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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLUSTER-BASED SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVING TEACHING IN NAMIBIAN SCHOOLS

BY

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SUMMARY

In 1991, one year after the Namibian independence, the Ministry of Education and Culture was organised in six departments and six regional directorates. The regional directorates were established as early as in 1991. The establishment of the regional directorates was the first step towards decentralisation of education management, which took a form of de-concentration. During the late 1990s, the regional directorates were subdivided into thirteen regional education directorates to be in compliance with the central government policy of decentralising functions from the head offices of various ministries to the regional administrations in the thirteen regions.

During 2000, the Namibian Ministry of Education introduced cluster-based school management as a decentralisation reform, granting authority and responsibility for managing school supervision and in-service training for school managers and teachers to clusters, to be implemented in all the thirteen education regions. Cluster–based school management reform has been adopted as a strategy for improving school supervision and teaching in Namibia. However, there is little empirical evidence on the effects of school clustering on the quality of teaching in Namibia.

This study examined the implementation of cluster-based school management reform in the Namibian primary schools. The specific focus of the study was to assess: (1) the implementation of cluster-based school management reform in the Namibian primary schools; and (2) the relationship between cluster-based school management reform and improving teaching at classroom level.

The data for this study were collected through: (1) survey research in thirty-seven primary schools in five regions: Caprivi; Erongo; Hardap; Karas and Kunene, and (2), case studies, based on interviews; focused group discussions; informal conversations; observations; and document analyses in the three primary school clusters in two of the five education regions.

The study's main findings are that the implementation of cluster-based school management reform has been constrained by resource scarcity and reluctance to share resources; potential threat to the authority of school inspectors and school principals; and incongruence between the ideologies existed prior to the introduction of the reform and the

democratic ideology. The other main finding from this study is that there is insufficient evidence to show that the teaching methods of teachers who have received support from the school management reform are notably different from those who have not.

This study demonstrates a number of obvious missing links between cluster-based school management and improving teaching, because the reform lacks: (1) clarity, guidelines and resources to support and monitor teaching in schools and at classroom level; (2) clarity on the roles and responsibilities of key implementers in improving teachers' teaching practices; (3) capability to transform school traditions and culture into a culture which transforms teaching in schools; and (4) clarity on how teacher involvement can be utilised to improve teaching in schools.

This study concludes that there is no evidence from this study that cluster-based school management reform relates to improving teaching.

Key words: Decentralisation; Educational Management; Site-based management; School Clustering; Education Policy Reform; School Reform; Cluster Contexts; Educational Change; Cluster Dynamics; School Cultures

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AG:	Administrator-General, South Africa's colonial governor in Namibia
BEP:	Basic Education Project
BETD:	Basic Education Teacher Diploma
BETD INSET:	Basic Education Teacher Diploma In-Service Training
CCP:	Cluster-centre principal
GDP:	Gross domestic product
GTZ:	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zussamenarbeit
IIEP:	International Institute for Educational Planning
MEC:	Ministry of Education and Culture
MBESC:	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
NSSCH:	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Higher
NSSCO:	Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate Ordinary
TRC:	Teachers' Resource Centre
SBM:	School-based management
SDM:	School-decision making
SIP:	School Improvement Program
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SRS:	Simple random sampling

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LIST OF CONCEPTS

Authoritarianism: an ideology which emphasises respect and blind submission to authority and opposes individual and collective freedom of thought, initiative and action. Stakeholders' participation in decision-making process is not promoted.

Bureaucracy: an ideology which views institutions and organisations as governed by set of rules, regulations and procedures. Bureaucracy stresses hierarchy and specialised division of labour.

Circuit management committee: the top management level of the cluster-based school management structure, consisting of circuit inspector and cluster-centre principals, which is responsible for supervising and monitoring cluster activities at the circuit office level.

Coloured: in the context of Namibia and South Africa, the term coloured has been used as a language of racial differentiation between white and black racial groups.

Cluster: refers to a grouping of schools for political, administrative and pedagogical purposes

Cluster management committee: the middle management level of the cluster-based school management structure, consisting of the cluster-centre principal and satellite school principals, which is responsible for managing, supervising and monitoring the cluster activities

Cluster centre principal: a principal of a cluster school who is given the responsibility to support, guide and supervise the satellite school principals and the cluster activities

Cluster subject facilitator: a teacher in a particular cluster who is given the responsibility to support and guide teachers in that cluster

De-concentration: refers to a territorial decentralisation which involves central government decentralising its own staff to sub-national levels to carry out their regular functions closer to the people, while the central government retains overall control

Delegation: refers to a functional decentralisation which involves the central government allocating some of its functions to the sub-national levels to carry out, but not to take full responsibility for, and without abrogating its own public accountability for those functions

Devolution: refers to functional decentralisation which involves the central state, either by legislation or through constitutional requirements, giving full responsibility and public accountability for central functions to the sub-national level.

Managerialism: A technocratic ideology which views analytical tools, developed to help managers make decisions, as ends in themselves. Its primary value is economic efficiency, or the pursuit of maximum output with minimum inputs as well as efficiency in public administration

Police Zone: refers to the southern and central areas of Namibia to which white settlement was directed in pre-independent Namibia. Unlike the territories north of this so-called Red line, which were governed through a system of indirect rule, in the Police Zone the administration employed policies of direct control.

Satellite school principal: refers to a principal of a satellite school in a cluster