

# The Quality of Working Life in Public Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Rundu Circuit

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## Abstract

The study in the Rundu Circuit aimed to assess the quality of working life (QWL) of public secondary school teachers. The research used a qualitative approach, focusing on their sense of security, equity, pride, ownership, autonomy, responsibility, and flexibility. The study involved 22 teachers and 4 out of 5 principals, and used open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The QWL was found to be influenced by job requirements, work environment, supervisory behaviour, and development opportunities. The study recommends measures to improve QWL, including participative management, better work control, trust, and value for teachers.

**Keywords:** Quality of Work Life (QWL), Public Secondary School, Participative Management, Work Environment and Development Opportunities.

## INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundation of any nation, providing resources to employees and business owners who contribute to economic development. Public schools, as organizations, must strive to enhance the value of their employees' working lives.

Quality of work life (QWL) is a similarly valuable connection between work, home, employees, and the organization. The establishment must satisfy workers' desires, such as payment, safety, and wellness, to keep them happy and motivated (Bagtasos, 2011). It is similarly critical to keep employees pleased so that they, in turn, serve the clients of the organization well and increase morale and performance. In the late 1960s, the concept of quality of working life was introduced, emphasizing the poor quality of working life in the workplace (Vander, 2013).

The Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture in Namibia emphasizes the importance of fineness in providing quality education and preparing for nationwide development in their vision statement (MOE, 2012). To achieve excellence in providing valuable education in Namibia, organizations such as public schools should prioritize the well-being of their employees, who are

responsible for delivering the best possible education. In Namibia, the study done to assess the satisfaction and performance of employees in five Woermann Brock retail shops in Windhoek is one that talks about some of the issues that create the class of work life (Ekandjo, 2017).

A study at the University of Somalia (Dahie, 2017) identified three factors that impact lecturers' happiness and well-being: overall welfare, job satisfaction, and working conditions. These factors significantly influence the quality of work life. Similarly, research comparing public school teachers in Turkey and Pakistan—two countries with shared cultural and Islamic values but differing economic conditions—revealed that Turkish teachers scored higher on organizational support, workplace facilities, and career opportunities, while Pakistani teachers reported better working conditions and fairer pay (Akram, 2017).

The study on the quality of work life in state secondary schools explored additional factors that could improve it. Since no similar research has been conducted in public secondary schools in the Rundu Circuit, this study raised awareness among educational leaders about the importance of a positive work environment in schools.

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Over the years, many teachers have resigned in search of better opportunities, with some preferring business ventures over routine schoolwork. As dynamic organizations, schools face the challenge of retaining top talent due to the quality of their work lives.

The study examined how well public school teachers in the Rundu Circuit satisfy their core needs while working, focusing on aspects like security, equity, pride, ownership, autonomy, responsibility, and flexibility. It aimed to gain insight into the quality of work life in public secondary schools and to develop strategies for improvement. The study provided school principals with

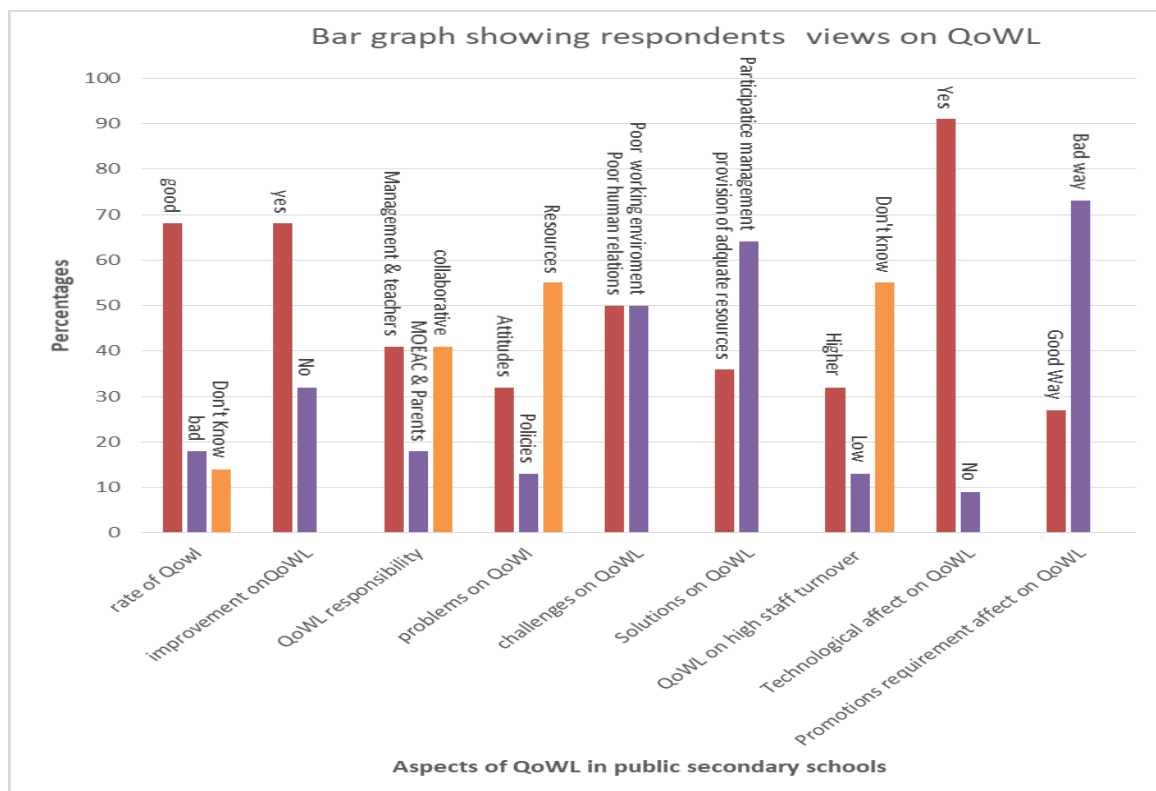
### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were mainly used to understand the quality of work life in public secondary schools in the Rundu circuit. This study used a qualitative research approach, which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data-gathering techniques, and the analysis to be used (Maree, 2013). A case study entailed intensive analysis of the quality of work life in the Rundu circuit. The study could not use quantitative design, as there are no descriptive phenomena numerically to answer specific questions or hypotheses. In the absence of the characteristics of a quantitative

insights into factors that can enhance performance by improving the quality of work life for teachers. Public schools may devise strategies to attract, develop, and retain suitably qualified teachers. The study raised public awareness and emphasis on the quality of work life for teachers in public secondary schools. The study provided valuable insights into the current state of teacher well-being in public schools, specifically in relation to Quality of Work Life (QoWL). Future researchers may use this as a foundation to further explore the quality of work-life in the Kavango East region.

approach, a mixed approach was not applicable to this study. Qualitative research technique is a process that studies the research problem in its natural setting rather than having subjects studied in a laboratory. The qualitative approach relied on a description of characteristics of people and events, not on numbers and amounts. Using a qualitative research design enables one to discover and understand the social dynamic aspects of the quality of work life. Hence, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire for teachers, interviews for principals, and observation to collect more information regarding the quality of work life in public secondary schools.

### FINDINGS



The data from the questionnaires presented in themes and interviews with principals was presented in a shortened transcript and coded as indicated in the attached appendices. Teachers and heads of departments were respondents to the questionnaires. Teachers and heads of departments rated the quality of work life in public secondary schools in the Rundu circuit on three scales: good, bad, and don't care. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents rated the quality of work life in some secondary schools as good, citing factors such as the cleanliness of the entire school, ablution facilities, ample parking spaces for teachers' cars, tables, and comfortable chairs in the staffrooms and classrooms. In some schools, the situation is reversed, leading to a poor quality of work life for teachers, as indicated by 18% of respondents. This implies that these schools are in stark contrast to those where teachers enjoy a positive work environment. Other respondents, representing fourteen percent (14%), stressed that they can't tell whether the quality of work life is good or bad. This is indicated in the pictures in the appendix, which were taken at various schools. Some schools have good offices with air conditioning for heads of departments, while others have offices without air conditioning, and the staffroom chairs are in poor condition. This is an indication that working in public secondary schools requires happiness in the workplace. The quality of work life in schools is affected by job requirements, the work environment, supervisory behavior, and development opportunities (Sumayyah, 2018). Some secondary schools report that internal and external factors created by the work environment are causing teachers and heads of departments to feel unsatisfied at work. We can attribute the ratings of teachers and heads of departments to McClelland's three needs theory, as the need for achievement from both the organization and individuals determines the extent to which those working in the school will enjoy their workplace or not. Those with power and those with envy make others in an organization like a school behave and finally they need to affiliate with one another. By considering this theory, we can gain a clear understanding of how schools rate the quality of their work life.

Respondents acknowledged that schools in the Rundu circuit are striving to maintain a quality of work life that allows teachers to find their work enjoyable and pleasant. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the respondents have noticed improvements in good working life in secondary schools, while thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents are not convinced that much is done. Renovations of classrooms in some schools were done to give the teachers a favorable classroom-working environment by fixing the floor and broken windows. Teachers are involved in the decision-making of projects and any other relevant decisions at the school; their opinions and suggestions are debated and thoroughly looked at during staff meetings. Teachers and school management have reached a consensus on important decisions to ensure their implementation. At times, school

managements demonstrate flexibility by listening to teachers' concerns and granting them permission or leave to address their personal needs. Some important tasks, such as discipline, stocktaking, and examination handling, are delegated to teachers and heads of departments to make them feel important and valued by the school. Most schools in the Rundu Circuit have Wi-Fi, which teachers use freely while at work.

Forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents stated that it is a collective responsibility of teachers, school management, senior education officers (SOEs), and any other stakeholders. Another 41% of respondents believe that parents and the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture bear a significant responsibility in promoting and ensuring the well-being of teachers in secondary schools. This can be done by designing programs to ensure a favorable quality of work life for teachers in public secondary schools. Parents have a role to play by ensuring that those who teach their children are enjoying their work environment; this is done by contributing to schools in kind or in any form. Teachers unions such as NANTU ensures that their members are satisfied in the workplace by bargaining for better conditions of employment and a positive work environment. Institutional workers have a responsibility in maintaining the quality of work life for teachers as they ensure that there is cleanliness in the staffroom and that ablution facilities and offices are kept clean. Learners are expected to keep the school environment clean for themselves and teachers. Principals as managers are responsible for providing a work environment that is conducive to excellent performance. This is referred to as the quality of work life for the employees in an organization, as the emphasis is on the work environment (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2013).

With regard to problems faced by schools in maintaining the quality of work life, respondents pointed out various factors that can be classified into three broad categories, namely, attitudes, policies, and resources. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents identified the attitude of both teachers and school management as the primary challenge to maintaining a high quality of work life, which in turn hinders teamwork. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the respondents alluded to resources, both human and physical, as the biggest challenge. Shortage of textbooks: Since the government and parents are unable to provide textbooks as learning resources, it becomes a burden for teachers to prepare notes for students. This is a time-consuming and exhausting activity for teachers. Teachers are not involved in curriculum design and evaluation; what is taught in schools is linked to a certain political ideology. Teachers discriminate against each other due to their diverse ethnic backgrounds, which creates a hostile and gossip-filled work environment. Teachers that further their studies are discouraged as supervisors feel they take too much study leave for examinations and classes. Many schools in the Rundu circuit experience disciplinary problems with learners; teachers are deprived the right to punish the

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learners because corporal punishment is abolished in Namibian schools. Secondary schools in the Rundu circuit are situated near busy main roads, which can become unbearably noisy during peak hours. Some schools in the Rundu circuit have a packed and busy schedule of activities, which puts pressure on teachers as they have limited time for family and social life. Respondents emphasized that the primary obstacles to enhancing the quality of work life for teachers are poor human relations within schools and unfavorable working environments, each receiving a score of 50% from the respondents. The respondents asserted that there are numerous factors contributing to challenges in the quality of their work life. These challenges include the rigid supervision and control of teachers by those in authority at schools, which in turn triggers unhappiness among teachers. Some school principals and heads of departments abuse their positions by exaggerating issues at schools to an extreme degree, thereby over controlling teachers. Teachers are not empowered to maintain discipline at school because it is limited by constitutional rights, which defend and protect human rights and the dignity of every person. Teachers often feel frustrated when they are unable to fully control the handling of severe disciplinary issues at school, as they must wait for a bureaucratic decision-making process. Poor communication between teachers and the management in some schools is a concern, especially when principals use threats to control them. The offices conceal relevant information about regulations, acts, and policies, waiting for teachers to make mistakes before using it against them. Secondary schools have significantly higher enrolment numbers, often with a teacher-to-learner ratio of 45, making it challenging and exhausting for teachers to provide individualized assistance to each student. Budget constraints are a reality in public schools. There appear to be delays in the allocation of funds to schools for the improvement and maintenance of infrastructures, including staffrooms, classrooms, and laboratories in secondary schools. At times schools cannot maintain their infrastructures due to limited funds.

Respondents suggested ways in which schools can overcome challenges and improve the quality of work life for teachers by focusing on the provision of adequate resources and participative management. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the respondents think provision of adequate resources is a solution, while sixty-four percent (64%) referred to participative management as a solution. This includes the recruitment of more teachers. The teacher-learner ratio nationally stands at 1:35 (New Era, 2017). Respondents further indicated that other schools in the circuit be upgraded to secondary school level to lessen the burden of overcrowding in the current secondary schools. The other schools to be upgraded are primary schools with huge populations, which puts a burden on the enrollment figures of secondary schools in the circuit. School management needs to embark on team-building activities among staff members to make

them aware of and understand each other. End-of-year functions or term get-togethers will improve the quality of work for teachers and foster cooperation with the school management. Teachers and their supervisors can relate to one another when involved in team-building activities. Management of schools needs to treat each teacher fairly for a harmonious environment to prevail at school. Respect among staff members will promote peace and a sense of trust and feeling valued by their supervisors. School management needs to involve teachers in decision-making by consulting on matters affecting the school.

The study focused on the rate of staff turnover and the quality of work life in secondary schools. Of the respondents, fifty-five percent (55%) said they were unsure if teachers are actually leaving the teaching profession, thirteen percent (13%) indicated that it is low, and thirty-two percent (32%) acknowledged that some teachers are leaving the teaching profession. The respondents stated that while some teachers are leaving the teaching profession in some schools, it is not a common occurrence in many schools. Secondary schools in the Rundu circuit retain their skilled teachers for many years, although some schools have experienced a decline in the number of departing teachers. A school that sees a high number of teachers departing, either for better opportunities or through resignation, may be at risk of losing experienced and skilled teachers. Because some schools experience unsatisfactory work conditions, it is assumed that some teachers may not be happy with their work environment, leading them to leave. Unappreciated teachers by management, particularly by principals, cause teachers to feel bad and attempt to look for a new work environment. Some teachers have left their jobs due to the attraction of promotional opportunities beyond teaching.

Ninety percent (90%) of respondents agreed that technology influences the quality of work for teachers in secondary schools, and nine percent (9%) disagreed. Respondents acknowledged that all secondary schools in Rundu are equipped with the internet, which makes teaching easier. Teachers can search for information in their various subjects, which enhances the quality of their teaching. Teachers work is simplified by using projectors and computers; this arouses interest in learners as they are shown videos and pictures. Teachers can reduce the burden of manual planning and assessment by downloading activities and notes from various websites. Teachers are able to design record sheets for assessment and lesson preparation using laptops and computers. Some teachers are not computer friendly due to the generation, perceptions, and training they acquired.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the respondents stated that promotional policy for both teachers and learners is not good and contributes to a bad working life for teachers in secondary schools. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the respondents feel the promotional requirements for teachers to higher positions and learners to the next

grade are a good thing and make the working life of a teacher in secondary schools good. Learners who are promoted to the next grade are ready, while teachers are matured and have accumulated enough experience for their promotion.

Respondents who express dissatisfaction with the promotional requirement in secondary schools believe that the revised curriculum's current requirement encourages more repeaters by allowing learners who don't meet the requirements to repeat a grade. Therefore, teachers must allocate time for remedial teaching. The promotional requirement also permits learners to advance to the next grade with E symbols; this implies that a learner requires 15 points to advance to Grade 11, potentially accommodating learners who may not be prepared for that level. Teachers work under pressure in higher grades to help learners master the contents of the previous grade.

The respondents also discussed the promotion requirements for teachers to senior positions, which are determined by those in authority. The set requirements are often overlooked, leading to discouragement among many teachers. Promote teachers by looking at their work experience and educational qualifications.

Interviews were conducted with principals to assess their understanding and their views on the quality of work life in secondary schools. "Teachers' attitudes towards school work are positive, while others have negative attitudes," said one principal. Principals with a longer serving experience described teachers' attitudes as good, committed, and towards their work in public secondary schools. Most teachers are well-prepared, conduct thorough assessments, and consistently exceed expectations in carrying out their duties. The principal, who has less experience in the circuit, stated that despite the majority of teachers striving to do their best, there are still those who are lazy and counterproductive, seeking unnecessary excuses and fault-finding in their leaders. Teachers who are underqualified or continuing their education are more obedient and hardworking to keep their temporal appointment status. Principals, as participants, indicated that schools in the Rundu circuit are working toward the quality of work life for teachers by ensuring a conducive working environment. Principals believe in corrective measures rather than punishment. The school principal helps teachers realize their mistakes and do the right thing in the future. Proper planning done in advance helps the teachers know what they are expected to do and work on a schedule to meet set targets and due dates without stressing them with sudden changes and unplanned activities. A humorous approach is used in some secondary schools in the Rundu circuit as principals set up a relaxed personality in which they try to interact with their subordinates or start the briefings in

including the use of videos, downloaded worksheets, and visual learning environments. Principals also pointed out that, despite the benefits of using technological tools in

the morning with songs. This is done to try to lift the spirit of teachers and relax the work environment.

School principals stated that they face numerous challenges. "Working with a stubborn teacher". When faced with reprimands, teachers in Rundu circuit schools often resort to defensive mechanisms. Teachers attempt to find faults with their supervisors and undermine school programs. Teachers become protective of themselves, as at times they refuse to accept corrections from their supervisors. Some teachers exhibit poor commitment to their work, which can lead to a negative attitude and influence both novice and experienced teachers. Late coming is also a concern in some schools, particularly on Mondays, Fridays, and paydays, as teachers come with excuses of coming late for home situations. Both teachers and principals experience emotional distress when attempting to resolve issues at schools that arise due to the behavior of teachers. This results in a high tone of voice from the supervisor and the teacher involved.

Most principals believe that leading by example is the first step towards improving the quality of work life in secondary schools. The institution's leader should consistently arrive at school punctually, setting an example for teachers to follow. Principals must face the reality of their assistants' ineffective work. The principal needs to reprimand, advise, and inspire the demotivated or confused subordinates. Teachers doing their best are praised and acknowledged for their efforts. Principals need to be open to suggestions and accept critics. Teachers should receive fair treatment, regardless of whether they are critics or passive, during staff meetings or briefings. They should not be singled out or humiliated when they make mistakes. Principals need to address staff in a professional manner and follow grievance procedures. More team-building activities enhance cooperation and lead to a team working together. When teachers exhibit skill deficiencies, we arrange, coordinate, and organize ongoing professional development to assist them.

Principals believe that the revised curriculum of the secondary education phase has low promotional requirements for learners, allowing them to advance to the next level with an average score of an E symbol in their subjects. Principals have mixed feelings about the promotion requirements of teachers to senior positions. Some principals feel experience is the best teacher, as this allows one to mature before taking up a promotional post. Others feel, though experience is good, opportunity is granted to those who have acquired relevant qualifications as they work hard for it.

"Yes, technology is important in teachers' lives; it is a must for all schools." All principals agreed that using technological tools indeed makes teaching easier. Teachers utilize a variety of teaching techniques,

teaching, there are still some challenges involved. Teachers need more time to prepare effectively. Teachers may abuse this opportunity, which does not guarantee

effective teaching and learning.

Schools in the Rundu circuit have institutional workers who are responsible for keeping the school environment clean. Some schools maintain their staff rooms and the outdoor environment well, resulting in a clean, green environment with visible plants, flowers, and lawns. Some schools have libraries, computer labs, and physical science labs, which are not properly maintained. Storerooms of stationery and cleaning facilities in some schools are well packed and in an orderly manner. Teachers clean their ablution facilities in the mornings, but sometimes neglect them in the afternoons. Most schools lack sufficient chairs and tables for teachers to work from in their staffrooms. Many schools have installed air conditioners in the staffrooms and principals' offices, but neglect to maintain the offices of heads of departments. Libraries and computer labs often lack proper maintenance, and while Wi-Fi is present in most schools, it occasionally fails to function effectively.

It has been observed that in certain secondary schools within the circuit, the management takes the lead by threatening and humiliating teachers who have made mistakes. Such an effort to lead others by threats and humiliating subordinates' triggers unhappiness and stubbornness among teachers. Division between subordinates and supervisors may emerge. Teachers are sometimes victimized due to their critical or inquisitive nature. Some principals adopt a more democratic approach, which can lead to a chaotic environment within the school, as each individual is free to act as they please. A school management that prioritizes corrective measures over threats fosters a cooperative team between teachers and the management, whereas in certain schools, rigid management practices can lead to the opposite outcome.

The secondary schools have established professional development committees whose role is linked to monitoring teachers with deficiencies in skills, classroom management, and professional conduct. Some schools do this only twice a year, at the start and end. This is not enough, as members of the CPD are occupied with teaching and management issues at schools and unable to make the committee operate effectively. The CPD committee at schools comprises the principal, HOD, experienced teacher, and a novice teacher. These individuals are tasked with teaching or administrative responsibilities that may consume a significant portion of their time, leading them to neglect these responsibilities. Secondary schools in the Rundu circuit need to create more links with the community and improve the interpersonal relationship among teachers and parents. More gossips and groupings in schools exist, which can either be supportive to the management of the schools. Some teachers view those who adhere to strict management as spies. The management may exploit those who are loyal to them to gather information, leading to a strained relationship between teachers and the management. The spying environment often leads to poor

communication between school management and teachers. The hostile environment creates the possibility of division and an uncooperative spirit within the school as an organization.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that the quality of work life in secondary schools is good. Most schools strive to enhance their work environment to make teachers feel happy and enjoy their work. Teachers and principals have acknowledged that there have been noticeable improvements in schools that have enhanced teachers' happiness and well-being at their workplace. This means that a good working life is important for employees in any organization; schools are not an exception. Teachers are human beings with needs and wants that must be satisfied. The environment, interactions, human resource aspects, and promotional requirements for both learners and teachers influence their happiness and well-being within the school as an organisation.

The study points out that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that more is being done to create an excellent working life for teachers. Moreover, the study highlights numerous challenges in ensuring a good working life for teachers in secondary schools within the Rundu circuit. We cannot ignore the potential burden teachers face in today's schools; it has become a significant issue in the teaching profession. It is therefore a responsibility, and there is a need to ensure that what keeps teachers happy and productive is maintained by those within the position of authority to do so. The satisfaction level of teachers in their work should be a concern to the entire school and a nation at large. It is crucial to connect this study to McClelland's three needs theory, as the fulfilment of both organisational and individual needs will determine the degree to which school employees enjoy their work environment. Those with power and those with envy make others in an organization, like a school, behave, and finally they need to affiliate with one another. Taking into consideration such need of the theory, we can clearly understand that the quality of work life in schools as organisations results in good or bad due to the three needs you find in those who work in the organisation and those who supervise them. Employees and managers battle with one another with regard to their work. Employees may feel that certain aspects of their work are causing them dissatisfaction, which in turn can impact their performance.

The study revealed that secondary school principals in the Rundu circuit are striving to enhance the quality of work life for teachers. Many principals are aware of the work situation in which teachers find themselves. Principals strive to enhance the quality of work life for teachers by fostering interpersonal relationships, implementing effective planning strategies, providing guidance and motivation, promoting team building

activities, and implementing praise and reward systems. The study also revealed that school principals, teachers, and heads of departments are aware of the importance of technology and how it enhances teachers working lives. Using technological tools enhances the enjoyment of teaching, but it also highlights certain disadvantages, such as increased time requirements, which can be stressful for teachers. Promotional requirements for learners to the next grade, particularly of the revised curriculum for secondary schools in Namibia, seem to have a bad effect on teachers as they need to deal with learners who are not ready to move to the next grade due to the low set requirements. Teacher promotional requirements are described as demotivating, as they are based on known factors.

The above conclusion indicates that much must be done in the schools to attain quality of work life for teachers in public secondary schools, particularly in the Rundu circuit.

Below are some recommendations that are necessary for the prevailing quality of work life in secondary schools and organizations:

- Do participative management, control of work in schools, as teachers will develop trust, and feel valued. This makes the work environment less tense and enjoyable for both management and subordinates.
- Schools and the Ministry of education Arts and culture to provide adequate teaching and learning resources in schools such as enough textbooks, well-furnished classrooms, laboratories, offices, Wi-Fi availability, enough ablution facilities, school beautifications and good staffroom with air conditions and tables teachers need to work.
- Consider seniority and merits in promotion of teachers while in the case of learners focus on meeting standard requirements set by universities. Teacher promotional requirement set to seniority and merits help to reduce staff rate of turnover in schools. Flexible work schedule for teachers in schools are required to allow them balance their work life with social life or family time.
- The schools and the Ministry of education Arts and culture should embrace and promote opportunity for growth of teachers such as study leaves, going for marking sessions and more workshops.
- Grievance procedures be followed fairly by the school management without favouritism but should apply to all, the good, the bad, the critics and the loyal group.
- Recognition and reward system be in place all time to appreciate those who are doing their best in their job and those who seems to be committed and loyal to the school as an organisation.

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