefs, or opinion, perceptions and experience of the teachers on the role of the TRCs. The first group discussion was composed of Heads of Department (HOD) (3 participants) and the other two (5 and 3 participants) comprised teachers. In these discussions, teachers and HODs contributed openly and freely. The importance of a FGD is that it is capable of generating rich and insightful data through interaction. Focus group discussion allows for extensive probing, follow-up questions and

group discussion and observation of emotions (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004, p. 214). Another important aspect of a FGD is their group dynamics which can result in disagreements and tensions which may alert a researcher to hidden complexities which the individual interviews cannot reveal (Gillham, 2000, p. 78). However, as a researcher, I was vigilant of the dynamics of the power relations, especially when members of the group have differences in status or authority and one group member might dominate (Gillham, 2000).

My experience during the research process was that it was not easy to constitute a FGD. The school programme was full and teachers found it difficult to commit the time required for the FGD.

### **3.3.5.5 Observation**

Although I did not plan to use observation as a method in my study, I made some observations during the process of my research at the TRC on issues I thought would be relevant to my study. I observed how teachers were using the TRC service. This allowed me to find out the type of services, how often they were used and why they were used at TRCs. Some scholars observe that interviews provide important data, but they reveal only how people perceive what happens, not what actually happens. Observation thus helped me to “understand the context of the programmes, to be open-ended and inductive, and see things which the interviews could not reveal”, (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 304). However, observation has a weakness in that people may not behave naturally when they know they are being observed.

## **3.6 Analysis of data**

According to Flick et al. (2004, p. 254), analysis begins with a thorough repeated reading of and listening to research data. This entails studying interview scripts, observation notes or documents and interview tapes, and then compiling notes of what can be seen and heard to develop “tentative ideas about categories and relationships” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). It is here where triangulation played a role during analysis. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 141), “triangulation technique attempts to map out, or explain fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one stand point”. This means that the different methods help to supplement each other to unveil detailed information and in so doing bring about contextual enrichment of the data. After transcription, the data was coded and categorised into themes and sub themes. Flick et al. (2004, p. 156) see coding as a way of

“assessing and classifying data” according to “analytic categories”. These categories helped me to compare my data during analysis. The final step in my data analysis involved an interpretation of the data by interrogating and making meaning of the data.

### **3.7 Ethical issues**

Firstly, I wrote letters describing my research and requesting permission from the Regional Director, circuit inspectors and selected schools managers. The participants were asked to sign a consent form. I assured the respondents that they would remain anonymous and confidential information would not be revealed. According to Cooper & Schindler (2003, p. 120) “research must be designed in a way that respondents do not suffer physical harm, discomfort pain, embarrassment or loss of privacy”. However, where anonymity was going to be impossible, for example in photographs the participants were informed accordingly. I also acknowledged all the resources I drew on in my content and reference list. Thank you letters were sent to the school principal, Inspector, the director and all the participants of the research. I also tried to reduce the degree of conflict of interest by explaining the importance of this research and declaring my interest, especially during interviews with the staff at my work station (TRC).

### **3.8 Validity**

The use of triangulation strengthened the validity of my findings. The strength of triangulation is that it reduces the risk that conclusions reflect only the systematic biases or limitation of a specific source or method, and allows for broader and more secure understanding of the issue you are investigating (Maxwell, 2005, p. 93). This implies that the more a method picked up on an issue, the greater its validity. After the transcription of the data, I referred the notes back to the participants (research members) to check the accuracy of the information. I stored the raw material for my research to make it available to my supervisor.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

While the data collection process was exhilarating to me, I also learned some lessons. I learned that a well thought out or planned process of data collection may be influenced by the situation on the ground. A good example of this was the withdrawal of focus group participants. Secondly, I had the valuable opportunity to learn from the teachers and school

manager on their experience and perception of the role of the TRCs in supporting them professionally. As a staff member of a TRC, the process of this research has given me more insight into TRCs, in terms of their role, shortcomings, and problems and most importantly had an opportunity to hear from the teachers and school managers what the role of the TRCs should be. Some lessons on ethical consideration and validity of qualitative research were also learned. The next section presents the data collected.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4. Presentation of research findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In chapter three, I presented the research methodology I used in collecting the data. In this chapter, I present the data collected. Though the main sources of my data were interviews with the school managers, I also use the data collected through focus group discussions, observation, document analysis and questionnaires to substantiate the validity of my data. This is a process of triangulation (see methodology). However, I must note here that very

little information was collected from document analysis and observation. Therefore, most of the supporting information for the interview is drawn from focus group discussions and questionnaires.

The presentation of data in this chapter is in accordance with the eight categories that emerged from the data analysis. These categories are,

- TRCs service awareness and marketing among schools
- Expansion of TRCs network
- TRCs linkage with schools
- Access to TRCs by teachers
- Experiences of school managers and teachers of the services of TRCs
- School managers' learning and role towards their staff/school learning
- Acquisition of resources and their relevance to schools
- Professional development and resource provision for the TRCs

These categories are further divided into smaller sub categories for easy and logical presentation. In presenting the findings of this research I will use codes in place of the names of participants, schools and TRCs. The one-on-one interviews with principals/school managers will be addressed as School A, B and C in no specific order, focus group discussion participants will be addressed as Participant 1/2/3/4/5 of FGD 1/2/3 and TRCs participants as TRC.

## **4.2 Presentation of findings**

### **4.2.1 TRCs service awareness and marketing among schools**

The school managers and teachers who participated in this study were familiar with the concept of TRCs. This was evident during the interviews with school manager and focus group discussion with the teachers and Heads of Department. According to school A, B and C, and all FGDs, they see TRCs as centres that support teachers in terms of learning, teaching resources and knowledge improvement. School A, described TRCs as:

Centres which provide support to teachers in terms of teaching and learning resources to support teachers in their teaching career.

On the same point, school B explained that the centres help to increase their knowledge in their subject specialisation as well as helping teachers to produce teaching aids. In FGD1, participant 3 described TRCs as, "...the centre which is equipped with resources where teachers come and get information they need and share information". In support, participant 3, of FGD2 explained that, "It is a centre that supports the schools with the resources they lack in order for teachers to realise quality education in their schools". In adding, the TRC "should be an organisation or structure that meet the teachers' needs to make it easy for them to facilitate teaching in the classroom...it must have a supportive role" (Participant 2 of FGD1). In the same vein, participant 5 of FGD2 added:

It is also a centre where teachers meet in order to share ideas concerning their profession, discuss about strategies that they can use in their schools as a group. Sometimes they discuss about and develop scheme of work ...this centre is meant for teachers to plan their work.

However, despite the awareness of the TRCs among these participants, participant 3 of FGD2 argued that there are many school teachers that are still not aware of the service that TRCs provide e.g. chemicals. "Therefore, marketing of the available resource at TRCs should be done to encourage awareness among teachers to motivate them to come and use the available resource"

On the aspect of awareness, School C remarked that "TRCs must come on board",

They must make publicity about its existence and what resources and the type of support it has to offer to teachers. There are teachers out there who do not know how the TRC can help them. They are not benefiting because they don't know that they can make use of the TRC, some publicity must go on air, newspapers to let people know about TRC and their services.

He argued that only when information about TRCs reaches out to all schools, will teachers be aware of the services they offer and use them.

One way to do these is by expanding the TRCs services to all parts of the country and establishing and maintaining stronger links with schools and making them more accessible.

#### **4.2.2 Expansion of TRCs network**

It also emerged during this study that TRCs need to expand their services to reach out to schools in the more remote areas in the education regions. In this way the services of TRCs would be linked closely to all schools and classrooms. This expansion should be both in the

form of increasing the services at specific TRCs and the establishment of new TRCs in the areas that do not have this service. Remarking on the expansion, school B observed the following:

Looking at the Centre itself the capacity is small in comparison with the number of its clients it needs to serve. Maybe the centre needs to expand its service to serve all teachers including those that are situated in the villages. ...teachers from the far remote areas reach the nearest TRC late and it is closed because of the long travelling distance. As a result these teachers are denied access. For that reason there is a need that this service be expanded to cater all teachers and help more teachers.

She also suggested that the expanded TRCs should include additional structures such as a language centre which would assist teachers reading, speaking and grammar skills. In the same vein, School A argued that teachers need extensive programmes for English proficiency. Echoing the idea of a language centre, participant 2 of FGD1 remarked that a language centre would help language teachers to record comprehension, help teachers to teach grammar, speaking and reading skills. This, according to her would assist teachers to improve their language proficiency which in turn improves learners' performance.

Supporting the idea of the expansion of TRCs, school B, suggested that TRCs be established in every circuit (a groupings of 30-32 schools or a group 5/6 clusters) to cut the distance between TRCs and schools. This expansion should also include an improvement in the resources provided for juniors and senior secondary schools which is insufficient at the moment.

In addition to the aspect of TRC expansion, participant 2 of FGD1 remarked:

The location of the TRCs currently is best, it's centred ...but its capacity is really small and unable to meet the needs of the schools. Maybe we need to find a place where a proper planned resource centre could be constructed unlike the current one which is just modified classrooms.

According to participant 3 of FGD1, the need for the expansion of TRCs is necessitated by the ever increasing numbers of teachers and schools. The expansion of TRC services would improve the distances making the services easily accessible to the users.

It is against this background that participant 1 of FGD1 suggested that a modern TRC be built. This would be the one with better and bigger facilities, for example "the one that would include a science and computer laboratory, conference rooms etc". He added that the construction of new circuit offices should include TRCs. According to participant 3 of FGD1

a bigger TRC would accommodate more resources than the current one. In addition, an expert should be employed to guide the clients.

Furthermore, participant 3 of FGD3 added that it is in the remote areas where the support of the TRCs is mostly needed. According to participant 2 of FGD3, “many teachers in the rural areas are not exposed to more information”. As such this hampers their performance especially with the external examinations.

Sharing his experience, participant 2 of FGD2 said that:

The expansion of the TRC is a good idea ...I remember the times when I was still a teacher in the inland (far remote area) ...I could hardly make it on time to the TRC before it could close in the afternoon. If I had to leave early in the morning, my learners were left unattended to and that is bad.

He argued that in the remote areas some of the teachers do not know the role of the TRC. According to him bringing a centre closer to them would enable them to be aware of it and make full use of its services. In the same vein, participant 5 of FGD2 sees the expansion as “taking service to the people that need the service”. On the same issue, one of the TRCs confirmed that the space at the current TRC is not sufficient and because of that, the materials are scattered around in different rooms and some are hidden in the store rooms. For example, “the TRC does not have a laboratory for teachers to use for preparing or to do experiments before doing it with the learners in the class”. The materials that the teachers need for the productions of their teaching aids are also insufficient for all the clients.

As a result of this expansion the TRC would be able to support schools that according to the national school evaluation report (2007and 2008) reported a serious shortage of textbooks in schools.

In addition to that, participant 3 of FGD1 extended the idea of expansion to benefit school learners. In his view, TRCs could assist school learners on how to use and search for materials or books in the library or by using the internet. This would assist them to locate useful material on the internet and in libraries. He asserted that if learners have the knowledge, they could develop an interest in using their school libraries and computer laboratories for more effective learning.

### **4.2.3 TRCs linkage with schools**

Since the TRCs are created for schools, the linkage between the TRCs and schools is very important especially with regard to the realisation of quality education. It should therefore be strong and active at all times.

During this study, participant 1 of FGD3 pointed out that the linkage between TRCs and schools is not strong. As a result, there is a lack of communication between the TRC and the teachers, “there is a gap”. She asserted that “the TRC is isolated from schools in a way like it is not dealing with teachers”.

Participant 2 of FGD3 re-emphasised that the linkage is missing and that the TRCs must publicise their programmes to teachers. He remarked that most of the time teachers hear about TRCs when they are called for workshops. “As a result teachers think TRCs are just places where a workshop is conducted”. Due to this ‘missing link’ participant 1 of FGD3 asserted that the TRCs are “...kind of forgotten ...no-one from the centre reaches out ...but it’s a good idea”. One of the most important things that could boost this link according to participant 2 of FGD3 is that the annual calendar activities of the TRC should be provided to schools for teachers to be aware of them and schedule time to attend.

The consequences of the absence of a link, according to participant 3 of FGD1 is that he could not look for assistance from the TRC, because he did not know whether the TRC offered the specific type of assistance he was looking for. He re-iterated the call of his fellow participants that the TRC staff should inform teachers what the centres have to offer. Remarking on the lack of a link, participant 2, of FGD1 described it as a double-edged sword, the schools do not make attempts to approach the TRCs for assistance. Affirming her feelings on the problems of a link, participant 2 of FGD1 said:

There has not been any notable initiative to inform the TRC to meet us on our identified shortcoming or request them to meet us half way. We have just been using it on the limited basis only when we need something but there was no ground laid that we need a programme like this.

### **4.2.4 Access to TRCs by teachers**

There were mixed reactions from the participants to the question of access of schools to the services of TRCs. There was a significant indication that teachers have access to TRCs services such as the library, computer lab, production facilities conference room and various

teaching resources. In an attempt to provide professional development service to schools, the observation reveals that the TRCs open from 08H00 in the morning to 17H00 in the afternoon from Monday to Friday to allow teachers access. Sharing her experience on access, school B remarked that, "...teachers at our school are going to TRC regularly to produce teaching materials and use the internet service to research on relevant teaching materials". According to her this practice, "...is helping the school in providing quality education to the learners".

Sharing this sentiment, school A, also pointed out that:

TRC is supportive as teachers have access to the available resources at the TRCs, because teachers use these resources to produce teaching aids and use some other available materials, in this regard the centre is trying its best to help teachers improve on their teaching skills.

In addition, school C said:

Teachers have access to TRCs, they use internet at the TRC to search for relevant information that fits their specific subject specialisations...teachers are also allowed to borrow books from the TRC library. Teachers go to the TRCs to develop teaching materials, especially primary school teachers.

Furthermore, participant 1 of FGD1 also reported that, "Although the TRC is under-stocked; we used to borrow readers (story books), use listening skills cassettes and science equipment that I was recently exposed to". Still on the aspect of access, participant 3 of FGD2, through his experience remarked that; "...one day I used the library as well as the computer centre whereby I researched on the topic I wanted to teach, Fathers' Day". According to him through that exercise, he managed to find useful information for the lesson.

However it was pointed out by some participants in the study that due to long distances from the TRCs, and the limited number of TRCs centres and resources at the TRCs centres and the time frame in which the TRCs operates, the access to TRCs is limited for many teachers. Commenting on the issue of access, school A said, "...the centre is extremely small both in terms of the availability of resources and space compared to the needs and the number of schools it has cater for". She therefore suggested that the TRC should equip its library and make provision to open on the weekends till late in the evening to allow access for teachers teaching outside town. Supporting that view, school C argued, that sometimes teachers have extra classes in the afternoons which result in little time for them to use the TRC after their

extra classes. He also recommended that the TRC be opened on Saturdays to give enough time for teachers to make use of its services.

In addition to that participant 3 of FGD1 also suggested that:

TRCs be opened during the weekends as teachers who are teaching far away don't usually catch up with the operation time of the centre during week days, ...opening during the weekends would allow ample time for teachers to use the service, for example opening from 08H00 to 12H00 in the weekends.

While participant 3 of FGD1 and FGD2 commented that the location of the TRCs is the best in terms of access to teachers, participant 1 of FGD 3, on the other hand felt that the location was not in easy reach of teachers thereby denying access to many teachers. It would be of benefit if they were to be constructed at the place where their services could be used simultaneously with that of the advisory teachers (ATs) and the regional offices of education. She asserted that many teachers who use the services of the ATs and that of the regional office of education would then be able to more easily access the TRC.

#### **4.2.5 Experiences of school managers and teachers of the service of TRCs**

The research found that the TRCs offer some benefits to schools in terms of the provision of teaching resources, access to internet and computer service, library service and production facilities, development of teaching aids, teachers' training and workshops. Although the study found that this service is limited, the participants pointed out that these services have been a positive experience among teachers and school managers who accessed them.

##### **4.2.5.1 Provision of teaching resources and production of teaching aids**

It surfaced from the interviews with school A, B and C that the TRCs are generally trying to meet the needs of the teachers half way in terms of resource provision and production of teaching aids. Commenting on this point, School A explained that, "...teachers have access to the available resources at the centre" ... they use it to prepare their teaching materials. In the same vein school B, highlighted some resources they use at the TRCs as "readymade teaching materials, posters, globes (maps), biology models, and the teaching aids that teacher produce themselves,...this resources make it easy for the teachers to do their job easier and better".

During the research process I also observed that many teachers came to prepare their teaching aids at the TRC using raw materials from the TRC, library and internet service. Most of these teachers were from primary schools. The secondary school teachers came in to borrow chemicals and human biology transparencies to use in their class.

Echoing this argument, the TRCs outlined the widely used services at TRCs by schools as,

- Photocopy facilities which teachers use to reproduce teaching materials that interest them.
- Subject related audio-visual materials e.g. video tapes, cassette, DVD and CDs.

The following picture shows one of the production rooms in which teachers produce teaching materials at one of the TRCs.

- Production room where teacher produce their teaching aids and items for decorating or equipping their class rooms.



Figure 3: Production room (picture taken, August 12, 2009)

However, it also came out of the interviews that, although the TRCs are doing their best to support schools, they do not have enough resources to this adequately. As school C puts it, “I

would have loved to see the service of TRCs expanded to Junior and Secondary...as at the moment not much is provided in terms of materials at that level apart from the internet”. In addition to a lack of resources at the TRCs, school C explain one incident:

I heard about teachers who went to TRC to look for science experiment guide books and they were not helped because the resources they were looking for were not available at the TRC.

In addition to that participant 1 from FGD1 argued that,

In my observation and experience the TRCs comes with two sides, which is either just underutilised or the centre itself is not well equipped with the resources that teachers need... the TRC itself does not have the resource books that teachers need to read, though of recent resource books in the library are increasing.

Sharing her experience on the lack of resources at the TRCs, school B said, “...I went at the TRC to look for posters but they were very few remaining and they could not help me. I am saying that enough stock must always be in available, if they are finished then order more”.

The issue of inadequate resources in the TRCs centres was also noted by the TRCs as a challenge which they attribute to poor financial support from the government. Participant 2 of FGD1 also pointed out that:

The resource centre should go a long way to complement the effort of the schools and teachers with the various resources and equipment that the schools need in order to help them implement quality education. Currently TRCs have not adequately addressed this situation...this make the TRCs fall short in helping us, teachers.

The lack of adequate instructional support materials in schools is seriously obstructing the delivery of a better and quality education. Thus, TRCs should try to make the materials that are needed in schools available to support them (school B).

Sharing the same opinion, participant 2 of FGD 3 observed that, “a lack of concrete teaching resources is really a challenge in schools”. He argued that

It is time now for the centre to acquire these materials that we can borrow and utilise in schools, example biological models like support system, or other parts. When you teach and learners are seeing them (the models) and this is also important for their daily life not only for helping them to pass.

The importance of using concrete materials according to him is that they look exactly like the real organs in the body making it easier for learners to understand.

#### **4.2.5.2 Library, photocopy service, internet and computer facility**

According to this study, the other services that schools use at the TRCs are those of the library, photocopy machine, internet and computers.

As we were looking at the school managers and teachers' experience of the role of TRCs in supporting them, school C noted that teachers use the internet at the TRCs to obtain relevant information that fits their specific subject area. Sharing the same sentiment, school A remarked:

There are some resources which we borrow and use at school including books and computer and internet services at the centre. The use of computers and internet service is one of the aspects which are stressed in our curriculum.

According to participant 2 of FGD1 the TRC has also specifically benefited their school by providing a photocopy service especially during exams and when they had problems with their own machines.

Sharing her experience on these services, participant 2 of FGD1 said, "the second time I went to research about chemicals ...we managed to retrieve a lot of information about it from the internet at the TRCs...it was very helpful." In addition, the TRCs also indicated the following services that schools use at the TRCs;

- Library service which allows teachers or schools to borrow books or reference materials, previous exam question papers, syllabuses and other book related materials.
- Computer and internet labs where school teachers search for up-to-date materials that may be useful for their respective subjects.

The picture below show a computer lab fitted with modern computers to be used by teachers to search for useful information on the internet.



Figure 4: TRC computer lab (picture taken, August 10, 2009)

#### **4.2.5.3 Professional development provision through workshops, training and meetings**

Continuous professional development is an important principle of the Ministry of Education that leads to the attainment of the goal of quality education. It is the responsibility of the TRCs to ensure that professional development programmes are provided to ensure capable and creative teachers. During this study, School A advanced the following argument:

I argue here that we can no longer prepare teachers who follow blindly whatever standard or curricula are handed down from the state, instead, Namibia needs professionals who can take on leadership roles and make decisions about assessment and instruction, teachers who will critique current models and generate models of their own.

School A maintained that, as an academic, “I believe that the centre should develop new programmes ...that would involve the teachers fully in promoting changes in education reform”. According to her this type of programme would encourage creativities and independent thinking among teachers. Furthermore it would equip teachers with the necessary knowledge that would enable them to understand the vision of their organisation and thereby participate fully to realise it.

In addition, when teachers come together at the centre for formal meetings or during teaching material preparations, they meet other teachers from other schools. During these meetings they exchange or learn from each other, as a result they experience professional development. The TRCs also organise workshops and training aimed at developing teachers professionally. The issue of workshops and training was raised by the participants during this study and are presented next as subsections, starting with Information Communication Technology in Education (ICT).

#### **4.2.5.3.1 Learning through information communication technology in education (ICT) training and workshops**

The TRCs provide ICT training to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in the use of technology as learning and teaching tool. This study found that as a result of this training teachers are able to use the internet facilities to find up to date and relevant resources to use in their lessons.

On training, school C remarked that:

The TRCs should venture into Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The world today requires ICT literate people in order for them to be able to help or facilitate the teaching and learning easier. This would help the teachers to access more recent and relevant information that they may use to teach their learners.

According to him, a lack of ICT knowledge in teachers serves as a disadvantage to the learners who may end up not benefiting from recent and relevant information. TRCs must then play a role in ensuring that teachers are computer literate.

The relevance of this training is that schools would be able to use computers for production of teaching materials, research, teaching tools, administration and communicate beyond the borders of their schools.

One of the beneficiaries, school B, applauded the TRC for offering ICT training. She said, "The ICT programs have really helped us a lot, some of the principals did not know even how to open a computer ...after this training we have learned some basic programs of computer". According to her, as a result of training, she is now able to use a computer to design teaching materials instead of waiting for help from the school secretary. She said her work has become easier.

In addition, school C stressed that TRCs are institutions responsible for professional development, "ICT should be the area where they must assist us". According to him, this would allow teachers to impart ICT knowledge to their learners. The learners in turn would then use it as a learning tool.

According to school C, last year (2008) one teacher from their school attended ICT training at the TRCs, but due to a lack of computer facilities at schools, the trained teacher could not train the other staff members. To add to that, school C also pointed out the slow pace at which the ICT training is being rolled out to all schools in the region attributed to insufficient ICT equipment and facilities to accommodate large numbers of workshop participants at

TRCs. Confirming that, school C said, “I had a chance to go and check for myself the room was already full with a small number of participants”.

Thus, school C argued that there has not yet been a positive impact of the ICT training in schools, and because only few people are trained. “If it can be expanded it would do us wonders”. However, “the individual colleagues that attended the training are benefiting”.

In addition to that participant 1 of FGD3 also shared her experience on the relevance of ICT workshops teachers when she managed to produce her own teaching aids (graph board) using computer skills she acquired as a result of the ICT workshop at the TRC. She said:

The latest teaching resource that I found interesting was a graph board. I always tried to come up with one myself but it was not effective enough. Luckily this year (2009) I was invited for a workshop at TRC which I appreciated, at least now I have a graph board.

Participant 1 of FGD2 also remarked on training teachers to use technology to present lessons, “not to replace teachers” but just as another approach or a tool to be used in teaching, specifically in mathematics. She argued that it would help in alleviating boredom in the class which is caused by only one (usual) teaching approach. The learners may be excited by technology which as a result leads to an arousal of their interest to participate in active learning. Furthermore, teaching using technology would help in time management as it is easier and faster to repeat the lesson if the learners did not follow.

Participant 3 of FGD1 also joined the discussion and remarked that computer skilled people use computers to obtain information or resources easily and cheaply to use to improve their teaching, instead of buying more expensive books.

In support of the former, participant 2 of FGD1 said that:

ICT can bring us at the competitive level with other schools or regions. The performance of the teachers and the performance of the learners can be improved in the classroom as teachers have access to computers (internet) and can share with the learners the information we can get there. Today teaching relies very much on the chalkboard, however we now want to step on to and keep in line with the other advanced schools in the region by including ICT in our teaching.

In agreement, participant 2 of FGD 1 shared her positive experience when she used the internet service at a TRC to research the topic she had to teach where books are not provided though it appears prominently in the syllabus. This participant said:

The first time I asked someone to help me look for idioms, this is what the syllabi demand us to teach but we don't have that kind of books in the schools. Though I am computer illiterate, I got the type of help from the TRC staff and the learners enjoyed it during the lesson (in 2005 or 2006), "it makes their English richer".

Participant 3 of FGD1 remarked that one of the benefits that schools get out of ICT training and workshops is that it has become easier to retrieve information of the past years external examinations question papers for grade twelve using the internet facilities at the TRCs or elsewhere where this service is available.

Participant 1 of FGD1, who participated in the TRCs' ICT training, also remarked that his recent experience was very enjoyable and educative. He recommended that many workshops of that kind be organised for everybody (teachers) to get the basic computer literacy/skills. In addition to his own remarks, he pointed out that as a result of that workshop, he also learned how to use some other ICT equipment like a data projector for lesson presentation. One day he borrowed the projector and used it to present lessons at school and returned it when he was done.

#### **4.2.5.3.2 Learning through In-Service Basic Education Training Diploma (BETD INSET)**

The other form of formal training that featured in interviews during this study is the training that teachers who are under- or un-qualified undertake to upgrade their professional qualifications. This qualification is called In-Service Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD INSET). Sometimes it is referred to as BETD In-service. The picture below shows the office with BETD in-service modules at a certain TRC.



Figure 5: BETD INSET modules (Picture taken on August 12, 2009)

Participant 1 of FGD1 commented that the BETD plays a significant role in improving teachers' qualifications. He argued that, "the region had a lot of unqualified teachers and the

colleges alone could not have brought up the region to the level where it is now”. He commended the TRC for having done a good job, “...here the TRCs have played a significant role in professional development”.

In his recommendation he (participant 1) argued that, “...as things are changing, new approaches are coming in teaching, new things are continually coming, TRCs therefore must still move a step further to embrace these changes ...I am talking about ICT”.

The TRCs must offer in-service ICT courses to the teachers. This would enable them to use technology to teach in the class. This is an area of need as many teachers who graduated from universities and colleges were not privileged to learn computers and are therefore unable to use them in teaching. The challenge of the TRCs is to investigate the areas where teachers need additional training and ICT is just one example of them.

The documented evidence (training evaluation) also indicates that teachers who were trained through the ICT training programme were happy with it as they learned basic computer skills that now enable them to search for teaching resources on the internet and incorporate ICT in education as a teaching tool but not necessarily a separate subject.

Commenting on his own experience about the BETD INSET training, participant 5 of FGD2 said, “I was an under qualified teachers before, but through the TRC I managed to become a qualified teacher and I now have a BETD diploma ...I really think the TRC is there for the teachers”. He commended the TRC for helping teachers to become professionally qualified.

Sharing the same sentiment, school B also remarked that BETD in-service have brought improvement in qualification among the staff members of their school. As a result of improved qualifications among teachers, their own practices and learners performance have also improved. Complementary to that, document analysis reveals that the BETD INSET strives to foster growth in teachers in terms of specialised subject content and pedagogical skills.

Participant 5 of FGD2 agreed that through the BETD INSET, the TRC is achieving professional development among teachers. He said:

Through the BETD INSET training, I am equipped with knowledge on different methods that I can use in the class rooms ...I am now able to implement the Learner Centred Method. The work in the class room has become very easy to me, ...I have the ability to initiate any ‘tactics’ to solve many of my classroom problems with the

learners, when I find that certain learners have problems I know what to do. I have gained good experience from the TRC.

Remarking on the difference between qualified and un-qualified teachers in terms of their practices, School B said that, “If a person did not get professional training, he or she would do things differently than the one who got training and was professionally qualified in the field”. Usually, the qualified teachers are able to teach using a Learner Centred Approach (LCA); as a result their learners are encouraged to discover things by themselves and are now confident to express themselves in English at school. According to participant 2 of FGD1, “the programme of BETD INSET training at TRCs is helping in equipping teachers to develop professionally”.

Although the document analysis indicates the successful implementation of LCA in some schools, it also points out a need for improvement in many schools and teachers in this area. As mentioned earlier, the other aspect that surfaced from the study is the TRC as a meeting place for teachers, which is presented next.

#### **4.2.5.3.3 Learning through Meetings at TRCs**

The TRCs are also described as places where teachers meet formally and informally in an effort to effect improvements in their schools. Thus, they are also centres that help teachers to resolve problems that they are facing at their various schools, for example teaching techniques, classroom management and other work related problems. This is made possible when teachers meet at the TRCs.

Commenting on this participant 2 of FGD 2 said, “...once you are there (at the TRC) you will meet with other colleagues and learn from them different methods on how to present lesson in the class room and how to interpret the scheme of work”, for example during workshops teachers come together and share ideas. In that process teachers learn from each other. “In my experience this is one form of help that we are getting from TRCs”. Some of the formal meetings held at the TRCs bring together teachers from inland, urban areas and from other remote schools to exchange ideas on the problems that they are experiencing at schools.

Participant 5 of FGD2 remarked that, through meeting discussions and workshops at the TRCs, teachers are becoming creative. Many of them can now create their own materials or resources that they can use in their classes. With the help of TRCs all these things are happening. He argued that if the TRCs were not there, many teachers would suffer because

there would not be a place that could coordinate the learning of new ‘technologies’. In support, participant 2 of FGD 1 described TRCs as places where teachers can help each other through the sharing of experience and knowledge through group meetings, workshops and training.

#### **4.2.6 School managers’ learning and their role in their staff/school learning**

The TRCs, being organisations responsible for professional development, need to provide leadership and management training among teachers and school managers. On this aspect, school C and A argued that there is a need for professional development specifically for school managers. Voicing his opinion school C said, “I also think that TRCs have a responsibility to coordinate training and meeting programmes for school managers to enhance their leadership and management skills”. He argued that:

TRCs could for instance bring together leaders of performing schools and those from the schools that are lagging behind and share their experience. In this way the best practice in the area of school leadership and management would be shared. If our schools are to be developed, I think this programme should be managed by TRCs as well.

He contended that this is an area where TRCs are ineffective.

Sharing this sentiment, school A remarked that professional development programmes for school managers would serve as an advantage to both managers and teachers by improving their skills in areas such as decision-making, classroom management, and other aspects of leadership and management. Therefore, it would be good for TRCs to organise experts in the area of educational leadership and management to facilitate workshops of this kind. However, she argued that in the end, “it all depends on the attitudes of the participants”, whether they are prepared to accept and implement the ideas from the workshop or not.

The need for professional development of school managers also features prominently in the national external evaluation school reports for 2007 and 2008. These reports clearly indicate that, “there is an urgent need for a training programme in all aspects of school management” for school managers. This learning would result in school managers promoting learning among their staff. And one of the better ways of doing that is by taking the lead by learning themselves. That would set an example that their staff would emulate.

The achievement of quality education should be a collaborative effort from both schools and TRCs; therefore it is equally important that school manager get involved in an effort to encourage teachers to make maximum use of the TRCs. When the school managers use the TRCs themselves, they can play a significant role in encouraging their staff to use the resources available at the TRCs. School A remarked:

Being the principal of the school very close to the TRC, I regard TRC as my second office. I used to encourage my teachers not to only rely on the textbooks but to consider using the available resources at the TRC, for example to use internet to download latest resources that are useful to their classroom teaching. There are also certain resources I also need as a manager, for example books and guides about ways of managing schools, I borrow these books from the TRC, read and return them after when I am done.

In addition, the use of resources at the TRCs is being emphasised in her staff reflection meetings. As she pointed out, “I remember two weeks back, I conducted a reflective training in which we also encouraged teachers to make full use of the resources at the TRC”. Through the use of the TRC, they can also meet other teachers from the other schools and as a group they can exchange ideas and get solutions to problems. Remarking on this, school B also said:

As one of the school which is closer to the TRC, I encourage teachers to make use of the resources at the TRC; they should not hide behind excuses of a lack of teaching materials at school.

According to her, that would enable them to offer quality teaching in their classrooms. However, she pointed out that some teachers are just too lazy to use the TRC on a regular basis and these are the ones that only rely on a prescribed text book as the sole source of information. The result of this is that usually their lessons “are not of good quality and are less enjoyable” to their learners. School C shares this thinking. In his remarks he stated that, “my approach to that is that teaching is a learning process”. The teachers should always go out there to research for information to continuously enhance their knowledge. There is always something new to learn as there is always change taking place in this world. He said, “That is exactly what we are promoting during our meetings for staff and subject teachers”. According to school A, in as much as the managers of the organisations want their staff to develop professionally, they remain responsible for creating an environment conducive to learning.

Nevertheless, participant 2 of FGD3 pointed out that it has been a long time since the school managers at their school talked to them about the TRC and its service.

This feeling is supported in the document analysis (external school evaluation report, 2007 & 2008) that revealed that the professional competence of managers and their ability to inspire and motivate were weak in around half of all schools in Namibia and thus needs urgent professional development training.

#### **4.2.7 Acquisition of resources and their relevance to schools**

To establish the extent to which TRCs make a significant effort to improve their resources to support schools appropriately, data were sought from the TRCs through an interview and questionnaires.

The interview and questionnaires reveal that TRCs acquire resources through their respective regional office of education, NIED, donations, or through their respective centres development funds. Some TRCs reported that materials that are acquired through regional office budgetary provision, NIED and development funds are mostly relevant as there is input from the basic education curriculum implementers, the teachers and advisory teachers.

The donations are a mixture of relevant, irrelevant, dated and out of date materials. In most cases these materials don't match with the curriculum implemented in schools. As one respondent from TRCs put it, "most books from donors are irrelevant to the system (education)" because they do not fit in with the curriculum. Sharing this view, another TRC respondent said, "many donations are from foreign institutions and therefore not applicable to Namibian syllabi, and most of the printed materials are out dated".

The TRCs in some regions facilitate the acquisition or donation and deployment of ICT equipment for schools. Currently, they are Tech/Na, a national project of the Ministry of Education (see TRC computer lab). The picture below shows 200 computers donated by USAID in 2009.



Figure 6 and 7: 200 donated PCs (picture taken, August 11, 2009)

In addition to that, one TRC respondent remarked that their centre has a number of relevant resources which are updated annually. However, it was pointed out that these resources are still inadequate. Some of the TRCs ensure the relevance of their acquisitions by conducting a needs assessment by means of questionnaires or surveys and from the advisory teachers during school visits.

In addition, some TRCs encourage their staff members to attend continuous professional development courses to keep them up to date with relevant developments in their fields. TRCs also liaise with business and donors to lobby for support for their local TRC and schools.

However, despite all these efforts to improve resources in order for quality education to be ensured some TRCs still maintained that the significance of the role of TRCs depends on the readiness of the teachers to make use of the service.

In order to continue to render effective support to schools, the following priorities were identified by the TRCs:

- Provision of many ICT training courses for teachers
- Facilitate the process of providing computers and internet facilities to schools
- Provision of reading with comprehension workshops for teachers
- Annual needs assessment survey to determine the needs and challenges of schools.

According to one TRC participant, TRCs are one of the most important components of the education structure in terms of supporting quality education through teacher support. He argues that increased financial support is vital for the TRCs to acquire the relevant resources that the teachers need to support their professional development.

In addition, the limited number of TRCs, shortage of staff with expert knowledge in some areas at the TRCs, insufficient materials to be used by teachers, a lack of transport to run the centres programmes effectively are some other limiting factors experienced by the TRCs.

#### **4.2.8 Professional development and human resource provision at TRCs**

The Teachers Resource Centre needs expert human resources to facilitate their programmes and to expand. While the number of schools and teachers is increasing, the TRCs are left without the capacity to provide adequate professional support for all of them. On the other hand, the few staff members available at the TRCs have little or no opportunity to learn and increase their ability to be able to render effective support.

During this study, school A noted that the centres need to employ an adequate number of knowledgeable staff to assist teachers, especially, in the areas of computer skills, teaching material production and internet searching. According to participant 2 of FGD 3 sufficient human resources would enable the Teachers Resource Centres to facilitate their programmes to provide the required support within a reasonable time frame.

School B remarked that the TRC staff should also be given workshops on client/customer relations. This would help them to handle visitors or users of the TRCs in a professional manner that would attract many teachers to the centres. According to her it is important that the TRC managers together with the rest of their staff must be helpful and respectful among themselves and to the clients. There should be a practice of mutual respect and support, to enable the clients to always feel motivated to use the centre. She argued that the opposite of this would discourage the clients from using the centre.

Sharing her experience of some of the issues related to client relation skills of the TRC staff School B said:

We experienced a problem though not exactly with the TRC manager. Sometimes you want to make copies at the TRC with your own papers but they refuse. Sometimes you want to fax some official documents but they are refusing. I can remember once upon a time the secretary I found there refused.

This kind of behaviour could de-motivate teachers from using the TRCs. The limitation in terms of the number of staff with expert knowledge in some areas was also confirmed by the TRCs during the study. One of the TRCs argued that a factor that hampers the proper implementation of the TRCs programmes is a lack of sufficient financial support for TRCs.

An improvement in expertise in the TRCs would help them to see the purpose of their organisation and allow them to work collaboratively with the schools to achieve the overall vision of quality education.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the data in accordance with the various analytical categories that emerged through the process of data analysis. These categories were further divided into sub-categories. In the next chapter I present the discussion of the research findings of this study using the themes that emerged from the data.

## **CHAPTER 5**

## **5. Discussion of findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter 4, I presented the findings of my research using the categories that emerged from the process of analysis that emanated from my research question. This chapter now discusses and interprets the findings of the study in terms of the themes developed from my data. As I venture into the discussion of findings, I draw on literature presented in chapter 2 and on the data presented in chapter 4 to harmonise them into my research findings.

During the presentation of my research findings, I was astonished by the information that surfaced from the study on the perceptions, experience and expectations of schools of the TRCs as organisations for professional development. A survey of the schools was necessary for an understanding of the role of the TRCs as they are the service users.

As a result of this engagement with the school managers, teachers, and TRCs, the significance, achievements, improvement as well as the short comings and challenges of the TRCs were revealed. As I discuss the findings, I interweave these aspects with the literature. This discussion of findings revolves around the following themes:

- Understanding and significance of TRCs as learning organisations
- Organisational leadership responsibilities towards quality achievement
- Improved TRCs capacity and linkage with schools
- The TRCs support system and challenges

## **5.2 Discussion of findings**

### **5.2.1 Understanding and significance of TRCs as learning organisations**

During this study, it was established that there is a good understanding of the purpose and significance of TRCs as organisations that provide professional development support to schools to help them deliver quality education. All definitions or descriptions of the TRCs of participants boil down to the fact of enhancing learning and capacity improvement for individual teachers and schools as organisations. For example, in chapter 4, school A and

participant 5 of FGD2 described TRCs as, “a centre which provide support to teachers in terms of teaching and learning resources to support teachers in their teaching career” and “...a centre where teachers meet in order to share ideas concerning their profession, discuss and develop strategies that they can use in their schools as a group” to improve the quality of education. Similarly, Knamiller, 1999, Hoppers, 1998, and DANIDA cited in Knamiller, 1999 described TRCs as centres where teachers meet and discuss strategies that offer professional and academic support to schools with the aim to improve the quality of their teaching. Ideally, TRCs should provide a basis for interaction among teachers, encouraging exchange and collective projects, fostering a culture of improvement from within the teaching body, assisted by facilitators or resources centre staff (Giordano, 2008, p. 144). It is patently clear from these descriptions that learning and capacity building or improvements are the main terms at play when we discuss the role of TRCs. These resonate with the characteristics of learning organisation as discussed in chapter 2.

In organisations, individuals and teams continuously engage into activities that improve their knowledge capacity and thereby aligning themselves with the requirements or set qualities of the organisation. Usually these requirements keep on changing just as change is occurring in the external environment. In most cases the external forces are mainly responsible for triggering change in the organisation. Learning organisations therefore are organisations in which individuals continuously learn to acquire the necessary knowledge that enables them as a whole to handle change or transform to a successful organisation. Similarly, Senge (1990) the ‘architect’ of learning organisation (see chapter 2) argues that organisations learn to prepare themselves for future change. This is done by developing capacity of individual members within them. According to learning organisation literature, learning organisations exhibit the characteristics of continuously learning, readily adapting to change, detecting and correcting errors, thus, continually improving (Argyris & Schon cited in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 427).

Therefore, the TRCs should be wary of merely maintaining the status quo and engage in activities that improve their capacity to ensure that the goal of quality education is achieved through rendering quality service to teachers and schools as organisations.

According to the data presented in chapter 4, the TRCs provide a range of activities and programmes that ensure learning among individual members at TRCs, teachers, school managers as well as schools as organisations. A good example of formal and informal

learning experience such as training library and computer service, meeting opportunities, provision of learning and teaching resources were highlighted by participants of this study in chapter 4. Thus it can be argued that TRCs as learning organisations manifest themselves as organisations where members are continually learning new strategies of working, drawing on the experience and seeking new trends through research, reading, workshops, outside experience and organisational development (OD) programmes. According to Senge (1990) as discussed in chapter 2, through these programmes, the TRCs align and develop the capacities of individuals and teams within TRCs but they also create a platform for schools and individual teachers to advance in terms of capacity in order for them to achieve quality education. It is for this reason that I argue that TRCs should be seen as learning organisations with the chief responsibility of creating opportunities for learning among individual teachers and schools as organisations, thus, enabling schools to become learned or learning organisations.

Capacity building or improvement exercises and making professional development services accessible to schools form my next sub-theme. The capacity improvement should however start within the TRCs themselves to enable them to support schools.

### **5.2.1.1 Capacity building or improvement in schools**

Many researchers on education quality stress the significance of the role of teachers and school leadership in bringing about quality educational change (Giordano, 2008, p. 11). Giordano argued that change in schools depends on the motivation and qualifications of teachers, who are or not able to adopt suitable or workable teaching strategies given the different situations they may find themselves in and the capability to understand and implement policy recommendations correctly. Therefore, TRCs become important elements for supporting teachers to realise that. As reported in the data presentation, the Teachers' Resource Centres achieve this through the provision of professional development to schools in two forms, those of formal and informal learning experiences. This support comes through training, workshops, provision of meeting space, teaching and learning materials, library facilities, computer and internet facilities, teaching aids production and photocopy facilities. The teachers that were part of the professional development programmes argued that they gained knowledge and useful experience allowing them to use different strategies in their teaching.

As was discussed in chapter 2, both these forms of professional development are important for teachers' growth to attain the goal of quality education. Thus, Jurasaitė-Harbison (2009) in chapter 2 recommended that, if any reform in education system is to succeed, teachers need to use various opportunities for learning to enhance continuous professional growth.

In chapter 4, school A argued for the importance of creativity in teachers to deal with the reform that is currently taking place in the Namibian education system. When teachers continue to learn, they acquire new knowledge and improve their capacity, leading to a learned school. Such learning improves performance of both individuals and their schools as organisations and quality education becomes attainable. Another value of continuous learning is that it brings about personal mastery in individuals.

As a result of increase in personal mastery teachers would be in a better position to understand the content and interpret their work and understand their personal goal within the organisation and the vision of the organisation as a whole. This enables them to participate in the attainment of the overall vision of the organisation by making their meaningful personal contribution. The improved mental model results in people sharing the organisational vision. The sharing of the vision leads to team learning which leads to system thinking in the entire organisation.

This resonates with the argument of school A in the study who argued that, as an academic, "I believe that the centres (TRCs) should develop new programmes ...that would involve the teachers fully in promoting changes during education reform" in their organisations. These types of programme would encourage creativity and independent thinking among teachers thereby causing personal mastery. Consequently, this would enable teachers to understand their role within the organisation better, leading to an improved mental model.

Moreover, this learning helps individuals and organisations to anticipate environmental change and adapt their thinking and actions quickly by aligning teachers and school practices with the vision of realising quality education (Moloi, 2005, p. 34).

### **5.2.1.2 Accessibility of TRCs service and its impact on schools**

This study reported that the issue of access is imperative for professional development initiatives of the TRCs. However this study reported mixed feelings by the participants on the current accessibility of the TRCs service by schools which leads to the conclusion that the impact of the TRCs service is not felt by all schools. According to my observation, the ideal

radius is 5km. This argument resonates with the findings of Welford and Khaheke, who concluded that, the TRCs have little or no impact on schools further than a few kilometres away (cited in Giordano, 2008, p. 98). Participants in FGD 3 concurred that a stronger link between TRCs and schools could be established if the TRC service was closer to schools.

However, the participants maintained that TRCs are important organisations for education quality improvement in schools. Teachers who have access to TRCs make use of the service of the TRC regularly for teaching and learning materials production, and researching relevant materials on the internet .As discussed by Francis, (1997, p. 170) a result of learning is that the individual performance of organisational members in terms of quality improves and when all teachers participate in learning it results in school learning.

It is important therefore that the TRCs as learning organisations must have as a central principle a commitment to help all teachers to embrace a desire to learn (Senge, 1994, p. 11). Thus, if the TRCs are to make an impact on all schools in terms of learning they have to make their services accessible to all. This would mean that the professional development of teachers and schools is catered for. In addition to that, participants in the study suggest that access could be achieved through expanding the service to remote areas that do not presently benefit from this service or extend opening times and dates. The logistics of this arrangement would require people that are willing to work overtime and funds to pay their overtime hours.

The access to professional development activities and programmes of the TRCs would give teachers the opportunity to engage in activities that would advance their knowledge or skills to enable them to participate in the transformation of their schools. Usually this happens when they detect errors in their teaching strategies; they may use the available services at TRCs to work on correcting them (Moloi, 2005). School teachers could be part of team learning. Team learning occurs when individuals come together in one place to share knowledge and experiences. This level of learning precedes individual learning.

Most of the studies on learning organisation contend that individual learning is the starting point of organisational learning, and that though it does not guarantee organisational learning, I believe, along with other scholars in this field that individual learning is a compulsory starting point for the learning of an organisation. My earlier argument indicates a positive effect on individual learning as a result of access to the professional development service offered by TRCs.

That is why Dixon (in Moloi, 2005, p. 24) argues that learning of an organisation takes place when learning processes at individual, team and organisation level transform the organisation in a direction that is satisfactory to its stakeholders. Thus accessibility is one of the important aspects that encourage learning in the organisation. The aspect of accessibility was a point of argument of participant 1 of FGD3 in the study.

### **5.2.2. Organisational leadership responsibilities towards quality achievement**

In ensuring quality education in schools this study has also found that the collaborative role of leadership of both TRCs and schools as learning organisations is crucial. The TRCs, being responsible for professional development support for schools, owe it to teachers to ensure an environment conducive to learning. On the other hand, school leadership should also ensure a motivating environment for teachers to be committed to seeking ongoing professional development at TRCs. Most importantly, the study reported that the line of communication between them should at all times remain open and active for the sake of appropriate, effective and efficient support. This is one of the roles that organisation leaders should play. Hence I argue that transforming the organisation needs transformational leadership. The literature argues that transformational leadership is an essential concept to organisations that are serious about bringing about change in their organisations.

The transformational leadership creates valuable and positive change in the followers. According to Sergiovanni (2007, p. 61), transformational leaders “focus on high-order, intrinsic and moral motives and needs of the followers”. It assumes that followers have the capacity to pass moral judgement on processes of achieving common goal as defined group commitments.

During this time when the Namibian education system is undergoing major reform, transformational leadership is essential. The evidence for the urgent need for school managers’ leadership training was also reported by external evaluators’ reports (2007 & 2008) in the data.

Thus, Bass cited in Garcia-Morales et al., (2008, p. 192) maintains that, it is imperative that leadership in education organisations today should move toward becoming transformational leadership, which inspires employees to participate with enthusiasm in team efforts and to

analyse beyond their own interests, reorienting the training and construction of team to improve organisational performance.

In order to provide a better understanding on transformational leadership responsibilities towards achieving quality education, I present it in two sub-themes, learning leaders for learning organisations and the leadership role in learning organisations.

### **5.2.2.1 Learning leaders for learning organisations**

For TRCs and schools to achieve the standard of quality of education required in schools, the leaders of these organisations should continue to enhance their capacities through continuous learning. In that way they would be able to have the confidence to encourage learning among staff members. Moreover, this would enable them to have the capacity to bring about and handle meaningful transformation. More to the point, it is a measure of responsibility of a leadership to enhance learning among the individuals and their organisation as a whole by building the learning organisation (Senge, 1990).

Thus, TRCs being organisations responsible for professional development support in schools, should also provide leadership and management training for school managers to enhance their knowledge and skills in that area. This was the argument that was advanced by School A, B & C during the study. In addition, the participants argued that the TRCs should facilitate the gatherings of school managers comprising performing and non performing schools so that they could share experiences and exchange ideas. Through this, managers may learn from each other and eventually improve on their weakness and practices. In the study of school cluster and TRCs, Giordano (2008, p. 100) argues, that TRCs have shown the potential to improve management at schools through training and creating a platform or forum that provides managers opportunity for sharing solutions to common problems. Moreover, the active involvement of organisational managers in ongoing professional development programmes would set a good example for their teachers to emulate.

It was interesting to find out how some schools managers are actively involved in enabling continuous learning. For example one school manager in this study shared her experience to this effect when she reported that:

There are also some certain resources I also need as a manager, for example books and guides about ways of managing schools, I borrow these books from the TRC, read and return them after when I am done.

Through this practice the manager experiences learning as she continues to pick up new ideas of managing her school. I argue that it is the notion of idealised influence (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998, p. 24) in the sense that this school manager does what she wants other members of the organisation to do, and that is leading through modelling. Bass & Steidlmeier (1998) and others in the literature argue that it gives a positive indication to the members of the organisations that it is the right thing to do and thus, boosts their confidence and motivates them to achieve the required high standard. I also argue that it shows an aspect of inspirational motivation in the sense that when managers get seriously involved in learning, it can psychologically trigger the interest of followers in pursuing the same initiative, especially when the manager brings change in the organisation by implementing what they learned from the developmental programmes. This is also a form of motivation.

Mark et al., (cited in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 428) argue, that “leadership in the context of transformational change requires a learning leader”. Such leaders foster a learning culture in the organisation; they detect “dysfunctionality” and encourage transformation (Schein cited in Silins & Mulford, 2002, p. 428).

Therefore when leaders of the TRCs and schools are committed to learning, it is more likely that they may encourage meaningful learning among the staff members. Besides, the participation of managers in learning would serve as a good example and reinforcement for the entire organisational learning.

Also through learning, TRCs or organisational managers acquire the relevant intellectual capacity to stimulate learning within their organisations and among the benefiting organisations. Moreover, this trait enables the managers to promote the staff members’ “intelligence, knowledge and learning so that they can be innovative in their problem-solving and solutions” (García-Morales, Matia-Reche & Hurtado-Torres, 2008, p. 190). These learning managers encourage their followers to participate in the realisation of the organisational goal through taking part in the organisational leadership. It is for that reason that most of the literature on educational leadership stress that leadership needs to be embedded in the school community as a whole because leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively (Hayes, Christie, Mills & Lingard, 2004, p. 521). In addition other researchers emphasise the need for leadership practices to focus on learning (Hayes, et al., 2004, p. 522). In this way the learning become an aspect of the culture of the organisations.

The data collected through interviews contend that although TRCs have a responsibility to organise professional development platforms for school managers, in the end, “it all depends on the attitudes of the participants”, whether they are prepared to accept and implement the ideas from the workshop or not. This thinking is similar to Senge (1994, p. 193) who argued that personal mastery can only be achieved or increased by a concerned person him or herself and others including the TRC managers and the TRCs as organisations can only help in creating conditions which may support or encourage it to grow.

### **5.2.1.2 The transformation leadership role in learning organisations**

While the TRCs leadership has a responsibility to ensure that learning take place among the individuals in the TRCs through ensuring conditions that encourage learning they do this to ensure that the capacity of the TRCs individuals staff and organisations are improved to the level where they are able to support the learning of individual teachers, school managers and schools as learning organisations. This argument resonates with the idea mooted in chapter 2 that TRCs recruit individuals that have “... the ability to challenge the ordinary and stimulate the exceptional ...they must always be striving to keep abreast of developments in education and be catalytic in bring about change”. This would enable them to serve the teachers appropriately while using the latest technologies.

In addition to that, the literature on organisation learning and leadership style indicates that indeed there is a relationship between leadership and successful learning in the organisation Amitay, Popper and Lipshitz (2005, p. 59) argued that the leadership is responsible for creating an “atmosphere of openness and psychological safety, which is regarded as a crucial factor for effective organisational learning to occur”. I believe that this is a kind of atmosphere that is also required to promote learning within the TRCs and among their depending organisations and individuals.

Thus, one of the transformational leadership responsibilities of schools within the vicinity of the TRC is to encourage and motivate teachers to go beyond the boundaries of their schools seeking continuous professional development. This would enable them to acquire knowledge thereby improving their performance. For example school A and B both argued that they regard the TRC as their second office and encourage their teachers not only to rely on the textbooks but to consider using the available resources at the TRC, for example to use internet to down load latest resources that are useful to their teaching, and that they should not hide behind excuses of a lack of teaching materials at schools. This has the effect of

motivating members of the organisation to do more than they originally thought possible and to grow intellectually. As a result, followers are empowered making it easy for them to embrace reforms in their organisations. In addition school A contended that there should be programmes that encourage creativity among teachers to enable them to critique current models and generate their own model. I support this in light of the literature on transformational leadership that argues that intellectual stimulation is about the questioning of current experience and assumptions, and generating creative solutions to problems faced by individuals of the organisations (Cashing et al., 2000). In addition, intellectual stimulation poses the challenge of a high standard of thinking that fosters open participation and creativity among members of the organisation. The participating schools reported during this research that their organisations also achieved intellectual stimulation through reflective meetings or workshops in which they have conversations and highlight positive achievements, and use that opportunity to motivate all participants.

However, as I pointed out in chapter 2, the TRCs and school managers as transformational leaders must then first and foremost, ensure that the structures and environment that support collaboration among TRCs and schools, shared vision, open communication and participation among members are created. I believe that these features are catalysts to organisational learning. According to school A and C those features would motivate members of the organisation to learn and to understand that teaching career is a continuous learning process. There are always new things to learn so TRCs and schools as organisations must welcome transformation in order to adapt and survive.

Thus, Bass (cited in Amitay et al., (2005, p. 59) maintained that the fundamental aim of leaders is setting goals and priorities, and harnessing motivation by creating, enabling, and sometimes inspiring a psychological atmosphere. That would help organisational leaders in TRCs and schools to eliminate the challenges that members are expected to face, thereby reducing the fear of change and creating environments that promote learning among the followers. To achieve this, it is imperative that the leaders help the members of their organisations to understand the significance of change for individuals and for the organisation as a whole, and one way of doing that is by involving them in the entire process of change. The leaders of the organisation should thus mentor and coach individual staff members to help them to develop professionally. This is what the transformational leadership literature refers to as individualised consideration. However, the success of individualised consideration depends heavily on open communication, respect and valuing of the individual

members' contribution to the team and organisation. In addition, members should also be motivated to be part of the team and their contributions are essential to the building of a learning team and organisation. Consequently, the encouragements that organisation leadership gives the followers to improve their personal mastery usually have substantial benefit for the organisation.

Yuen and Cheng (cited in Wilkins, 2000, p. 120) recommend that it is central that a leadership frame that supports and promotes action research by all the organisation's members should exist in order to help in fostering a learning culture, enhancing theoretical knowledge and skills, and providing intellectual stimulation in the organisation. In addition, Senge (1994, p. 199) argued that the leadership of learning organisations like TRCs and schools invest time, money and energy to improve resources that would encourage the continuous development of their members. Garcí'a-Morales et al., (2008, p. 192) agrees with this, in her argument that leaders invest in factors that brings about required competence that enable organisations to execute strategies and anticipate reform. Some of these factors were discussed in chapter 2.

It is against this background that scholars such as, Popper and Lipshitz (cited in Chang & Lee, 2007, p. 160) contended that leadership is the main factor to effect organisation learning. The absence of effective leadership in the organisations leads to anarchy in the organisational learning. This suggest a lack of organised structure that promotes learning within the organisation .Thus learning highly depends on individuals themselves and not driven by the leaders. Usually, learning in these types of organisations is not considered as part of the organisational culture.

Thus, the more structured an organisation is, the more deeply-rooted it is in established practices that lead to learning. I believe that well structured organisations have well planned systems in place that are aimed at promoting learning within the organisations. These systems help individual members of the organisation to understand the significance of learning and consider learning as part of their organisational culture.

Adding to that, Lam (cited in Chang and Lee, 2007, p. 160) argued that there exists a relationship between an effective transformational leadership and achievement of an organisation. In well structured organisations, transformational leaders convey their vision and create learning opportunities that allow subordinates to learn and improve their capacity.

It is important for education leaders to practice the leadership style that focuses on developing the capacity of members of their organisations. Hayes et al, (2004, p. 522) argued that the leaders build professional learning communities through the promotion of learning within their organisation. This learning focuses on improved outcomes for all students within a context of pressure and support. These types of leaders are referred to in the organisational learning literature as productive leaders because of their ability to build the required learning communities.

According to Hayes et al, (2004, p. 542) the following characteristics are required by productive leaders:

- A commitment to leadership dispersal which supports the spread of leadership practice and collaborative decision making in building a common vision.
- Supportive social relationships within the organisation, between staff and others.
- “Hands on knowledge” about how education theory translates into strategic action and is aligned with community concerns and relationships outside of the organisation
- A focus on pedagogy in which leadership in an organisation is focused on improving student learning outcomes and learning with the organisation as a whole.
- Support for the development of a culture of care which encourages members professional risk taking
- A focus on structures and strategies in which leadership focuses on developing organisational processes that facilitate the smooth running of the organisation.

These characteristics are fundamental to transformational leadership. As one of the themes of this discussion, it is thus imperative to look at the improvement in capacity of TRCs and the relevance of having a strong and active link with the organisations that they were created to serve.

### **5.2.3 Improved TRCs capacity and linkage with schools**

#### **5.2.3.1 The essence of learning among TRC individuals and as organisations**

The improvement of the TRCs capacity is especially significant for the effectiveness and quality of the support for its ever increasing population of teachers and schools. Staff members at TRCs therefore need to continuously engage in learning in order to provide quality service to schools. I for one believe that when all members of the TRCs engage in learning, they grow professionally and as a result the TRCs as organisations also become learned. It was also reported during this study that it is essential that Teachers Resource Centres have knowledgeable staff to assist teachers in all fields, especially, in computer skills, teaching material productions and teaching resource searching, and in specific subject related issues. In addition, participant 2 of FGD 3 argued that adequate number of human resources would enable the Teachers Resource Centres to implement their professional programs effectively and at a faster pace. The professional maturity of the staff members would have a positive impact on the service users, who are teachers and schools.

The literature on professional development in chapter 2 confirms this argument. Thus, it is important according to the findings presented in chapter 4 that the Teachers Resource Centre needs to work towards increasing expertise among its human resources to enable it to facilitate and discharge their programmes effectively.

In addition to that, the study points out in chapter 4 that the staff members at the TRCs need to be trained on client or customer relations. It is imperative to note that the practice of mutual respect and support prevails, to enable the clients to feel motivated to use the TRCs. Senge (cited in Chang & Lee (2007, p. 159) emphasised that within the teams of learning organisations, organisation members work together in a different way from the usual operation but with mutual trust, respect and supplementary aids to achieve common goals and reach excellent achievement. Burns (cited in Bone, 2000, p.1) argued that moral values are important to leadership and learning organisation. Thus the Teacher Resource Centres as organisations should strive to be moral organisations (Sergiovanni, 2007, pp. 85-86). They should enhance moral connections among their members and schools

However, despite the acknowledgement by many organisations that ethical behaviour is important, unethical behaviour is still perpetuated in many organisations (Litany, 2007, p. 27). Thus the TRCs pointed out in this study that there is a need to facilitate TRCs staff training in the area of ethics at work.

Furthermore, the improvement in knowledge in both TRCs staff and schools teachers would help them to see the purpose of their organisation and collaboratively work together to achieve the overall vision of quality education in schools.

Thus the “academic definition of the learning organisation suggest that the learning organisation covers individual, grouping and organisational learning with the simultaneous proceeding effort for organisational and individual learning” (Chang & Lee, 2007, p. 159). According to Chang & Lee (2007), learning is the power of growth, and individual learning is also the resource of organisational growth. Some evidence of individual learning and personal mastery as Moloi (2005) and Senge (1990) put it, were presented in chapter 4 of this research.

Participant 3 of FGD2 shared his experience on using internet service at the TRC to search information about the topic (father’s day) he prepared to teach. This is an indication of individual learning and enhancement of mastery model. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the data presented a variety of services which benefit teachers and help in ensuring successful learning in individuals and schools as organisations. These services provide learning experiences that enhance personal knowledge that leads to new discoveries in the roles of individuals and their organisations. These varieties of learning experience supports Senge (1990)’s five learning disciplines notion, though it probably happened unconsciously among individuals and organisations.

In order to ensure learning in all disciplines, TRCs provide individual teachers and schools with opportunities for continuous enquiries or research, training, meetings and workshops. In addition, it shows that individual teachers of schools that are within the vicinity of the TRCs and who are committed to learning have indicated a crucial improvement in their practice. For example participant 5 of FGD2 confirmed during the study that he has indeed acquired pedagogical knowledge and skills that are useful in teaching Learner Centred Approach. This is an indication that as a result of training, teachers attain a change in mental model.

In addition, studies on teacher education and training maintain that in-service training is indispensable in changing the pedagogical behaviour and practice of teachers (Enameller, 1999, p. 88). An improvement in mental model of individuals, increase their understanding of individual purpose within the organisation and that of the organisation. Subsequently, they understand, share and participate in the realisation of the organisational vision.

Chang & Lee (2007, p. 165) defined shared vision as a “common image and version among organisational members” that makes all members unite into one, where all of them understand the overall goal of the organisation. Shared vision can only be achieved through continuous enhancement of mental model. Thus TRCs should rise to meet the professional developmental needs of the teachers to enable them to have the knowledge that enable them to share the vision of their organisations. In agreement, Moloji (2005, p. 56) affirms that a shared vision enables an organisation to develop a common identity and helps individuals in the organisation to understand their individual purpose within the organisation and the purpose of the organisation. I therefore argue that a strong and shared vision is vital in that it serves as a ‘lighthouse’ to both the individual members and the organisation as a whole in guiding them in the right direction.

However, the TRCs should strive for quality processes if they want quality and shared vision. As noted in chapter 2 and 4 of this study, attempts to achieve a shared vision, should include the TRCs engaging in dialogue and discussions with schools and other relevant stakeholders with the purpose of finding solutions that would better solve the common problems of schools. In this process, individual participants share their mental models and in the end deliberate on workable solutions. This is another team learning activity. According the literature in chapter 2, effective team learning leads to system thinking. Through team learning members and teams’ capability are coordinated toward the achievement of their common goal. For example TRCs and schools have a common goal of achieving quality education. Thus, they need to coordinate their efforts in order to achieve the goal of quality education.

This is the reason why numerous researchers in the literature on organisational learning maintain that system thinking allows us to see a bigger picture of interdependency and influence among individuals, teams, systems and organisation. In some studies researchers argue that system thinking is the way of thinking about and a language for describing and understanding the forces and interrelationships that shape the behaviour of the system (Senge, 1994, p. 6). It is the change that helps people to see how to change a system effectively and to respond to a larger process of the natural and economic world. I see system thinking as the sum of all the learning disciplines. Thus, this type of interdependency enables the organisation to arrive at a better understanding of any social phenomenon (Moloji, 2005, p. 73).

Participant 1 of FGD 3 (p. 5) however argued that there is a lack of communication between the TRCs and schools. This has created a gap between TRCs and schools which results in few teachers and schools using the service of the TRCs. According to Jamali et al., (2006, p. 345) system thinking is founded on fluent communication and flexibility. It is believed that communication within and between organisations like TRCs and schools could promote agreement and understanding, in turn expanding members of the organisation's ability to identify patterns and interrelationships. This encourages the members of the organisation to acquire and apply experience and professionalism to problems and opportunities to ways that can best contribute to the overall objective of quality education (Benet & Benet, cited in Jamali, Khoury & Sahyoun, 2006, p. 345). Flexibility enhances the ability of members of the organisation to process and synthesise new information, to apply a variety of thinking styles and core competencies to issues and problems, and shape and reconfigure knowledge in new and creative combinations (Jamali et al., 2006, p. 345).

Although there seems to be a separation in development among these five learning disciplines, they are interdependent on each other. Hence they are collectively imperative for the establishment of successful learning organisations. Aksum and Ozdemir cited in Chang & Lee (2007, p. 159) summarize the main points of the learning organisation as:

- The learning organisation needs to change the current applications and the view of organisational members.
- The learning organisation has direct bearing on the future of the organisation.
- The learning organisation needs change to improve.
- The learning of all members of the organisation must be easier.
- The input of all members is needed.

### **5.2.3.2 The essence of improved learning and teaching resources at TRCs**

During this research it was found that many teachers and schools do not make use of the TRCs services due their experience and perception about them. For example school C said:

...I heard about teachers who went to TRC to look for science experiment guide books and they were not helped because the resources they were looking for were not available at the TRC. (p. 9)

Based on experience, participant 1 from FGD1 argued that,

in my observation and experience the TRCs comes with two sides, which is either just underutilised or the centre itself is not well equipped with the resources that teachers need... (p. 9)

In addition school B and other participant of this study share the same perception and experience of insufficient resources at TRCs. The above observations of the research participants would be the answer to why many schools could not consider using TRCs as professional support providers. Thus it is imperative for the TRCs to ensure that learning and teaching resources are made available for use by schools to enhance quality education.

Professional development studies acknowledge that learning does not only happen through formal experience, but also through informal experience. Therefore apart from the training, workshops, formal meetings and conferences, learning is also experienced through reading, doing research, experiments, informal meetings, and many other activities that teachers do or face on a daily basis. Thus, if any reform in education system is to succeed, teachers need to use various opportunities for learning and continuous professional growth (Jurasaitė-Harbison, 2009, pp. 299-300). It is therefore against this background that it is imperative that Teacher Resource Centres make attempt to improve conditions that would encourage various opportunities for learning among the TRCs themselves and schools. The TRCs in this study have reported that they are making efforts to improve their resources through their various regional offices, through NIED and through donations. Some of them reported that they use their centre development fund in securing resources.

TRCs and schools are expected to work collaboratively to achieve the quality of education required in schools. Despite the fact that TRCs make an effort to bring the relevant up to date resources within the reach of schools, they must also continue keeping in touch with schools to determine the appropriate responses to the challenges that the schools are facing. Hence the inclusion of schools in the process of professional development right from the start is crucial because they will have a sense of ownership which motivates them to commit themselves to it.

When teachers commit to the TRCs as their learning centre, they acquire more knowledge that would grow their capacity and ultimately help their organisation to become learned. My argument here now is that the improvement of resources at the centres is one of the vital starting points towards quality achievement in schools.

### **5.2.3.3 The essence of a strong and active link between TRCs and schools**

The effectiveness of the TRCs' organisational role depends on how appropriately they are responding to the needs of the schools which they are created to serve. The questions seeking answers therefore are: *how do you serve appropriately when you don't know the needs of the clients? How do you know that your acquisitions are responding to their needs if you don't get feedback from them?*

The response to these questions is in the formation of strong and active links between the two types of organisations. I believe that the stronger and more active the links between them are, the higher the motivation for teachers to use the resource at the TRCs for the enhancement of their knowledge. It became clear during this study that there is not enough effort made by the TRCs to reach out to schools to educate them on the professional benefit they can get from the centres. Thus, many schools especially in the remote areas do not benefit from the services of the TRCs.

It is important to realise that the Teachers Resource Centres and schools as organisations have a common objective, that of quality education. It is for this reason that they work together as part of one system that aims to realise the goal of quality education. Furthermore, the literature on learning organisations anchors the argument by indicating that the personal mastery discipline is nurtured by a process of empowerment, commitment and communication (Jamali, et al., 2006, p. 165) which provides critical feedback about choices and actions that need to be taken to offer appropriate support.

#### **5.2.4 The TRCs support system and challenges**

The role of TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education is not a simple one. It involves different processes to ensure quality and appropriate support for schools. This process of support starts from identification of needs and consultations, planning, training or acquisition and distribution or stock. The support system of the TRCs is built around these processes.

In the case of training and workshops, the TRCs make all the necessary arrangements ranging from venue to training equipments. These needs are identified through involving schools by ways of surveys. As some TRCs reported during the study, the materials that are acquired are mostly relevant. Thus the reason for conducting survey is in order to give teachers the opportunity to participate in the decision-making of their own professional development.

Besides, in chapter 2, Villegas-Reimers (2001) argues that most reforms that do not involve the implementers find it hard to succeed. It is also for this reason that I contend that the TRCs as organisations should emphasise the significance of involving people in bringing about a culture of social change. In addition, their participation would enable them to be aware of the professional development activities available at the centre.

However, as TRCs venture into processes that improve professional support to schools, they come across obstacles. These challenges range from physical resources to human resources. When I look at the issue from the responses from questionnaire in this study, it is highly likely that the education regions do lack knowledge of the indispensable role of TRCs and thereby compromise quality teachers' support. This therefore may have resulted in negligence in terms of sufficient financial support of the TRCs by many educational regions in Namibia. As a result, TRCs in various regions of education in Namibia are substantially limited in the support of teachers. As Douglas (1997, p. 124) puts it:

Until Namibia is able to provide staff resource and funding for more extensive and comprehensive network of TRCs, the provision of regular and sustainable professional development will remain just out of sight beyond the horizon.

In addition, the TRCs in various regions are faced with a lack of sufficient resource to support schools accordingly.

### **5.2.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the findings of my research in light of the theories that support the role of TRCs of providing professional development support to schools. This discussion was done through themes that emanated from the presentation of findings in chapter four. As I discussed the data, it became clearer that the operation of Teacher Resources Centres as organisations revolve around professional development or learning, learning organisation and transformational leadership. It was interesting however, to find that their activities fit in appropriately with the body of literature of learning organisation and transformational leadership. In summary, the operation of the TRCs is founded in the responsibility to assist schools to handle transformation successfully. Within this process, TRCs ensure that they provide training, resources and other related service that raise the capacity of schools to achieve quality education. However, in as much as the TRCs want to achieve that, they are bound to first ensure that they have the necessary capacity. Equally important, is the necessity

for transformational leadership in the organisations to drive the organisational learning and transform it successfully to learning organisations.

In the next chapter, I present my concluding remarks and recommendations of this research.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **6. Conclusion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Having presented the findings and discussed them in Chapters 4 and 5, I shall now conclude this research with a summary of the findings and their implications.

The goal of the study was “to investigate the role of TRCs in supporting schools to achieve quality education”. This goal appears to have been attained by the data gathered and its interpretation. It was a quite overwhelming experience for me to learn, in the course of the research, how service users, teachers and school managers experience and perceive the significance of the role of TRCs in achieving quality education in schools. Despite the small capacities of TRCs, the participants were insistent on the value of the support that they offer to schools. School teachers and managers benefit variously from training in the use of information and communication technology in education, upgrading their qualifications through BETD in-service training courses, the use of the internet to download up-to-date teaching materials from websites, the production of teaching aids, hosting teachers meetings, the provision of teaching and learning materials and other assistance. The schools involved maintained that, thanks to the role played by the TRCs, they had acquired pedagogical knowledge, subject content knowledge and skills that were helping them to ensure quality education in their schools.

The TRCs’ service is expanding to support disadvantaged schools in remote and rural areas. It was impressive to learn from teachers and managers how the TRCs were helping them and how they could improve on what they were already doing for schools. They pointed out the improvement in the capacity of TRCs in terms of expertise, resources, expansion to all regions, marketing strategies, staffing complement and expansion in terms of physical

facilities. There is no doubt that learning is taking place through the activities of the TRCs, though on a small scale in terms of the size of the country's population.

This chapter will also briefly present the significance and limitations of the study, and suggest potential areas for future research.

## **6.2 Summary of findings**

### **6.2.1 Improved leadership and diversification of TRCs**

While this study has detected some life in the TRCs, it has at the same time raised awareness of the limitations of this life. The study has found that TRCs in Namibia need to diversify and increase their current operational capacity. They need to offer new and additional services to tackle the specific problems facing teachers in schools, for example through the provision of language centres and science labs. This would require leadership capable of planning and executing the new strategies in order to respond to schools' needs in the most appropriate way. The indications are that this leadership will not appear spontaneously and will only be achievable through continuous learning. Thus, this research identifies a need for leadership professional development programmes for both TRCs and schools. And it identifies transformational leadership as the mode of leadership most appropriate to spearhead the diversification process.

The study ascertained that suitable diversification of the TRCs would bring professional support closer to schools and the classroom, where all the reform is taking place. As Giordano (2008, p. 11) puts it, "change takes place in the classrooms behind thousands of doors". In addition, diversification of the TRCs would spread the benefits of professional development to all regions in the country, a process complementary to the ongoing service decentralisation initiative of the Namibian government. Furthermore, the research also found that schools in the remote areas are even more in need of professional support than schools in the urban areas, where the TRCs are mostly situated.

Lastly, this study has found that there ought to be stronger links between TRCs and schools, and a collaborative relationship between them. This could be achieved through awareness campaigns. Teachers could then be involved, for instance, in the acquisition of the exact equipment needed by their school. Also, teachers would have a reason to visit the TRCs regularly.

## **6.2.2 The need for learning at TRCs**

The necessity for TRCs to be centres of learning was another essential finding of this study. In terms of the TRCs' declared purpose of providing ongoing professional development support to schools, there is a definite need for TRCs to continue learning. This would help them to support schools effectively in times of change. This view is shared by Knamiller (1999, p. 22) in his research on the effectiveness of Teacher Resource Centre strategies. He argues that learning brings success as it helps organisations to be flexible and respond quickly to new demands and changes. This is one of the aspects that led to the success of TRCs in Britain (Knamiller, 1999).

The learning of the TRCs should however be driven by the learning of their professional staff members. Because TRC staff members are expected to provide the professional support that the teachers and schools need to develop and achieve the goal of quality education, they must first themselves be learned. Only if this is so will they have the requisite capacity to provide high standard support to schools. This study has also suggested that client relations training be given to TRC staff, to help them create nurturing and stimulating environments for teachers to learn in.

## **6.2.3 A sign of progress**

As the research findings show, there are signs of progress among the TRCs in their efforts to help schools to achieve quality education. The identified benefits accruing to schools from the TRCs are described in the introduction to this chapter.

Though TRCs are operating on a small scale, their services were perceived by the research participants to be useful to schools. This is why there were repeated calls for these services to be expanded.

## **6.3 Significance of the study**

This research has potential value for me personally and professionally, as an employee within the TRCs network; for the TRCs network, and for policy makers and implementers both at the regional level and the national level of the Ministry of Education. It should also hold significance for future researchers within the field of Teacher Resource Centres and learning organisations in general.

The research has enhanced my understanding of, and hence my authority in respect of, the role of TRCs. This understanding derives in part from ideas concerning the foundation of TRCs and their purpose internationally, and in part from the challenges, successes, and disappointments reported by stakeholders in Namibia.

As an employee, I have obtained useful information from this research on the experience and perceptions of the service user in regard to the role of TRCs in supporting schools. The research has identified specific areas in which we as TRCs need to improve in order to serve our purpose better. The study may be regarded as a mirror reflecting the past and the present role of the TRCs in terms of effectiveness, thus providing a basis on which to build a future of rendering yet more effective support to schools.

This study revealed some aspects notably in need of attention, including collaboration, weak linkages and a lack of marketing strategies. These should be given serious consideration by the entire TRC network in Namibia, especially when yearly programmes are being planned. This process would also help the entire TRC network in Namibia to reflect on its performance.

The research has pointed out some critical areas in which the intervention of policy makers is essential in order to enable TRCs to render appropriate support to schools. One example of this is the matter of financial support for TRCs. Moreover, the findings of this study add to the existing body of literature in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) in general, and more specifically concerning TRCs as learning organisations. Additionally, this study has demonstrated throughout how contemporary leadership theories, specifically that of transformational leadership, embrace the notion of development and learning.

## **6.4 Recommendations for practice**

The Namibian education system is still in a process of transformation, and the provision of quality education remains a challenge to be met. The need for cooperation among the various stakeholders in education has never been greater. Specifically, there exists a need for cooperation between the ministry at both regional and national levels, the TRC network and schools. I therefore recommend the following:

- That the ministry provide adequate funding for TRC initiatives. This would ensure their effectiveness in terms of acquiring resources flexibly and responding to schools' demands quickly.
- That the ministry invest in the TRCs' network expansion. This would assist TRCs to provide professional development services to remote, rural schools. It could be achieved by adding extensional structures to cluster centres and circuit offices to house TRCs resources.
- That there is cooperation between the TRC network and education regional management teams in all regions. This would promote understanding of the imperatives of TRCs, and thus enable management to help TRCs to provide effective service.
- That the National TRC network meetings be revived to re-establish a platform where critical issues that affect the effective operation of the network in the regions can be discussed. It is necessary for TRCs in regions to draw up programmes to market their services to all schools.
- That TRCs and schools should collaborate and ensure that communication between them is strong and active. This would help to keep schools informed about the programmes of the TRCs and their new acquisitions, and appraise TRCs of the needs of schools and thus enable them to act promptly.
- When state funding runs out, TRCs need to embark on initiatives to tap other sources to ensure that their resources are replenished.
- In order to handle transformation and change effectively, TRCs need to be proactive. For example, they should conduct research to acquaint themselves with the problems and needs of schools and act promptly.
- That the TRCs' professional staff acquaint themselves with the school curricula. This would provide them with a guide to the type of support that teachers need.
- In view of the reforms being imposed on the Namibian education system, it is crucial that TRCs and schools embrace learning and transformational leadership to facilitate change in these organisations.
- The TRCs need to get involved in exchange programmes to learn from each other.

- Taking into account the urgent need for leadership and management skills training as per this research's findings, there is a necessity for the TRCs to extend their scope of operation to cover the needs of school managers. For example, they could organise workshops, training and meetings to serve as fora for school managers to exchange ideas or learn.

## **6.5 Suggestions for future research**

This research was specifically aimed at investigating the role of the TRCs, according to the experience and perceptions of school teachers and managers. This means that the research was largely limited to the perspective of the school, although this arguably enabled me to look at the issues in depth.

However the study would have been broader and more comprehensive if the perceptions and experiences of all the TRCs and the main stakeholders in the ministry of education could also have been explored in some depth. A study on that scale has the potential to shed light on why in the first place the TRCs were established in Namibia, how they are expected to operate, the issue of TRC funding, and the significance of TRCs from the perspective of the ministry and TRC officials. This is clearly an area for future research since it would identify strategies and mechanisms required for the expansion of TRCs in Namibia.

## **6.6 The limitations of the study**

Although I regard this study as a success in terms of the information it yielded, it nevertheless had certain limitations (as mentioned in the previous section).

The chief limitation of this study is its limited scope and time. Despite the fact that the three schools covered were carefully selected and thus were able to provide adequate information in response to the research question, I am still of the opinion that it would have been more valuable and interesting to have included schools that are closer to local TRC centres in the remote areas. These schools may have had different experiences and perceptions, given their different situations. This broader coverage would have helped me to gather valuable data from more sources, which might have served to enhance the quality of my findings. In addition, it would have allowed me to check the facts in my findings from multiple perspectives thus increasing the scope of the findings. Additionally, the limited time frame for this research could not allow me to observe the trend or pattern over time of TRC usage

on the part of the teachers. According to Merriam (2001, p. 204), long term enquiries would have allowed me to gather more data, and this would have increased the validity of my findings. However, the validity of my research findings was achieved through multiple sources of data and member checking. According to Stake (1995, p. 112), data source triangulation is essential for ensuring validity in a qualitative case study. Another way of ensuring validity is through member checking (Merriam 2001, p. 204).

In view of the limitations of the study, it is difficult to generalise its findings to other organisations and places, because they could well have had different experiences, shaped by their particular environment, situations and cultural and individual differences. According to Merriam (2001, p. 208), generalisation is a limitation in the traditional methods of research design. Stake (1995, p. 85) agrees with this in his argument that “single cases are not as strong a base for generalising to a population of cases as other research designs”. However, Merriam (2001) argues that:

The ability to generalise to other settings or people could be ensured through a priori conditions such as assumption and equivalency between the same size and population from which it was drawn, control of sample size, random sampling and so on. Even in this context, generalisation is done at a specified level of confidence. (p. 207)

Generalisability can be achieved through the use of concrete universals (studying a specific case in great detail and comparing it with other cases that have been studied in equally great detail), or what Stake in Merriam (2001) refers to as naturalistic generalisation (drawing on tacit knowledge, intuition and personal experience, and looking for patterns that explain one’s experience and events in the world around one). According to Merriam (2001, p. 211), the following are among strategies that enhance qualitative study generalisation:

- Rich, thick description. Providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation.
- Typicality or modal category. Describing how typical the programme, event or individual is compared with others in the same class.
- Multisite designs. Using several sites, cases, situations, especially the ones that maximise diversity in the phenomenon of interest.

Although many researchers insist that qualitative case studies are not generalisable because they focus on specific cases within a given context, I am of the opinion that naturalistic generalisation can be achieved through recourse to the strategies discussed above. In addition,

according to Yin (2009, p. 43), the particular set of my research findings could also be generalised to broader theory.

Thus I maintain that, in spite of the limitations described above, this study can be significant to individuals who find themselves in similar situations – in addition to the individuals and organisations that actually participated in it.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented a summary of the main findings of the study. I have also outlined the value of the research to Namibia as a whole, and the Ministry of Education in particular, to the national TRC network, to individual TRCs and schools, and to individuals with an interest in TRCs.

This research constituted a steep learning curve for me as a novice researcher. During the research process I encountered problems and hitches, for example my plans regarding the number of samples, time frame, and tools for collecting data were all affected by the reality at the research sites.

In conclusion, this study maintains that the TRC is an absolutely vital element in the education system. If the recommendations made above were to be implemented, the goal of quality education for all in Namibia would be within reach.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview questions for school Managers

1. How would you describe your experience of the support of TRCs in terms of professional development and resources to teachers in your school?
2. What kind of support do you get as a school (managers and teachers) from the TRCs?
3. What kind of professional development support would you expect from the TRCs?
4. How does this support help you and the teachers to improve the quality of teaching in schools?
5. Does your school experience any shortcomings that could prevent it from delivering quality education? (*How do you cope with that?*)
6. Do you think TRCs intervention could to certain extent help you address these shortcomings?
7. How do you as a school manager encourage professional development among staff members by using resources available at the TRCs?
8. In your opinion, what should be improved by the TRCs in order to support schools effectively?

## **Appendix B: Interview for TRCs managers.**

1. How do you describe the role that you as TRCs have been playing in supporting teachers to deliver quality education in schools in the past few years?
2. What specific services do teachers use at the TRCs mostly?
3. Do you think there is any reason for that?
4. How do you acquire the resources that you support teachers with?
5. Do you think these resources are appropriate for their needs of delivering quality education?
6. What are some of the problem (if any) that you (TRCs) experience that you think are hampering the effectiveness of the TRC's role?
7. To what extent do the TRCs make a significant contribution to improve resources which could support quality teaching and learning in schools?
8. Is there any suggestion you would like to make on the TRCs service improvement?

### **Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers**

1. What do you know about TRCs?
2. How do you describe your experience of the role of TRCs in regarding professional supports to schools and the teachers specifically?
3. What do you think are some of the problems experienced at this school, and what would you suggest the role that TRCs should be to help you as teachers to render quality education in your school?
4. Does it make any difference to have the TRCs service expanded in to the rest part of the region?
5. What would you suggest as some of the improvements needed by the TRCs to support teachers in rendering quality education?
6. Any other comment you would like to share with us on your experience of TRCs service.

## **Appendix D: Questionnaire for TRCs network managers**

1. How do you describe the role that TRCs network have been playing in supporting teachers to deliver quality education in schools in the past few years
2. What specific services that the teachers have been using at the TRCs mostly? Explain.
3. Do you think there are enough resources in the TRCs in various regions that can help teachers to achieve quality education?
4. How do you acquire the resources that you support teachers to realise quality education?
5. Do you think these resources are appropriate for their needs of delivering quality education? if yes why do you think so.
6. What are some of the problems (if any) that the TRCs network experience that you think is hampering the effectiveness of the TRC's role?
7. To what extent does the TRCs network make a significant contribution to improve resources which could support quality teaching and learning in schools?
8. Is there any suggestion you would like to make on the TRCs service improvement?

9. Are there some identified priorities that the TRCs network are now looking at, to support quality education in schools? Please put them down.

**Appendix E 1: Proposed plan for the research process.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Proposed target Dates for completion</b>
Submission of the proposal	May, 30
Writing literature review chapter	Draft ready by June, 30 (but continuous)
Collections and Transcribing of collected data	September, 25
Presentation and analysis of data	October, 30
Writing introduction and abstract	November, 10
Complete and submit first draft	November, 30

**Appendix E 2: Provisional Data collection and transcription schedule**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
1. Do Interviews with the principals at schools A, B and C	8 June 2009-08 July 2009	Flexible-preferably after in the afternoons
2. Do Focus Group Discussions with teachers 1,2 and	13 July 2009- 17 July 2009	Flexible-preferably after in the afternoons

3		
3. Do/Sent- Interview and questionnaires with/to TRCs	20July 2009- 24 July 2009	Flexible
4. Data analysis	From 27 July 2009	Flexible
5. Transcription	Throughout-Happened after every data collection activity.	Flexible

## **Appendix F: Consent forms for the research participants**

### Part 1.

I hereby agree to participate in an interview/Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Markus Shifature Mbambo. I understand that he will inquire about my understanding and experience of the role of the teacher resources centres (TRCs) of providing professional development support to schools to enable them to render quality education.

Sign..... Date.....

### Part 2.

Markus Shifature Mbambo is hereby given my permission to record/video or conduct an interview with me as part of the process of his data collection for a research report that he will be writing as a partial fulfilment of his Master's degree. I am also made to understand and accepted that transcripts of the interviews/FGD will be made available to me for verification and that the verified data may be used in the final report.

I have been assured that my school/TRC and I will remain anonymous in the report. I was also informed of my right to quit at any time should I so wish. And that he is also reachable at his cell phone number (0812826153) and land line (256895) for queries.

Signature..... Date.....

### **Appendix G: A thank you letter to the participants of the study**

Rhodes University-Education department

September 2009

Dear Participant

I would like to thank you for your participation and contribution in my research. I truly appreciate all the time and care you took in telling me about your experience and perceptions about the role of TRCs of providing professional development support to schools.

I'm so pleased to inform you that your contribution to my research was valuable and I consider it very helpful to all stake holders that want to venture in processes of quality education in schools. Your contribution has contributed to the improvement of my mental model. As a professional working with TRCs, I learned some new issues surrounding TRCs which are useful.

Lastly the report will eventually be made available at places where you can access it.

Thank you again for the exhilarating interview.

Sincerely,

M.S. Mbambo

Researcher

## Appendix H: A letter requesting permission to the region/schools



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Tel: (046) 603 8383/4 • Fax: (046) 622 8028 • e-mail: education@ru.ac.za

23 June 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission for Mr M S Mbambo to conduct research in your region/school

The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission for Mr Mbambo (student number 09M4078) to conduct research in your region/school. Mr Mbambo is full-time Masters student of mine who has successfully completed the coursework section of the programme. He now needs to conduct his research and we prefer our students to investigate an issue in their own countries.

Mr Mbambo wants to investigate the role of Teacher Resource Centres in professional development in schools. This is a very interesting and under-researched topic and I am sure his work will be of value to the schools and the TRC in question as well as the region as a whole. May I take this opportunity of asking you to support him in any way possible. He will need permission from the TRC and Resource Centre Manager, the Director, the school principals and the Inspector of Education.

As we know, doing research is no easy matter and our students need all the help they can get. I hope you are able to facilitate easy access for him.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht  
(Course Coordinator)

**Appendix J: A letter for permission to do research to the region and schools**



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
KAVANGO REGION**

PRIVATE BAG 2134, RUNDU, NAMIBIA

Enquiries : Alfons M. Dikuua Telephone No. : [264 66] 258 9111  
Email : [dikuua@iway.na](mailto:dikuua@iway.na) Fax No. : [264 66] 258 9213/258 9321  
Ref. No. : 13/4/2/1

Tuesday, 30 June 2009

TO: The Principals  
Regional Directorate of Education  
Kavango Region

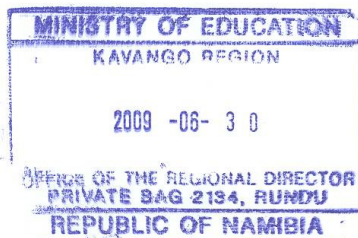
**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS**

1. Mr. M.S. Mbambo is a full-time student at Rhodes University in South Africa, doing his Masters Degree in Education, specializing in Education Leadership and Management.
2. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to Mr. Mbambo to investigate the role of Teacher Resource Centres in professional development in schools.

I count on your usual understanding and cooperation.

Yours in Education

  
Alfons M. Dikuua  
DIRECTOR



Cc. *The Inspectors of Education*  
*[Kavango Region]*

