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## THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE KHWE<sup>1</sup> (SAN) COMMUNITY AT BWABWATA ON THE IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF FORMAL EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Khwe (san) people had settled in Bwabwata long before the late 18th century when other Bantu groups began settling in the area. The aim of this article is to examine the perception of the Khwe Community at Bwabwata on the importance and influence of formal education. This article was guided by these questions. What is the origin of the Khwe people of Bwabwata? What are the perception of the Khwe Community at Bwabwata on the importance and influence of formal education? What are your suggestions on how to overcome the challenges facing the Khwe community at Bwabwata on education attainment? Qualitative research approach was used and data was collected using face-to-face individual and group interviews. The major findings were as follows. The Khwe people first settled in Bwabwata and latter migrated to Botswana and returned again to settle in Bwabwata and other areas. Other findings are that some Khwe regards formal education as important and this group have sent their children and relatives to attain even higher education. Another group, even though regards formal education as important, cite the challenges faced by the Khwe at Bwabwata that have made it difficult for them to reap the benefits of formal education. The challenges faced by this group of Khwe include poverty, nomadic lifestyle, early marriages and teenage pregnancy. No network and electricity were also raised as additional challenges.*

**KEYWORDS:** perception, khwe community, bwabwata, influence of formal education

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### INTRODUCTION

This research took place in Chetto (one of the major linear settlements), located in the middle of Bwabwata National Park<sup>2</sup>. The Trans-Zambezi Highway (B8) traverses the Park in the middle from east to west – from Kongola in the East to Divundu in the west (Ministry of Environment

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion on the usage and designation of the Khwe ethnonym and the history of the Khwe people, see for example Boden, Gertrud, 2009, 'The Khwe and West Caprivi before Namibian independence: Matters of land, labour, power and alliance', in *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 5 (2009): 27-71;

<sup>2</sup> Formerly known as (West) Caprivi Game Park between 1963 and 2000. Bwabwata is located in an area historically known as West Caprivi. The Caprivi Strip was divided into West and East Caprivi for administrative purposes during the colonial period (see Kangumu, 2011, pp. 61-91). West Caprivi's checkered history is that of neglect in state formation largely because the area was considered remote, inaccessible (with no roads) and taken to be not suitable for white settlement but during the South African colonial period from the 1940s then the thinking changed, from initially making it a livestock free area, then a nature conservation area to finally a military no-access zone where the South African Defence Force (SADF) operated.

and Tourism, 2013). Chetto is mostly inhabited by the San community - the San (Khwe and Kung) inhabited the area before the 18<sup>th</sup> century; that is before the first Bantu tribes entered the area in the late 18th century<sup>3</sup>. It is said that other residents of the area like the Hambukushu, Mafwe and Mayeyi people had moved out of the low lying areas in the Park following the tsetse fly infestation in 1945 (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2013). In this article, the term Bushmen will not be used as it is considered racist and sexist (Thiem & Hays, 2013). We would constantly use the term San people or San Community or more specifically Khwe<sup>4</sup> when referring to the study area as it refers to their hunting and gathering habits. “In 1996, representatives of several San groups across southern Africa met in Namibia and agreed to use the term ‘San’ in referring to all the language groups to denote a single group” (Dieckmann, Thiem & Hays, 2014 pp 24).

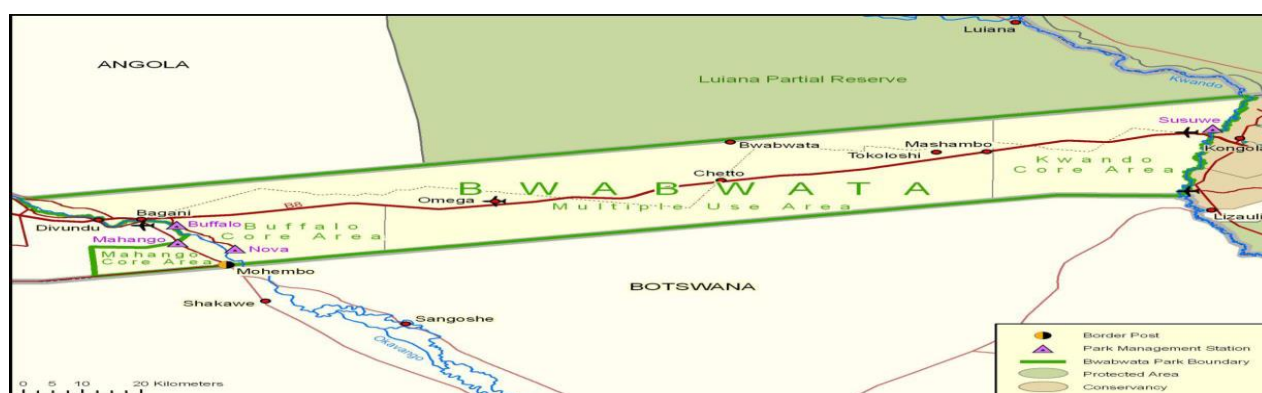


Figure 1: The map of Bwabwata National Park (Humphrey, 2015)

Historiography on the San people is fairly available, albeit with representations that depict them and their cultures as ‘timeless, a-historic and primordial’, a critique brought to the fore in the ‘Kalahari debate of the 1980s and 1990s.’<sup>5</sup> According to Boden, little is known of the life histories of the Khwe in Bwabwata (West Caprivi), encompassing Chetto, before Namibian independence. She attributes this to two factors: the fact that the Khwe “... did not fit the image of ‘pure’ San in the eyes of physical or cultural anthropologists and secondly, [that] they lived in the geographical isolation of West Caprivi”.<sup>6</sup> The geographical isolation is ascribed to the remoteness of the area in terms of access but also the intentional and calculated move to declare the area a military zone with controlled access to hide the activities of the SADF.

<sup>3</sup> Boden, *Ibid*, op cit.

<sup>4</sup> Also Kxoe; spelling as according to “The Penduka Declaration on the Standardisation of Ju and Khoe Languages” decided upon by San representatives in April 2001’, Boden, *Ibid*, op cit., p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Boden (in footnote 9) lists among others Robert J. Gordon, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, Colorado & Oxford, Westview Press, 1992; Robert J. Gordon & Stuart S. Douglas, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, Westview Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2000; James Suzman, *‘Things from the Bush’, A Contemporary History of the Omaheke Bushmen*, Basel, Schlettwein, 2000; Dieckmann, Ute, *Haillom in the Etosha Region: A History of Colonial Settlement, Ethnicity and Nature Conservation*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Boden, p.31.

The above described remoteness and isolation has since been addressed with the dawn of independence in 1990. However, it still provides a backdrop on how the inhabitants of Bwabwata view the importance of formal education as discussed in this paper.

### **Why we undertook this research**

Education is a fundamental right for everyone as stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of the United Nations stipulates that every person has the right to education and elementary education should be free. Education For All, The UN Declaration on the rights of the indigenous people and others all affirm the view that indigenous people have the right to establish and control their education in their languages. The Namibian language policy for schools has made it possible for teaching to be done in indigenous languages from grade one to three. The Namibian government has established schools in the San communities, yet the rate of absenteeism and school dropout remain high among the San learners. The Namibian government has provided free hostels and transportation to and from for the San communities, yet the San learners are not progressing to higher institutions like the University of Namibia in a corresponding number. This is what prompted the researchers to find out the perceptions of the San Community at Bwabwata on the importance and influence of formal education.

### **Research questions**

This article was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the origin of the Khwe (San) people of Bwabwata?
2. What are the perceptions of the Khwe (San) Community at Bwabwata on the importance and influence of formal education?
3. What are your suggestions on how to overcome the challenges facing the Khwe (San) community at Bwabwata on education attainment?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This section examines the Namibian Language Policy for the San schools, the barriers to attending formal education by the San people and the conceptual framework for this study. Below is a summary of issues that arises out of literature pertaining to this topic we are researching.

### **Namibian Language Policy for the San schools**

There is no doubt that some of the problems faced by San learners in accessing schools are rooted in Namibia's history. During the apartheid period, very little was done to encourage the San people, especially in Bwabwata to go to school. This seems to explain why many elderly San people in Bwabwata are uneducated and cannot read or write (Thiem & Hays, 2013). Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution made primary education free and compulsory. The Namibian language policy requires that the learners' mother tongue be used as a medium of instruction from grade one to three.

Even though there has been a general increase in enrolment of the San learners especially after Namibian independence in 1990, the government of Namibia through policies like the National Policy Option for the Educationally Marginalized Children has attempted to overcome the barriers of poverty and attitudes. There is no doubt that the Namibian policies for the education of the minority groups are among the most progressive in the world, but the San people are yet to fully benefit from such policies.. Learners' dropout and absenteeism remain high in schools, and not many San children are proceeding to attain higher education despite the available government support. (Dieckmann et al., 2014)

### **Barriers to attending formal education by the San people**

San learners face lots of challenges in attending formal education. These challenges among others include poverty, remoteness of villages and discrimination.

#### **Poverty**

In a study by Thiem and Hays (2013), it was found that poverty was a major cause of school dropout of San learners. According to the participants, covering the costs for schooling like hostel fee, school-related materials and school uniforms were a challenge. "A major reason for children not attending school or for dropping out of school is poverty" (Thiem & Hays, 2013 pp 8). Even though the government of Namibia has exempted many indigenous people from the payment of school-related fees, it was reported that the San people were often reluctant to request for such exemption for fear of being stigmatized by teachers and other learners. Ninkova (2009, pp 76) called this the "dilemma of special treatment". (Taylor 2012)

#### **Discrimination**

23 years after Namibia's independence, discrimination against the San people was reportedly still common. Writers like Ninkova (2009), Hays (2007) and Suzman (2001) have all elaborated on the various forms of discrimination suffered by the San children. In a study by Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC 2000), they acknowledged that discrimination was a crucial factor for learners' reluctance to attend school. It was also reported that the prejudices were not limited to the San children, the San parents were also confronted with stereotypes from other parents and even from school staff.

#### **Remote location of villages**

The remote location of the San villages means children must travel for long distances. They complained that public transport was costly and sometimes not available. To solve this problem, the San children have to live with relatives closer to the school or in school hostels where available. Parents complained about the poor hostel conditions and the theft of their children's belongings. The San parents explained that the long distances from home have made it difficult for the parents to ensure that their children attend school. Some San learners attended lower primary closer to their homes but had to travel for long distances to attend upper primary or secondary phases. At each transition (from lower to upper primary and secondary), the San learners dropped out because of distance-related problems. (Thiem & Hays, 2013)

### **Cultural mismatch**

The cultural mismatch can be seen at two levels: Language, and the differences in cultural practices. At the language level, the Namibian language policy has not been evenly implemented in all schools. The San languages have been excluded since they have not been registered with the ministry of education or lack the finance to develop the language and train teachers. The lack of trained teachers and the slow development of materials mean that the San children will have to learn in a foreign language from Pre-primary to grade three before starting to use English as a medium of instruction in grade four. (Thiem & Hays, 2013). The San cultural and social practices in education differ a lot from those applied in formal education, as can be discerned from the below quotation:

*In many San cultures, parents place little pressure on their children to work and do not fully involve their children in performing daily chores until the children reach adolescence, whereas compulsory schooling demands children's full participation at all times. Most San cultures strongly emphasize personal autonomy and free will, whereas learners in formal schools have little freedom; there is a rigid schedule every day which leaves little room for individual choices (also as regards subjects of study). Learning practices of the San generally emphasize the process rather than the result, with failure viewed as a normal part of the learning process (and sometimes as an acceptable and normal outcome), whereas in formal education, learners who do not meet the requirements according to the schedule are viewed as 'failures'. San learning techniques are based on internal rather than external motivation, whereas formal schooling techniques generally rely on external forms of reward and punishment. (Thiem & Hays, 2013 pp 12)*

### **Inappropriate curricula**

The Namibian school curriculum does not say much about the social realities of the San people and this has made it difficult for the learners to relate to their lives. Some schools have made it a habit to invite San parents to give their input about their history, cultures and skills. Many people's knowledge about the San is limited to their hunting and gathering, but the San have rich cultures.

### **The lack of role models**

In a study by Tsumkwe [is this correct – it does not appear in the references. Tsumkwe is a place name. Could we double check] and lee (2013), many participants said they do not have a role model. The fact that there were no jobs even for grade 12 certificate holders, only helped to lower the moral as both school dropouts and grade 12 certificate holders were seen as equals. "The formal school curricula do not encourage visionary and innovative thinking about alternative career development paths of the San". (Thiem & Hays, 2013 pp 12)

### **Teenage pregnancies**

Teenage pregnancy and early marriages are responsible for early dropout among girls. Thiem and Hays (2013 pp 13), "Reported that teenage mothers usually [do] not return to school after giving birth". Anaya (2013) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People concluded in their findings that the San girls suffer from sexual abuse from their teachers and elderly members of their community. (Thiem & Hays, 2013)

### Conceptual framework of barriers to attending formal education by the San people

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of barriers to attending formal education by the San people

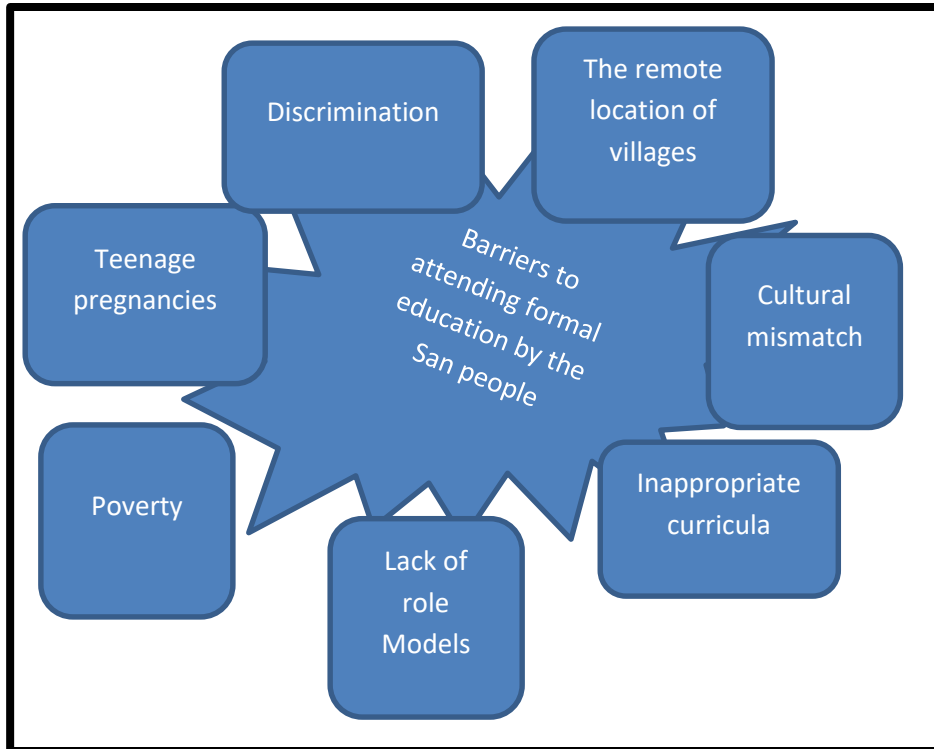


Figure 1 above presents a conceptual framework of barriers to attending formal education by the San people. These barriers include poverty, discrimination, the remote location of villages, cultural mismatch, inappropriate curricula, lack of role models and teenage pregnancies.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research design

The qualitative research approach was used in this article. Creswell (2012, p. 626) defines qualitative research as “An inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon”. The best way to understand the perceptions of the Khwe (San) Community at Bwabwata on the importance and influence of formal Education was to interview the people from the community. This approach has given the researchers first-hand data on this phenomenon.

### Population and sample

Creswell (2012, p. 625) defines the population as “A group of individuals who comprise the same characteristics”. The population for this article comprise of principals, teachers and community members. A sample, on the other hand, is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher intends to study. A principal and three teachers from a school located in the community were selected, one teacher – a University of Namibia graduate who is also a San was also selected, and the leader of the San community also took part.

### **Data collection methods**

The data was collected using interviews. The principal and three other teachers were interviewed face to face in a group and one teacher – a member of the San community and the community leader were also interviewed individually face to face.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using coding and themes. Some of these themes discussed in this article include the origin of the Khwe (San) people before settling in Bwabwata, how the Khwe (San) Community in Bwabwata values formal education, why many young people in Bwabwata do not attend Higher Education and suggestions on how to overcome the challenges facing the Bwabwata community.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **The origin of the San people before settling in Bwabwata<sup>7</sup>**

Participant 6 had explained that even though he does not know the history very much, he was told by his forefathers that the San people came from Botswana and they all scattered and settled in different places. According to him, the San people are the owners of Namibia because they were the first people who came from Botswana and settled in Namibia. “Some of us went to Angola, Zambia and others like my forefathers remained here” (P6).

*From what I heard from my grandmother, the first Khwe (San) people in Bwabwata came from Botswana and passed to Zambia before coming back to Namibia. When they came to Namibia, some settled here in Bwabwata. My family was separated and others settled at Wayawaya, Mylangani [we need to double check on the name] near Kongola and others at **Lubuta**. That is how I was told by my grandmother (P5).*

We often hear that some Khwe (San) people in Bwabwata are originally from Angola and that is why the names they are using here are Angolan. Most of them originated from Botswana. They are from these 2 countries (P3). When asked the origin of the school name - Kandunda Kasetta, participant 3 explained that the school was named after one of their former leaders Kandunda Kasetta. “Kandunda means leader and Kasetta is the name of the first chief who settled in this area” (P3).

### **How the San Community in Bwabwata regards/values Western Education**

Participant 4 explained that some Khwe (San) people in Bwabwata view western education as very important, but others do not. He continued that some value education very much, they see education as very important, for example, there are some of the learners from this community who are students at UNAM, and there are some graduates from UNAM and other higher institutions in Namibia.

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of the origin of the Khwe at Bwabwata cf Boden, 2009, pp. 35 – 41.

When questioned why she concluded that some of the Khwe (San) People do not value education very much, participant 4 replied that some of the learners drop out in the first year and some in the following year. “I think they do not understand the value of education”. When asked if she has tried to find out what other reasons are behind this dropout, T4 replied that she [Is participant 4 male or female – let us reconcile] has not investigated on the reasons for the dropout, but concluded that it is because they are from far locations, and some lack parental support. When questioned if it is because the parents are not there or the parents are there but do not give the learners support, she replied that some of the learners are orphans and some - the parents are there but do not give the learners the required support.

### **Many parents do not attend school meetings**

Participant 3 explained that

*In the past years, they usually [used to] come but from last year we experience a problem where you can call a meeting today and they will come maybe 2 or 3, and when you extend the meeting to another day, maybe they will come 5 or 6 until you just give up. For the past 2 years that most of the teachers have been here, it is worst. That is why we decided to invite the inspector so that he can come and assist us to talk to them. On that day the number was 35 (P3)*

Participant 3 blamed learners' dropout on their nomadic life style

*You find that a parent will stay here in Chetto, and after 2 to 3 months that parent will move to another location and after two to three months or even a month that parent again will shift to another area or somewhere very far from school and that will make it impossible for the young ones to come to school. We have decided to build 2 structures in the school to cater for learners who are coming from far away (10 kilometres away or more). It may be these parents do not know why they are there in those far locations. I do not know if the bore holes for water are still functional at those locations because these locations are very far from others. What about the young ones? How can they come to school from those far locations? It is why we end up registering grade one learners who are almost 10 years old because he/she can travel 10 kilometres a week from his/her village (P3).*

Another reason is the lack of parental support – most of the parents at Bwabwata are not working and they are very poor and unable to support their kids. It is very difficult for them to buy the school needs for their kids. Some other learners may turn to drop out because there is no support from parents. Some, who are getting little coins, used them just for drinking. Those parents, who harvest the devil claws and sell, only buy cold drinks for their kids and they squander the rest of the money. (P3)

### **The school hostel**

We applied for the community hostel but it failed so we just decided to build those two structures (pointing to the other side of the campus) to accommodate learners from far locations near the school. These learners are just provided with accommodation, but sometimes they are given the little from the school feeding programme. The school feeding programme is only once a day. (P3)



The dropout is also linked to poverty. You will find that some learners only eat once a day. They come to school on empty stomachs. They travel from one place to another looking for food. When they eat at the school, they will not eat again until the next day, when they come to school. That is another problem that makes them travel from one place to another looking for food. (P3)

Participant 2 believes that parents are the most contributing factor for poor education for their kids. She agrees that some parents understand the value of education for their kids.

*For the young ones, most of them are walking to school, and some just stay at home and some drop out. Some girls go for early marriages even at the ages of 14 to 15. Some members of the community who are marrying those kids tell them not to come to school and to just stay at home. There is an issue of nomadic lifestyle (of going around), when they get small money they move to another place. Some of the nomads who have gone to school join security forces; some remain in the community or abandoned their jobs and remain in the community. A few continue with their schooling. One can say that the value of education to them is not high. (P2)*

When asked if those who have completed from colleges/ universities and come back to work in the community have influence over others or their way of life? Participant 4 noted that there is a change in their lifestyle. Some have built houses and bought cars, even their lifestyle has completely changed. Others are copying from what they are doing.

When we asked if teachers from the community embark on other activities to change their society or they just come to school, work and go. Participant one explained that in most cases they just come to school to work, but the influence on the community itself is not that much. Sometimes they may just think whatever they get just belong to themselves. Hardly have I seen them involved in life changing-activities.

Participant 5 lamented that by merely looking - things have changed. Some people who regard education as important but there are others like some parents who do not yet know why education is important. Those who have seen the importance of education are encouraging their children to come to school. There are others like elderly people who completely do not know the value of education. Some parents when they come to parents meeting you will hear them encouraging their children to come to school.

When asked what participant 5 is doing to help, she replied that

*I am just like a role model. I was brought here as a role model. I was brought here by Mr Chataa and the formal education inspector. A post was created in grade 3 for me. When I came to this school, the aim was to show learners especially girls that people from our tribe can be like other tribes – we can become teachers. When I came here I was the second teacher from our tribe. Ms Kashongo was already here and we were brought [here] to show the girls that we can also be teachers. This is what we always tell them in class - which we are from the same tribe, we speak the same language; if you study hard you can become a teacher or take up any other position that you wish in other parts of the country. (P5)*

Apart from talking to the kids do you also meet with parents and learners to educate them on the importance of education? She said “No we have not done something like that”. She said they will consider doing it. People visited the school two weeks ago and encouraged the learners to come to school. Those visitors asked us to do something to curb early marriages since it is a problem here. “I do not know but by merely looking you can see that there are changes. When I came here there were only a few learners here but there has been an increase of learners” (P5). When asked who ask these young girls to get married? What benefits are there when the girl gets married? Participant 5 continued that it is a culture.

*Usually, it is the culture and the mother is usually the one to ask the girl to get married. The husband will provide to the girl's family money, food etc. It is to an extent about the social status. Since there is a belief that girls have to get married, when they turn 13 or 15, they have to get married. (p5)*

Are there certain things in the culture, like the way of life that looks at modern education as not being important?

*Today culture is not that much influencing education. I can say that there are still those who believe since they have not seen the importance of education. That is why they stay at home and get married early. The life of moving from one place to another is not that much [like before]. (P5)* Participant 5 explained that western education has influenced her life.

*By the way, I see myself now; I can say that education has brightened my life. If I was not educated I could not have been able to help myself without any support from my parents. I lost my parents when I was still young. I completed my school without my parents. When I started working I don't even think of my past life because I can help myself and my Aunties and my grandparents. Because of education, I know a lot of things and I can do many things that uneducated people cannot do. (P5)*

P5 explained that her Aunt she currently lives with is the one who encouraged her to complete her school and go for further studies. Her Aunt's firstborn completed grade 12 and is studying at IUM in Windhoek. The second [born] completed grade 12 and [completed] his course at IUM and is working. The third [born] is in grade 11 and another in grade 9. “When I go home I use to encourage them that the money that I am giving you is for you to go to school so that you will help those behind you.” (P5).

When asked if she considers herself as coming from this community (Bwabwata) or Wayawayaya? She replied that “I was born at Wayawayaya. I came to know this school only when I came to work here”. When asked on the differences that she has seen between Wayawayaya and Chetto communities. She explained that she has seen many differences between these two communities. According to her, the major difference is that people in Chetto do not mingle with others, unlike people in Wayawayaya (P5).

Participant 6 accepts that he can see the light of education, but there are lots of things which are blocking it from being realized in the community. The community would like the school going to grade 12 because learners always have transport problems going to school in other locations. When a learner is absent from school for some time the teacher will tell the learner that he/she has been absent for very long and that the learner should just go and stay at home. If our school goes up to grade 12, learners will stay with their parents and the problem will be solved. (P6)

#### **4.3 Why many young people in Bwabwata do not attend Higher Education**

Participant 2 thinks sometimes learners/students from this community have this fear of knowing something. I remember sometimes I asked one of them why are you not interested in advancing your education to a higher level? And he responded that at certain stages when things become a bit tough, they do not want to get involved. Their vision sometimes is not in those areas.

*I remember I had a friend from this community who was attending school at CSSS [Caprivi Senior Secondary School in Katima Mulilo] and from there he went to UNAM and he did not finish his studies. Later again he was sent to South Africa and he later came back and could not finish his university studies. To me, I was wondering what was going on! (P2)*

Participant 3 continued with an example of a good learner who dropped out.

*We have got a good example of one learner here in grade 7 who was performing well. He went to Ndoro and performed very well and went to grade 12. When he was in grade 12 we could even see him moving around the community. We even asked him why he was not in school and he would answer he is just here to visit. It was clear to us that he was not focusing on his education - he is looking for something else. At the end of the year, that learner failed his grade 12 with 6 points, but he was a very good learner. We thought that this learner could progress to higher institutions. It may be these learners lack motivation. The problem that we find in this community is that parents are not involved in their children's education because when they see a learner at home; they will not even ask the learner why he/she is not at school. Even some of the teachers in this community who came here as role models, do not tell the learners to do A, B or C so that the learners can become like them. (P3)*

According to participant 3, the parents have their share of the blame. "We were having a meeting sometimes and we were talking about shebeens, - that learners should not be visiting shebeens". Other parents could come up saying that let them go to shebeens because it is where they learn, watch TV, listen to music etc. For early marriages, they said that the little girls should marry so that the parents can get support from the in-laws. "This is why I will say that they view education differently". (P3)

Participant 5 explained that when she first came, the school was up to grade 7 only and learners will attend grade 8 at Chetto, Nguo, Ngarome etc., they used to have problems with transportation. When they visited home over the weekend, they will not have transport to go back and that contributed to them finally leaving school. Last year when we opened grade 8, those learners that

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we had in the past years who completed grade 7 here, came back, because they were at home. Some had even stayed at home for 3 to 4 years.

*When we opened grade 8 this year, the ones who had even stayed for 7 years came back. These are the learners that we are having – elderly learners in grade 9. They lack support because the parents are not working and these learners lack food to stay in the hostel. (P5)*

Ndoro Memorial goes up to grade 10 and from there learners used to go to Mayuni. Others used to go to Max Makushe and some to Caprivi Senior Secondary School (CSSS). These are the 3 main schools that learners go to. Usually, in the first term, they will attend but from the second term, they will gradually drop out because of transportation. She supports the view that this school (Kandunda Kaseta and Ndoro Memorial should go up to grade 12 to accommodate learners from the communities around. (P5)

When asked if the parents see shebeens as a learning environment for the western culture? Participant 3 continued that it is because of their lifestyle. Most of the parents do not have time to sit with their kids and talk to them like those olden days where you sit with your kids and tell stories.

*You even go and stay with them or sit with your kids and grandmother on the fire site. These things are no longer happening. Parents and kids just want to be at the shebeens where they can dance, drink and eat, hoping that someone will buy for him or her a cold drink where he/she can get energy from that. (P3)*

Participant one believes that it is something to do with exposure.

*For them, they have not been exposed to some of these activities on TV. It is by watching TV and listening to music that they have their interest. This is because most of the shebeens here are owned by people from outside this area. Most of them only stay here. They have a culture of sharing. It means it will be very difficult when they see different cultures. (P1)*

### **Parents and learners drinking attitudes**

Parents do not discourage their kids when they find them drinking.

*Most parents drink with their children. Even the kids who are drinking there get the money from their parents. Parents also enjoy drinking with their kids. Smoking is also a problem. At times young children I remember, ten or eleven years old were caught smoking and when they were asked why the kids responded that it was hunger that made them smoke. (P1)*

Are the children and the community aware of the consequences of being at the shebeens and smoking? According to participant 3, most parents are aware of the consequences.

*I remember last year there was a community meeting that was called and the police officers were invited to address them on the liquor act. I remember they were told what to do and what not to do. It is how they do their things. Even pensioners who used to come and get their money, for example like last Friday when they were getting paid, their kids will not concentrate in class – their hearts and minds will be where the pensioners are being paid. Some of the kids will even rush*

*to that community where the pensioners are getting paid. There have also been cases where people have gotten drunk and they have been bumped by vehicles etc. My suggestion is that some of the [railway][railway?? Let us revise] officers should bring in some educational programmes to help and educate the community. The role models teachers could also be involved. (P3)*

Participant 6's view is that, learners cannot go to UNAM because they cannot reach grade 12. The learners here encounter many problems and they cannot even get to grade 12 and that is why you would not find them at UNAM.

### **How can education be promoted in this community**

Help could be in the form of uniforms and transportation provided to learners. *"I think learners will be able to do better. If this school goes up to grade 9 it will help. The other things that made learners not to stay at school are because the teachers are sometimes absent."* Participant 6 explained that he usually interviews the learners when they come back from school and they will say *"My teacher did not come"*. According to P6,

*The problem is with male teachers because sometimes they go drinking and take much time to come back to school to work. These are some of the things that made learners stay home and not go to school. Kandunda Kaseta was the first to be established before Ndoro (school), but today Ndoro is going up. (P6)*

He does not know why things are going on that way. He used to talk about it when he attends parents' meetings. P6 believes that the principal does not take him seriously. The other time when there was a problem at the school, he was called by the principal and he went there and talk to the teachers. The principal lamented that male teachers were not cooperating with him. He said it would have been better if the teachers were here so that he could point at those teachers who are not working. (P6)

The kids at the kindergarten go to school and come back with empty stomachs. If there is a way of helping those kids, it will be much appreciated. The other problems include a lack of electricity, water etc. The whole community is having water problem. He suggested that when the researchers have time they should come and gather the kids and talk to them and motivate them so that they can come to school. (P6)

### **Suggestions on how to overcome the challenges**

Participant 4 suggested that their learners should visit other schools so that they can see how those schools are learning. Some of these learners have never left this community since they were born. *"I think this will also motivate them when they understand how other learners are taught outside."*  
P4

Participant 3 suggested that we should involve the councilors where schools in the Western Zambezi could meet and someone who is better educated inspire them on how they should behave when they are at school. *"Otherwise we are in real problems."*

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*Even the teachers we have from this community ... do not have that spirit of playing their roles in the community. Learners can even start a fight here and that fight will end up in the village and even tomorrow the fight will continue but the teachers are there who are supposed to counsel them. We need a counsellor in this community who should be talking to parents and learners. (P3)*

Participant 5 believes that Government support with transport is very crucial so that learners can come for the weekend and be able to go back. Another thing is what goes on in the hostel. Even if you have transport to go and come back if you are from the poor family it is very difficult because you may not have soap and other things that other learners are using. If there could be other ways of helping the learners with basic necessities such as toiletries when at school it will help significantly. That will act as an incentive for them to remain in school.

Participant 5 explained that the social grant from the government is too small. Other parents are trying, but the problem is the environment. There are no shops. With that N\$1200 that they are getting, a parent who has two children here in our school and another 2 at Mayuni and he/she has to buy food and give transport, the N\$1200 will not be enough.

### **How do parents survive in Bwabwata**

In the past, these people practiced subsistence farming but the problem is that of elephants. The government used to give them tractors to come and plough for them but after ploughing the elephants will come and destroy the crops. 'For these years that I have been here, the elephants even came right here in the school. When you plough in your yard, elephants will come and uproot the crops and it used to be scary. This year I saw people who ploughed behind our house. For the past 2 years, poachers have driven the elephants far away. I do not know about the next few years. It is very difficult for people to survive here. The only means for people here to survive is during winter for example in June, July and August the people will go to the bush and dig devils claws and sell them. That is the only time that we see our learners wearing uniforms and other new things. For this year that program stopped and there is no way, the people can survive.' P5

'People are taking education as very important but the only thing that is hindering is the problem of electricity'. (P6) That when his grandchildren are from school, they cannot study in the evening when it is dark because there is no electricity. He says it is letting them down as if they are not yet independent. There is no water. He explained that yesterday at their school, learners did not eat because of lack of water. (P6)

*Learners had to come back home during break and there was no school. In an independent country where water is available and people can open the tap at any time and cook food, but it is not the same in our community. At the school, there is no water where the feeding program can go on smoothly every day. These are the things which are letting people down from going further in education. (P6)*

Participant 6 also believe that communication is another problem. For example, it is only through the interpreter that the headman was informed that we are visiting. If there was a network, we

could have communicated directly to him that we are coming. If she did not go to Katima she would not have gotten that information. The absence of the network is letting them down.

*When people come here, we tell them how we are suffering, but it seems as people are not taking them seriously. People come here and listen to us but nothing happens. It seems as if we are not yet independent here in Bwabwata we are not considered as those in other parts. These are the things which are letting us down. (P6)*

When asked if there is a counselor in the school the response was no, they do not have (P3). Participant 2 suggested that educational programmes should be put forward. It is important to take them to other places so that they can see how other learners behave. 'I am aware of the situation like in Mayuni (school) where you put them in the hostel and at the end of the day they move out and just cluster in one room. They do not want to mix with others'. The next issue concerns parents as well because some of the learners do not have national documents. This is because their parents do not have those national documents as well. As we stated when we started about the origin of these people, some come from Angola and some from Botswana. They have a system of just moving around. When talking about their understanding of the value of education it comes down again to these young individuals. Also now there is a mixed-up of 'real' San people. There were other fighters or soldiers who were here and after inter marriages, they went back and others even died. Some kids do not even know their parents. Something needs to be done, especially with these kids without parents. (P2)

The next issue as suggested by participant 3 is that of role models. The role models should know why they are here, because "I do not think that they know". They want to behave as the San community members when it comes to drinking. At times you will find that most of these teachers can drink and at times dodging from work especially when it is "pay day". These are some of the things that the learners are copying. Even this idea of clustering them here at one school, I do not think it is helpful. They should have been put say one per school – say one here and the other at Kongola, the other at Sibbinda, etc. so that, that teacher who is that side, will learn something with the attitude of learners that side. One day when they find themselves at a community school, they will try to change the attitude of the learners. (P3)

Another problem is the curriculum; we have only one language while in some other schools there are two. We had a meeting and the learners were asked if Silozi or Afrikaans should be introduced in the school but they said no. For their mother tongue, we do not have a specialist to teach. The nomadic way of life nowadays is a bit different. In the past, it was seasonal where they follow especially food availability. Also if one person dies in their village they will all move away and go and stay in another village. Participant 3 continued that the nomadic movement is happening every season. The time that they will start to dig the devil's claws, they will move around the forest with their kids for about 3 months. (P3)

### **Help needed by the school**

Our main goal is keeping these learners at school so that they can be able to value education. Another issue is the network and electricity that we do not have. If we had electricity we could bring in computers so that learners will be able to search online and get additional materials and knowledge. Pre-vocational subjects will also help. Even arts like making baskets will also help. (P3)

Participant 2 explained that water is a problem at the school. We get water only from the clinic and for the past two weeks, we have had no water. These factors affect learners being at school. If the school had its own water point, it will be better.

*Another factor is the school fence. If we have a fence to control the movement of the learners it will be better. We have already written some letters to the regional council to support us with the material but I do not know its progress. If we could have a library – an open room with electricity where learners can take time and study, learners will learn better. Many learners do not have internet and television at home; that is why they go to shebeens. It would have been good if the hostel was there. Learners could be attending school because from class they will go to the hostel and have their dinner. When there is food at the school the turn up is very different. (P2)*

### **DISCUSSION**

Participant 6, 5 and 3 had explained that the Khwe (San) people at Bwabwata originated from Botswana and participant 6 even claimed that the San people were the first settlers in Namibia - they came from Botswana and settled in Namibia. This finding concurs with those of Zijl (2015)<sup>8</sup> and The Namibia Travel Shop (2018).

*The earliest known inhabitants of Namibia are the San, who belong to the Khoesan peoples. Generally short in stature, they have light yellowish-brown skins, while their language, which differs among the different groups, is characterized by numerous clicking sounds. (Zijl, 2015, p. 1)*

*There are approximately 27 000 San in Namibia. The San have inhabited Southern Africa for at least 30 000 years, proof of this habitation can be found in the wealth of rock art that can be found in numerous locations throughout the country. The Bushmen [San] are one of the most fascinating people on earth; unfortunately, their hunter-gatherer lifestyle has constantly come under threat from all the other residents of the regions. (The Namibia Travel Shop, 2018, p. 1)*

According to The Namibia Travel Shop (2018), about 60% of the San people live in the Kalahari in Botswana, 35% in Namibia and the remaining 5% are scattered all over southern Africa. Twyfelfontein and the Brandberg in Namibia are well known in Bushmen [San] art, “The oldest of these is thought to date back 28 000 years”. (The Namibia Travel Shop, 2018, p. 1)

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<sup>8</sup> For detailed scholarly discussion on the history of the San, see for example the reading list cited in footnote 5 above.



This study identified poverty as one of the causes of learners' dropout. According to the findings, most of the parents in Bwabwata depend on the allowances given to them by the government. T5 for example explained that the amount is just about N\$1000, and it is not enough to run a house and also buy the school needs for the children. This finding concurs with that of Taylor (2012) and Thiem and Hays (2013). In their studies, they explained that extreme poverty faced by most San families is a contributor for their children leaving school with the aim of contributing to their meagre family income.

The findings also identified that some San families in Bwabwata still leave a nomadic lifestyle. As a result, they sometimes move far away from the school without taking into consideration the education of the children. When this happens, the children have to move for long distances to school and sometimes just simply drop out. This finding is also similar to that of Thiem and Hays (2013). According to them the San people's remote villages from schools is a challenge. They explained that in most cases there is either no public transport, or it is too expensive.

Teenage pregnancy was also cited as a reason for many female learners not progressing with their studies. In san culture, early marriages are practiced and encouraged. This finding is similar to that of Dieckmann, et al (2014). They cited early marriages and teenage pregnancy as reasons for early dropout of many girls, and sometimes the teenage mothers do not return to school after given birth. Anaya (2013) explains that in some areas the teenage mothers who had returned to school are sent away.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the San Lifestyle as a whole has drastically improved because of the availability of formal education. Today we have many San in high positions and there is evidence that they regard education as being very valuable in their lives. In this study, we have argued that many San regards formal education as being very valuable. This group has relatives or family members who have studied even in higher institutions in Namibia. Another group, even though they see education as being important, the challenges at hand like poverty, nomadic lifestyle and others like early marriages and teenage pregnancy have prevented them from being able to participate in formal education. We do agree that "The Namibian Government is aware of the dire plight of the San community and has made their development and social uplifting a priority within its budgetary limitations" (Dieckmann et al., 2014 pp25).

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