Views Of Parents, Principals, Teachers And Inspectors On Performance-Based Accountability Of Primary School Teachers And Principals In Namibia

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Abstract
Performance-based accountability systems (PBAS) in education seek to improve learning achievements of all learners and to reduce achievement gaps amongst learners from diverse backgrounds through improved classroom instructions. Such a system does not exist in the Namibian primary education sector despite the fact that learning achievements in primary schools are low. The purpose of this study was to seek an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of primary school principals, teachers, parents and inspectors in the Khomas Region of Namibia regarding holding teachers and principals accountable for learners’ performance in an effort to improve learning achievements. This study utilized qualitative multiple case study research design. Data was collected through interviews from thirty two participants who were selected through stratified purposive sampling from five schools which were selected purposively. From their responses most of the participants had no problem with the idea of holding teachers and principals accountable for their learners’ performance but they had problems with the specific details of holding them accountable.

Keywords: Performance-based accountability, Primary education, Teachers, Principals, Windhoek, Namibia

Introduction
At independence in 1990 the Ministry of Education formulated four major education goals namely access, equity, quality and democracy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). UNICEF (2004) reports that the country has, to some extent, achieved access, equity and democracy goals, but quality, on the other hand, has been compromised. Marope (2005, p. 42) states that “…the current [Namibian] general education system is too weak to effectively support set national development goals, including transition to knowledge-based economy”. Wikan (2008) also found that the quality of Namibia’s primary education (grades 1 – 7) remains low and notes that nationally less than a quarter of primary school learners reach the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy. Marope (2005) and UNICEF (2004) note that only one third of grade six learners are able to read effectively at that level. Wikan (2008) concurs and cites the study of grade six learners in fourteen African countries by South African consortium for monitoring education quality (SACMEQ), which reveals that Namibian learners scored poorly compared to learners from other countries. For instance, in reading category the Namibian learners were placed third from the bottom while in the mathematics category, they were placed at the very bottom. Furthermore, Wikan (2008) found that at the national level, only 16.9 % of primary schools learners reach the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy in Namibia. As a result, most of the learners complete or leave school without achieving the basic competencies they should have acquired.

There is need, therefore, for an intervention to improve the quality of Namibia’s primary education. Various literature like Marope (2005) and Amukugo, Likando and Mushaandja (2010) suggest ways of improving the quality of Namibia’s education, however they mainly emphasize on enhancing educational inputs like teaching spaces, furniture, qualified teachers, competent learners, books, instructional materials, curriculum and instructional time. Little is mentioned about taking responsibility for educational outcome as a way of improving quality of education. A study conducted by the World Bank (2008) in some Sub Saharan African countries concluded that accountability for performance is low and as such should be improved since making teachers and principals accountable for the learning outcome has a great impact on the quality of education. Savage and Moore (2004) define accountability as being answerable and giving an account, which involves reporting to someone. Maile (2002) describes the nature of this responsibility as being moral in nature. It is an act of holding teachers and principals responsible for the performance of learners.

According to Suspitsyn a (2010), issues of quality assurance and accountability have controlled education policy agendas from Europe, to the USA, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. UNICEF (2004) notes that presently Sub Saharan African governments are also becoming more concerned with the performance of their education sectors and particularly that of teachers and principals, who are entrusted with the responsibility of educating the learners. Governments are no longer only interested in providing educational inputs such as finances and infrastructure, but are focusing more on educational outcomes. Sub Saharan African governments are therefore
demanding for more or improved accountability in all the aspects of their educational systems including that of teachers and principals.

**Problem Statement**
Despite the availability of research evidence that the quality of Namibia’s primary education is still low, the teachers and principals who are obliged of educating the learners are not held accountable for the low learning achievements. Unlike other countries such as the USA, UK and the Netherlands that have performance-based accountability policies to hold teachers accountable for the performance of learners (Anderson, 2005; Hofman, Dijkstra & Hofman, 2009), Namibia still does not have such policy (Marope, 2005; World Bank, 2008). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the possibility of holding primary teachers and principals accountable for the performance of learners in Namibia. Specifically the study attempted to answer the following research question: What are the views of primary school teachers, principals, inspectors and parents in the Khomas region towards how teachers and principals can be held accountable for the learning outcomes of learners?

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical framework**
This study was informed by the performance based accountability theory also known as result based accountability theory. According to Anderson (2005) and Thomas (2007) performance based accountability theory emerged from increased political involvement in public education. The need by the USA, UK and Australian governments to increase their involvement in the public education to ensure improved performance arose from those governments spending heavily on education and obtaining unsatisfactory outcomes. This, therefore, resulted in diminished public trust and confidence in the public education and consequently the demand for better and improved educational services (Thomas, 2007).

In an effort to improve the services offered by teachers and principals, governments such as those of the USA and UK have invested considerable amounts of money and other resources in the implementation of performance-based practices. Some governments like those of the USA and Australia have established performance-based accountability policies in their education systems (Hannaway and Hamilton, 2008). Examples of these policies include the No Child Left Behind (NLCB) policy in the USA, which according to Hannaway and Hamilton (2008) requires that schools and districts be held responsible for learner performance. Another example is the Australian National Education Performance Monitoring Task Force. Hannaway and Hamilton (2008) therefore note that such governments have not only provided the necessary educational inputs but have gone a step further to demand for performance from the teachers and principals.

This is quiet applicable to the Namibian situation where the education sector receives the largest share of the national budget and more than 80% of it goes to teachers’ salaries (Amukugo et al, 2010), and free primary education is provided (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990). Although the Namibian government spends a significant amount of money to provide free primary education, the education system lacks performance-based accountability system to hold teachers and principals accountable for learning outcomes. Anderson (2005) and Thomas (2007) note that if governments provide educational inputs, they can demand for performance-based accountability and as such the Namibian government is also justified to do so.

Anderson (2005) and Hannaway and Hamilton (2008) found that performance based accountability theory does not only seek to improve the performance of both teachers and learners but it also seeks to reduce achievement gaps between learners. Such achievement gaps are likely to occur in gender difference, learners from different economic and social backgrounds, etc. This is quite relevant to the Namibian education context which is just recovering from the legacy of apartheid policy which led to a gap in the performance of learners from different social backgrounds.

**Holding teachers accountable for learning outcome**
The purpose of this study was to investigate the possibility of holding primary teachers and principals accountable for the performance of learners. Elmore and Fuhrman (2001) are of the view that holding teachers accountable for achievement of learning goals makes teachers to be more committed and motivated. In other words, holding teachers accountable helps them to work towards achieving the most important goal which is to improve learning amongst learners. There are various ways in which teachers can be held accountable for learners’ learning achievements:

**Public reporting**
Goertz, Duffy and Le Floch (2001) point out that public reporting of learners’ learning achievements is the most basic form of accountability of teachers. Cobb (2002) however, adds that due to its simple nature it is often not of high stake or consequences to the teachers and learners but it is still an important form of accountability in education. Schools are thus required to give account of individual learner’s performance through, for example, report cards. Garipey, Spencer and Couture (2009) note that public reporting is a call for more transparency in education, and as such keeps the public informed on school progress. The public can use the information...
availed to them to demand for better performance or even choose alternative schools for their children.

Cobb (2002) notes that public reporting as is currently practiced in most education systems tends to be very selective and as such reports on certain aspects and leave out others which happen not to be in the school’s favour. Reporting should be useful to the public. Gariepy et al. (2009) concurs with Cobb (2002) by stating that directional reporting is shallow and not useful to the public and recommends that reporting should be transparent and rich in information that is useful. Schools should not only report on achievements but failures too even if they may portray negative picture of the schools because that is the only way that the public may get to know the actual picture and find ways to intervene or offer assistance.

However, Hanushek and Raymond (2004) state that any form of accountability in education is better than no accountability at all because they believe availability of some form of accountability in education tends to lead to larger achievement growth than would have occurred without any accountability. They warn that the use of reporting as a primary or the only accountability mechanism has minimal impact on learners’ performance and that the impact of accountability is associated by attachment of incentives linked to performance or achieving the set goals. Studies by Supovitz (2010) and Elmore (2002) have shown that incentives have impacts on teachers’ instructional practices. For instance, extrinsic rewards and sanctions linked to high stake testing serve to motivate teachers across the education systems of many countries. Stetcher and Camm (2010) found that teachers who are promised rewards if their low performing learners improve their performance are likely to adjust some teaching activities such as improving presentation of instructional materials and paying extra attention to the low performers. A study by Jackson (2008) in northern Carolina state in the USA revealed that even though many teachers were not motivated with the introduction of high stake examinations, 66.8% of the teachers felt that teachers should be sanctioned or rewarded for learners’ achievement in the standardized or the high stake examinations as they believe that such incentives are a motivation and help teachers to change their instructional practices which they believe help improve learners’ performance.

Incentives (rewards and sanctions)
A performance based accountability system is formed when there is an acknowledgement of the existence of a problem in achieving the desired outcomes and are designed to alter service providers’ behavior. At the center of performance based accountability system are incentives linked to performance or achieving the set goals (Stetcher and Camm, 2010). Studies by Supovitz (2010) and Elmore (2002) have shown that incentives have impacts on teachers’ instructional practices. For instance, extrinsic rewards and sanctions linked to high stake testing serve to motivate teachers across the education systems of many countries. Stetcher and Camm (2010) found that teachers who are promised rewards if their low performing learners improve their performance are likely to adjust some teaching activities such as improving presentation of instructional materials and paying extra attention to the low performers. A study by Jackson (2008) in northern Carolina state in the USA revealed that even though many teachers were not motivated with the introduction of high stake examinations, 66.8% of the teachers felt that teachers should be sanctioned or rewarded for learners’ achievement in the standardized or the high stake examinations as they believe that such incentives are a motivation and help teachers to change their instructional practices which they believe help improve learners’ performance.

School Inspection
Wilcox (2000) defines school inspection as the practice of monitoring and evaluating the quality and or performance of schools by agents who are not directly involved with the schools but are specially appointed to assess the schools and are known as the inspectors of schools. The school inspectors make regular visits to schools under their care to observe what goes on in the schools and classrooms. Word Bank (2008) observes that several countries in Sub Saharan Africa have inspectors within their education systems. The idea of inspection is, firstly, that teachers get to know that they are constantly under observation and subject to evaluation for which there is potential consequences like sanctions. Secondly, the process of inspection is likely to bring to the attention of the ministry staff whatever challenges the teachers are faced with and as such try to provide or find solutions to the challenges with an aim of improving the education standards. In this case inspection is thus viewed as having potential consequence of improvement of the schools that are inspected.

According to Wilcox (2000) and World Bank (2008) there is no general consensus on whether inspection is a reliable mechanism of accountability in education since it is faced by a number of challenges. There is a tendency to generalize inspection findings even if the sampling was not done adequately, and there exists a problem of transparency between teachers and the inspectors and therefore the reports form inspection often lacks credibility.

The point, therefore, is that incentives do not automatically lead to improvements but can only be effective if the message carried by the incentives is well translated into actions such as change of instructional practices for the better by the teachers or learning habits by the learners.
The past held forums to report to stakeholders like parents, Head of Department, and Vice-principals. The same grade seven examinations. Regional education officials were requested to assist with the selection of the five primary schools based on these criteria.

Methodology
Research design
The nature of the study called for the researchers to collect rich data and for this reason a qualitative research approach was used. This study employed the multiple case study design. Even though the focus was to understand a single phenomenon i.e. performance-based accountability of primary school teachers and principals, parallel data was collected from assorted participants in different sites (schools) to make triangulations of data possible. A multiple case study of five primary schools in the Khomas Region was conducted to understand the phenomenon from the participants’ perspectives. Robson (2002) warns against the misconception that the reason behind the multiple case studies is for the purpose of generalization of the study results to its population. Yin as cited by Robson (2002) expounds that carrying out multiple case studies is like conducting multiple experiments, which follow duplication logic and as such any generalization of results from the study is made to the theory and not populations. Robson thus concludes that multiple case studies strengthen the study outcome by replicating a pattern which may predict the same or contrasting results but for predictable reasons. This therefore increases the confidence in the robustness of the theory guiding the study.

3.2 Population
The population of the study consisted of all primary school teachers, principals, parents and school inspectors in the Khomas Region.

3.3 Sample and sampling procedures
Five primary schools were purposefully selected to participate in the study based on the following criteria: Firstly, participating schools were selected from primary schools in the Khomas Region of Namibia. Secondly, participants were selected from those primary schools that kept records on learner performance and also had in the past held forums to report to stakeholders like parents on learning achievements. Thirdly, three of the sampled schools have been excelling on grade seven examinations for the past five years, whereas the other two were schools that have not been excelling in the same grade seven examinations. Regional education officials were requested to assist with the selection of the five primary schools based on these criteria.

Once the five schools identified, a stratified purposeful sampling strategy was employed to select the participants. The school board chairperson and principal for each of the five schools were automatically selected. Heim (2006) notes that as school principals, they bear the responsibility to ensure demands of accountability are met and therefore play an important role in the implementation of any formulated accountability policies. The third group was that of school inspectors. Two senior school inspectors were sampled based on experience (the ones with the most years of experience). The teachers sub-sample was drawn from experienced teachers in various subject categories. Experience in this case meant teachers with at least five years teaching experience. From each school, one teacher from each of the four subject categories (English, Mathematics, sciences and social studies) was selected based on the following criteria: experienced teachers who spent extra instructional time especially for below average performers in their subjects (Hannaway and Hamilton, 2008). The second criterion was that of teachers whose learners’ performance gap was not extremely wide. The third criterion was that of teachers who had updated records on their learners’ performance. Thus the sample size was 32 participants (5 principals + 5 chairpersons + 2 inspectors + 4 teachers x 5 = 32 participants).

3.4 Research instruments
The data was collected using structured interviews. Participants for each sub-sample were asked similar questions. This was done to enhance comparability of data during data analysis, thus triangulation of data. Interviews were conducted to determine the views of participants on how the teachers and principals could be held accountable for the learning outcomes of their learners.

3.5 Data collection procedures
The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants. During the interview sessions, the researchers asked questions and allowed the participants to respond without interrupting them or judging their views. The researcher took notes of the responses. The researchers also probed the participants’ responses. This was done to enable the researchers to capture as much data as possible during the interviews.

3.6 Data analysis
The analysis of data was an ongoing process that began in the field and continued after the data was collected. Inductive data analysis which enabled the researchers to categorize data in the emerging themes and categories...
(Gay, Mills & Airsan, 2009) was used to analyze the data.

To obtain the emerging themes, the researchers read through raw data several times to understand the responses from the participants’ views. Meaningful data from the passages were identified and coded. Robson (2002) points out that coding is the process of identifying and selecting texts or phrases which are meaningful and highlighting them, so that similar ideas are highlighted with, for example, same highlighters. The idea behind coding basically was to enable the researchers to quickly retrieve and categorize texts that were associated with a similar thematic idea so that they could be examined collectively and comparisons or similarities be made. Therefore after reading several times through the raw data, the texts were highlighted in different colours and the texts with similar colours were categorized together under the themes that emerged. The researchers then made meanings of the data collected by interpreting the themes.

Findings
The aim of this study was to find out the perceptions of parents, inspectors, teachers and principals on how to hold teachers and principals accountable for the learning achievement of their learners. From their responses most of the participants had no problem with the idea of holding teachers and principals accountable for their learners’ performance, but they had problems with the specific details of holding them accountable. For instance, most of them were of the view that if teachers and principals were to be held accountable then all stakeholders in education, such as parents have to play their roles effectively otherwise they felt it would be unfair to expect teachers and principals to work effectively without the full support of other stakeholders. The researchers, therefore, classified similar responses from the different participants as follows.

4.1 Public display and reporting of examination results

Both inspectors and parents felt that by displaying the results of examinations publicly, teachers and learners would be forced to put more efforts in their work. The parent from school A said:

Primary school teachers need something that will make them to work harder than they are currently doing. Unlike the secondary schools which publish grade ten and twelve examination results in national newspapers, grade seven results are not. I feel that teachers and even learners do not take the examinations seriously. Grade seven … examination … results should be made public nationwide to make both learners and teachers to work harder.

Inspector X said:

… Making results of grade seven examinations public might make the learners work harder to avoid scoring low grades which if published could be embarrassing. I think even the teachers would feel embarrassed if their subject columns had the lowest grades. I know some may say it’s not the best way of handling things but I feel all the teachers will want to avoid the low grades and take pride in good grades by their learners.

Participants acknowledged how hard the process of making grade seven results public could be and the negative impact this method was likely to have on poor performing learners and teachers, however they felt that the learners’ performance should not be compromised for the sake of a few lazy learners and teachers. They stressed that learners and teachers should not see it negatively but rather as a wakeup call to start working hard and avoid low grades and embarrassment. The parent at school B said:

It’s up to them, if they are found in the section which embarrasses them; they should blame themselves because they have been given seven years [of teaching children in grades 1 – 7] to avoid being embarrassed if the results were to be on newspapers. They should just do it like they do it for the grades ten and twelve, it could help.

Apart from publishing grade seven results in newspapers, inspector Y suggested that schools should have annual meetings with parents in which the schools report to parents on the learners’ performance for the year. He felt that such meetings could provide an opportunity for parents to discuss and express their concerns on their children’s performance.

Inspector X’s concern regarding such meetings, however, was that some schools already hold such meetings but the meetings often are not taken seriously. He mentioned that he had received complaints from principals that few parents show up for such meetings. The turn-up for such meetings according to the inspector gets even worse with poor performing schools. He therefore asserted that such reporting meetings can only be productive if teachers and parents take their roles seriously by making the learners’ performance a priority. He argued:

It is pointless to call for parents meeting and just report on the learners’ performance. I think it could work better if something with more impact is attached to reporting, like rewarding both learners and teachers for their achievements. So these parents meetings can also double up as prize giving days.
The respondents identified public displaying of results and reporting to parents regularly on the learners’ performance as possible ways of demanding for performance based accountability, however they observed that parents should be encouraged to turn up for such meetings and to attach rewards to such meetings for them to be effective in improving learning achievements.

4.2 Rewards and incentives

All the participants were in agreement that teachers, principals and learners could be held accountable through rewarding the excelling ones and sanctioning poor performers. The teachers and principals all agreed that teachers whose learners excel should be rewarded to continue maintaining and improving the standards of their learners’ achievements and also to inspire the poor performing teachers to aim higher so that they too can get the rewards. Out of the five schools that participated, only two schools had rewarding programmes in place. School A has rewarding programme for the learners only. The principal of school A explained:

Being a state school, we run the school absolutely on state funding so in as much as we would like to give material or monetary rewards to these hardworking teachers it’s not easy because that may not be approved by government. However we recognize teachers’ hard work through public recognition and issuing certificates of excellence and vouching for promotions to the hard working teachers whose learners excel...As for the learners, we give top performers incentives like publicly recognizing their achievements, giving rewards in the form of learning materials, stationery, and once a year we organize for top five performers in all the grades to attend the Windhoek show in October annually.

The principal of school B stated that they have reward programme for both teachers and learners. She said that a slight portion of the fees that parents pay is allocated for reward programme for both teachers and learners to help motivate and improve the performance of learners. She said, apart from rewarding learners with stationery and learning materials, the top three and the most improved learners in each grade together with teachers whose subjects excel go on educational or recreational tours annually around the country and in her opinion the tour is coveted by all the teachers so they get motivated to work hard. Secondly, she stated that teachers get monetary and material rewards on prize giving days which they organize annually. She also indicated that in addition to monetary and material rewards, teachers whose subjects excel are publicly recognized and awarded certificates of excellence. Finally she said that the school being private has the jurisdiction of promoting hard working teachers whose learners excel in the various subjects.

The parent at school D whose school has not been performing well felt that giving incentives to the unmotivated teachers in his school could be the first step to improving the poor performance of the school, however he questioned the possibility of such programme since their school was struggling to provide the basic learning materials. He nevertheless indicated that the reward programmes could be something positive that both teachers and learners could look up to and thus the motivation could help improve the learning standards of any school.

From their responses, it was apparent that the participants acknowledged the power behind recognizing and rewarding individuals for their hard work. They felt that through the rewards the teachers not only feel recognized for their achievements and appreciated for the efforts they put in their work but the rewards are a source of motivation which keep them going on to achieve the set goals.

Two excelling schools A and B also had reward programmes in place for learners. They felt it was important because in their opinion learners need to be motivated to work harder and that the recognition and rewards are ways to keep a healthy competition amongst the learners since each learner would be eying the prize.

4.3 Sanctions

The researchers noticed leniency in the responses of most participants as far as sanctioning of teachers was concerned. Some participants felt that teachers who are sanctioned should be the ones whose learners have been performing dismally for a long periods of time. The principal of school D argued:

I think it would not be fair to punish a teacher whose learners performed poorly for the first time, because one never knows what really caused such poor performance. I think the teachers who have been given opportunities to improve but have not are the ones who should be sanctioned.

The participants, who were not for sanctioning teachers especially those from poor performing schools, felt that there was great possibility that sanctions could demoralize teachers and hence worsen the standards of achievement of the learners. They warned that it was important for proper measures to be taken before implementing the sanctions.

The participants who identified sanctioning as a possible motivation to improve the quality of learning achievements in schools felt that before any sanctions are to be implemented, it was only fair that the teachers be involved in the formulation of issues related to sanctions so that they would be able to own the sanctioning strate-
gies and not feel victimized. According to inspector X, teachers would be in a better position to take the sanc-
tions positively if they were involved in discussing all issues concerning sanctioning teachers rather than hav-
ing sanctions imposed on them. Participating teachers from poor performing schools were also of the opinion 
that if they were to be sanctioned learners too had to be sanctioned so that both parties could be motivated 
to work harder. Otherwise they would feel it is unfair to punish teachers while no measures were in place to sanc-
tion the learners. For instance, the teachers complained that the learners are transferred (automatic promotion) to the 
next grades even if they do not pass. Hence they mentioned that sanctioning learners who do not excel by 
promoting only the learners who pass could make the learners also to work harder than if they are transferred 
to the next grades when they do not deserve so. The per-
ception was that it would not be fair to expose teachers to demands of accountability alone since it takes more than teachers to improve the standards of achievement in an education system. The participants however suggested 
the following ways as means of sanctioning the teachers whose learners continuously perform dismally.

4.3.1 Written warnings

Nine teachers, three principals and the three parents were of the view that before any action is taken teachers whose learners continue to perform below average in their subjects should be issued with written warnings. The principal of school B pointed out that in her school, in the similar manner in which excelling teachers are recognized and awarded certificates of excellence, the teachers whose learners’ performance is constantly poor are often given written warnings. She said the written warnings are a constant reminder that teachers have to put more efforts in their work and should they fail to improve the learners’ performance then some action will be taken against them. However, the majority of the re-
pondents suggested that warnings are lenient and give individuals opportunities to improve before other tough measures can be implemented.

4.3.2 Demotions, transfers and dismissals

The participants concurred that some actions need to be taken against teachers who over the years have not been performing. The principal of school A wondered about the fact that teachers are often sanctioned for going against the professional codes of conduct for instance chronic absenteeism from school, having sexual relationship with learners, impregnating learners, yet they don’t get sanctioned for failing to perform the one task they are employed to do which is teaching. The teacher at school A said “...we cannot keep on sac-
rificing the learners’ future just because we do not want to upset a teacher who has not been able to deliver.” Principal of school B reported, “...in my school if you cannot perform to our standards, we have no choice but to release you from your duty.” The parent at school D added:

If I had the power, I would dismiss a few teachers who after all these years are still in this school de-
spite how poorly learners have been performing in their subjects. I can only hope that at some point the teachers will be transferred to other schools but there is never guarantee that they will leave. And by the way, who said there is a school that needs ‘lazy bones’? These lazy people should just be fired.

The researchers noticed the desperation and helplessness in the school principals of schools D and E as far as this issue was concerned. It was evident that the principals recognized that some teachers had been in the schools for lengthy periods and their subjects’ grades were still low yet there was very little they as principals could do.

Some of the sanctions in the participants’ views included transferring teachers who have been in the particular schools for three or more years and have not been able to improve the standards of achievement in their subjects. The point was not to allow teachers to stay in one school for long if they could not deliver. Two teachers stated that the teachers could be transferred to rural schools where most teachers would not readily go to be their wake up calls.

The principal of school B gave examples that in her school some teachers have been demoted from their po-
sitions as heads of department. She indicated that some individuals do not take demotions kindly so in the two cases the teachers opted to quit teaching in her school all together. She stated that it was important to take such actions to make teachers realize that they cannot be too comfortable in their positions and have to lead the de-
partment members by being good examples. The prin-
cipal of school B further indicated that in her school, which is run privately, teachers whose learners still per-
form poorly even after the warning letters and demo-
tions, are often dismissed. This was contrary to the re-
sponses of the principals in state owned schools who do not have the power to dismiss any teachers from their schools.

4.4 Contracting or licensing

Two principals, two parents, and a school inspector men-
tioned that the most effective way of holding teachers accountable for learners’ performance is to offer teachers jobs on contractual basis rather than being permanent
employees in the schools. The principal of school E for instance indicated that he was certain that employing teachers through contracts or licenses would make teachers to give their best to the learners through lesson preparations and classroom instructions since they would know that their jobs are not permanent. He said “I believe teachers will work harder than they are doing now if they are on contract. The problem is how practical can it be?”

The principal of school D said:

We find security in our jobs as it is now because we know we have a lifetime employment so I think for some teachers it is sort of a hiding place, the government doesn’t pay attention to individual teachers’ work so they may not deliver, but will have their jobs as long as they stay in the profession. If teachers are to be given employment contracts which should be renewed only if one performs then they will start taking their work seriously.

Therefore participants were of the opinion that learners’ achievement standards in the country as a whole would improve if teachers were offered job contracts since they would be forced to work hard to be able to renew their contracts. They, however, were skeptical that despite the possible effectiveness of employment contracts in improving learning achievements, it would be hard to put the idea in practice as they believed that teachers in Namibia are protected by the labour unions such as Namibia National Teachers’ Union (NANTU). “This suggestion was on the table for discussion before, but the unions fought it tooth and nail”, concluded inspector Y.

4.5 Regular inspection and impromptu school visits

All parents and inspectors and four teachers suggested that teachers could be made accountable by being answerable to school inspectors and education officials. Both inspectors of schools mentioned that not all schools were inspected regularly. Some schools have not been inspected in ages. Inspector Y was concerned that due to the fact that the school is run privately, parents pay a lot of school fees for their children as opposed to learners who receive free primary education in state primary schools and thus there is pressure on the teachers and the principal to perform to the parents’ satisfaction. If parents are dissatisfied with performance of their children, they tend to transfer their children to better performing schools and this would disadvantage the school. For this reason teachers are employed on contracts which are only renewed if the teachers happen to deliver satisfactorily. Teachers in this school are also promoted or demoted depending on how their learners perform. Therefore whereas teachers in state primary schools in the Khomas Region are not held accountable for the performance of their learners, teachers in school B a private school have to be accountable for the performance of their learners. Learner performance at that school was excellent.

This study findings show that participants acknowledge that learners’ performance is likely to improve if teachers and principals are held accountable for the performance of their learners. Like previous research (Gariepy et al., 2009; World Bank, 2008) the findings suggest that the teachers and principals should be held accountable for their learners’ performance to the parents, the general public and the government through the Ministry of Education. The study findings indicate that it would be easier for the Ministry of Education to implement particularly the incentives aspect of PBAS given that it is within its jurisdiction to take actions like to promote, demote, dismiss, and transfer teachers who perform or do not perform satisfactorily. Previous research indicate that to

The parent at school A pointed out that once in a while schools should get unannounced visits from high ranking education officials. He narrated to the researchers an incident that happened earlier in the year whereby the minister of education and some education officials dropped by in a few schools unannounced and found the schools in chaos. According to him that is the best way to find exactly how schools operate. He argued that giving prior notification gives the teachers and management time to sort out their misdeeds so that by the time the officials drop by everything seems to be in order. He supported his suggestion that most teachers were absent from school on the day the minister dropped in those schools without notice hence it gave a true picture of what was going on in those schools. He therefore was of the opinion that such impromptu visits from high ranking education officials to schools should be increased so that teachers are kept on a tight leash and learners would benefit.

Conclusions

While the literature like Marope (2005) and Dentlinger (2005) indicates that there is no education policy in Namibia that holds teachers and principals accountable for the learning achievements of learners, an unexpected finding in this study was that School B, a privately run school, on its own demands performance-based accountability from teachers and the principal. The study found that due to the fact that the school is run privately, parents pay a lot of school fees for their children as opposed to learners who receive free primary education in state primary schools and therefore there is pressure on the teachers and the principal to perform to the parents’ satisfaction. If parents are dissatisfied with performance of their children, they tend to transfer their children to better performing schools and this would disadvantage the school. For this reason teachers are employed on contracts which are only renewed if the teachers happen to deliver satisfactorily. Teachers in this school are also promoted or demoted depending on how their learners perform. Therefore whereas teachers in state primary schools in the Khomas Region are not held accountable for the performance of their learners, teachers in school B a private school have to be accountable for the performance of their learners. Learner performance at that school was excellent.
hold teachers and principals accountable for the learning achievements teachers should be both rewarded and sanctioned for excellent and dismal performance respectively (Elmore, 2002; Hout & Elliott, 2011; Stetecher & Camm, 2010). Studies suggest that to sanction, teachers should be demoted, transferred, dismissed, have teaching contracts or licenses so that they can only be given to competent teachers and renewal of the contracts or licenses be subjected to performance. While this study findings were consistent with the previous studies by pointing out the above mentioned ways to sanction teachers whose learners continue to perform poorly, the findings also indicated that more lenient forms of sanctions for example issuing of at least two written warnings to teachers whose learners continuously perform poorly should be used before the above mentioned measures which were viewed to be a bit harsh are taken.

Previous research by Wilcox (2000) show that inspection of schools is the most widely used form of accountability in education systems. The findings of this study was consistent with previous research in the sense that regular inspection of schools was likely to improve the quality of learning achievements because teachers would know that they are under constant observation. The study found that through regular inspections, teachers would improve how they prepare for classes and would avoid absenting themselves from school unnecessarily. Learners would therefore stand to benefit with these behavioral changes in teachers which regular inspection of schools could possibly bring along.

The study findings however indicate uncertainty in the ability of school inspectors to conduct school inspection whose reports have the potential to recommend for the sanctioning of teachers and principals who have not been able to perform as PBAS in education demands. The findings therefore suggest that while the participants concur with the results from prior research that inspection of schools is a means of holding teachers and principals accountable for their learners’ performance, they questioned the credibility of the inspection reports especially if the reports are not informed by credible evidence. They felt that the reports may not be objective.

The findings of this study concur with the studies of Supovitz (2010) and Elmore (2002) that a teacher who is promised a reward if the low performing learners improve their performance is likely to adjust some activities that he or she is able to control such as how well instructional materials are presented, and additional instructional time or paying extra attention to the low performing learners. The findings suggest that if teachers and principals were to be rewarded for their learners’ excellent or improved performance then they would improve the way they prepare or present the lessons and would be more committed to improving their learners’ performance. The findings further suggest that the rewards could be in form of monetary rewards, promotions, public recognition and certificates of excellence.

**Recommendations**

a) Primary school teachers should be held accountable for the learning outcomes of their learners.

b) In order to reward teachers and principals whose learners excel or make tremendous improvement as PBAS demands, teachers and principals should be promoted, given monetary incentives, certificates of excellence and publicly recognized for their achievements. To sanction teachers whose learners perform poorly consistently, teachers and principals should be first be given written warnings. If learners’ performance does not improve after the written warnings then the teachers and principals should be transferred, demoted and any monetary incentives should be withdrawn.

c) Grade seven examinations should not only be external and standardized but should also be of high stake as is required by PBAS. To make the grade seven examinations high stake, all grade seven learners in the country should take the same examinations.

d) Provision of education involves different parties who should play their roles effectively and since PBA in education is also a shared responsibility, learners should be made to be accountable for their performance. For instance, only learners who meet the minimum basic competencies of the particular grade should be promoted, those who do not merit promotion should repeat the grades and not be transferred to the next grades.

**REFERENCES**


