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An Assessment of Intercessory Skills and Abilities of Traditional Leaders Viewed as Important in Handling Conflict between Schools and Communities and Their Impact on Education: A Case of Zaka and Bikita Districts. Masvingo: Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

In Zimbabwe traditional leaders are part and parcel of school development especially in the rural areas. They hold a soul responsibility of handling conflicts that arise between the schools and communities. It has been noted that some disastrous conflicts between schools and communities have been reported, resulting in closure of schools or unacceptable staff turnover. This has been attributed to poor handling of the conflicts and lack of an amicable solution..

The study, employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. It was located in the paradigm of pragmatism.

Multi-stage stratified random sampling was employed to select 290 respondents, 30 were interviewed, 100 were divided into 4 focus groups and 160 questionnaires were distributed to school heads, school development chairpersons and traditional leaders in two chosen districts. Of the distributed questionnaires 121 were returned giving a return rate of 74.375%

The study found that A lot of attributes concerned with skills and abilities of traditional leaders in handling conflicts between schools and their communities were cited. It was noted that the attributes were among the following categories : People management skills , Abilities to make inferences , Ability to elicit solutions and Ability to facilitate communication among disputants . The study also revealed that lack of the important skills and abilities by traditional leaders would result in severe consequences in schools such as high staff turn over, high failure rate as a result of lack of trained staff. Also under development of schools as a result of persistent conflict between school and community which leads to parents not paying school levies. It was also noted that religion was also one of the factors in causing conflict. It was also noted that where there is peace between the school and community there was a lot of development.

It was recommended that there should be increased communication between communities and schools through the school development committees and the traditional leaders. Traditional leaders should be educated about conflict handling and their limits in the day today running of schools. Professional issues should be separated from traditional ritual issues and political issues. More training in conflict resolution for traditional leaders is necessary to avoid fueling conflict due to lack of skills in conflict resolution.

The ministry of education should hold workshop for teachers, traditional leaders and school development committees so as to avoid role conflict and enlighten them on their function

Keywords: *traditional leaders, intercessory, skills and abilities, attributes, education.*

1. Introduction

The Education Act 1996 (Chapter 25:04) classifies schools in Zimbabwe in three categories. These are Government Schools, Government-aided Schools and Private Schools. Private Schools include Mission Schools, Trust Schools and schools owned by individuals. Both the Education Act (Chapter 25:04) and the Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) lay out the responsibilities of traditional leaders over Government-aided Schools which are mainly in the rural and resettlement areas. In addition to what was cited under the Traditional Leaders Act, traditional leaders have the authority to ask for schools in specified areas of their jurisdiction. They also allocate land and set boundaries within which schools should be established. They also enforce the policy that every child especially in primary school should go to school. Traditional leaders also enforce the payment of school fees and levies. According to both the Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) the Education Act (Chapter 25:04) traditional leaders should articulate the needs of schools and be generally supportive of school programs. The Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture manual

entitled “A Handbook for School Development Committees (2010) lists sources of conflicts between schools and their communities as follows:

- Differences in perceptions, for example, differences in viewing forms of discipline in schools with some members believing in “strict old fashioned cultural discipline while others believe in more modern permissive approaches to discipline.” (A Handbook for School Development Committees 2010:78)
- Limited resources in schools
- Role conflicts
- Unilateral action by the School Head or School Development Chairperson
- Accountability issues where nobody accepts responsibility who should do what
- Poor communication or lack of it
- Unexplained changes to norms and practices
- Violation of territory-this happens when one member unilaterally does something that is the responsibility of another person without consultation
- Personality differences.

The Handbook is silent on the source of information concerning the causes of conflicts between the schools and their communities thereby casting doubt on whether the account on the causes is exhaustive. It was therefore felt that a more detailed study through interviews was necessary to unearth the fabrics and ramifications of the causes of conflicts between schools to provide a sound background to how traditional leaders dealt with such conflictual scenarios.

While the traditional leaders possess intercessory attributes in handling conflicts, little is known about their skills and abilities in the resolving of conflicts especially in the context of the school situation in Zimbabwe. In addition, while traditional leaders in Zimbabwe have some responsibility over schools, little is known on how their involvement impacts on school education. Most studies tend to look at the subject of conflict in the context of armed conflicts especially civil wars while little is covered on conflicts between schools and their communities. For Africa, there have been quite a number of studies on traditional leaders and their conflict resolution styles, approaches and techniques but the aspect of their skills and abilities has tended to be in passing. Examples of such studies are Juddiya in Southern Sudan, Mato Oput in Northern Uganda, Gacaca in Rwanda, Ubuntshingantahe in Burundi, the Clan Elders in Somaliland, The Dagara of Northern Ghana and the Buen along the border of Togo and Ghana. In all these studies, there is not much of skills and abilities mentioned. On the other hand, while traditional leaders in Zimbabwe have the responsibility over schools, little is also known on how their involvement impacts on school education. Literature on the impact of traditional leaders on school education is seldom available.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The nature of skills and abilities of an intercessor in handling conflicts is pivotal in determining their outcome. While traditional leaders in Zimbabwe handle most conflicts in rural areas, there has not been a well-coordinated and orchestrated in-depth study on those skills and abilities of traditional leaders which are viewed as important and the influence of these skills and abilities have on school education. The literature reviewed revealed that the subject of conflict, its management and its resolution are of great interest to many researchers. Leaders in their various roles find themselves in predicaments resulting from conflictual situations The dilemmas they experience resulting from conflict are a demonstration that as conflict handlers, leaders need exceptional skills abilities and knowledge to steer conflicts in constructive ways. Studies which have been carried out elsewhere and in Zimbabwe in particular do not shed sufficient light concerning skills and abilities viewed important and essential in the management of conflicts especially by traditional leaders in the context of education-hence the study on those intercessory skills and abilities of traditional leaders in Zimbabwe in handling conflicts and their influence on school education.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to establish intercessory skills and abilities of traditional leaders viewed as important in handling conflicts and their influence on school education in Zimbabwe.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- To identify intercessory skills and abilities of traditional leaders viewed important. in handling conflicts
- To identify cultural features in conflict handling styles of traditional leaders.
- To identify perceived causes of conflict between schools and their communities.
- To establish the influence of intercessory skills and abilities of traditional leaders on school education.

1.4. Research Questions

- What are the perceived causes of conflict between schools and their communities?
- What intercessory skills and abilities of traditional leaders are viewed as important handling conflicts?
- What are the cultural skills and abilities employed by traditional leaders in handling conflict?
- What effect do these skills and abilities and of traditional leaders in handling conflicts affect school education?

2. Methodology

The study, employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. It was located in the paradigm of pragmatism. In defending the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods, Myers and Haase (1989) argue that the world is viewed as a whole and not in truncated parts. Myers and Haase go on to argue that the world is an interactive whole where parts or dimensions relate to each other. Both subjective and objective data are recognized as legitimate avenues for gaining understanding. (Myers and Haase: 1989) Myers and Haase stress that all data sources offer a reflection of the whole and are necessary to understand the phenomenon under investigation. Hence the study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

2.1. The Population

This consisted of school heads, school development chairpersons and traditional leaders in two chosen districts.

2.2. Sampling Procedures

Multi-stage stratified random sampling was employed. "A multi-stage sample is one in which sampling is done sequentially across two or more hierarchical levels." (Battaglia 2008:10) In multi-stage sampling, a number of clusters are applied before final sample elements are reached. (Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia 2014) The randomness and sufficient size is maintained at each level. The advantages of multi-stage stratified random sampling are convenience, economy and efficiency (Statistics for All: 2014) A multi-stage sampling can in effect be easier to implement and create a more representative sample of the population than a single sampling technique. (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia 2014)

Thirty percent (30%) of each stratum was taken. A table of random numbers was used to come up with an unbiased sample from each stratum.

2.3. Sampling for Interviews

With 290 respondents in the final selected schools, were selected for interviews respondents 30 were thus interviewed.

To augment the validity of the results, 4 focus group discussion sessions were held with an average of 25 people per group and 160 questionnaires were distributed.

2.4. Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used as data collection tools.

The construction of the questionnaire was informed and guided by a number of dimensions related skills and abilities of an intercessor. The New Hampshire Judicial Branch Mediator Questionnaire (2010) was one of the instruments which guided the muting of some of the skills and abilities listed for rating.

A number of skills and abilities were also adapted from responses given in a study carried by Aderete (2012) whose main question was "What do you think are the most important skills and abilities of an effective civil rights mediator?"

Several items were also formulated from reviewed literature. Such literature covered some established forms of handling conflicts, attributes which were considered in appointing leaders in African communities and how conflicts were handled and resolved in such communities.

The questionnaire was designed for school heads, traditional leaders and school development committee chairpersons.

The face to face interview was also used. Robson (1995:229) defines the interview as a kind of a conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives. Interviews are one of the most commonly used methods of collecting qualitative data. In this study, the semi-structured interview was preferred.

2.5. Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed in person to traditional leaders, school heads and school development chairpersons.

As cited earlier, focus discussion groups were also employed as a variation within the interview approach to obtain a broader view of the skills and abilities of traditional leaders viewed as important in handling conflicts and their influence on school education.

3. Results

From the 160 questionnaire distributed, 121 were returned giving a return rate of 74.375%.

3.1. Biographical Data of Respondents

Respondents by Gender. n = 121

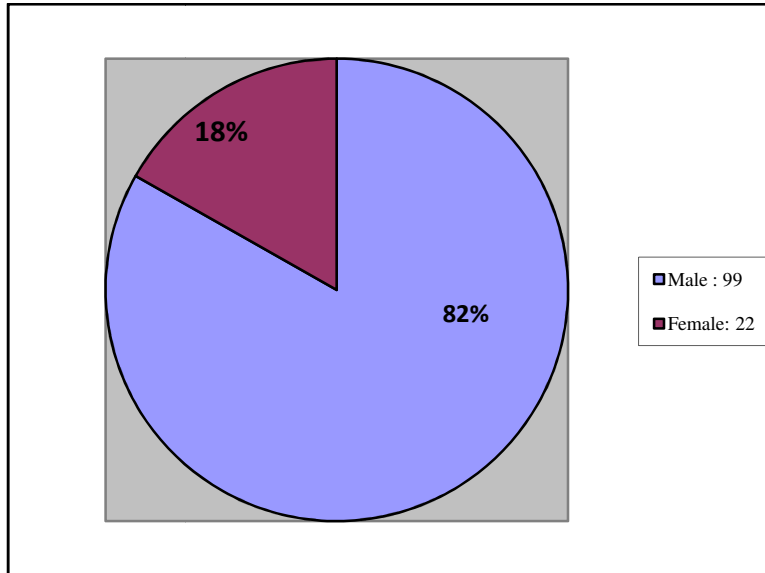


Figure 1

3.2. Respondents by Gender. n = 121

	Total	%
Male	99	82
Female	22	18
Total	121	100

Table 1

Figure 1 and Table 1 reveal that the majority of the respondents were males.

3.3. Respondents by Position in School n =121

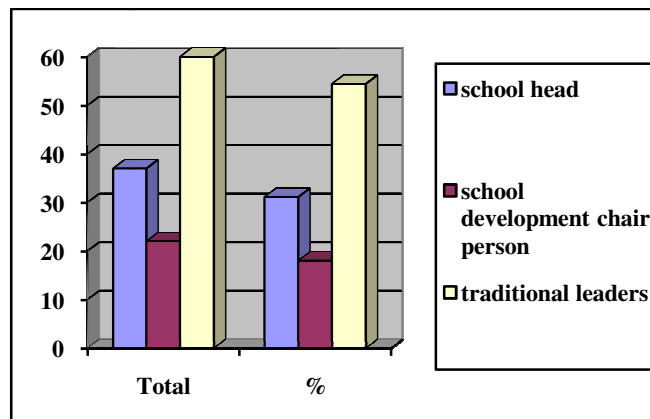


Figure 2

3.4. Respondents by Position in School n =121

Position in Community	Total	%
School Head	38	31.1
School Development Chairperson	23	18.5
Traditional Leader	60	50.4
Total	121	100

Table 2

Traditional Leaders constitute a dominant component according to classification of respondents by their position in school.

3.5. Respondents by age $n = 121$

Age Limit	Total	%
BELOW 29 YEARS	4	3.4
30-39 YEARS	13	10.1
40-49 YEARS	38	30.3
50-59 YEARS	34	27.7
60 YEARS PLUS	32	28.6
TOTAL	121	100

Table 3

Respondents of 50 years and above appeared to have an edge over those below.

3.6. Common Causes of Conflicts between Schools and Their Communities as Cited By Respondents

From the interviews held with school heads, school development chairpersons and traditional leaders, the following were identified as some of the major causes of conflicts between schools and their communities: -

- Payment of school levies – parents resisted paying of levies.
- Reporting of parents to traditional leaders by the school heads on non- payment of levies
- Suspicion by parents that school authorities misused levies they collected.
- Differences between the school and their communities on religious beliefs and practices. Parents of Apostolic Faith in some schools for example, considered it a taboo for their children to be involved in school projects which they considered unclean, such as piggery.
- Some parents were against baboons and monkeys being killed for destroying crops in schools because they were linked to their totems.
- Some parents also considered some cultural dances as pagan practices.
- Other parents did not accept levies for medical services for their children since they were against sending their children to hospital for treatment.
- Parents objecting to dress styles of some teachers especially tight fittings on the part of female teachers.
- Teachers having affairs with girls in the communities. Some communities forced teachers to marry girls they had had mad pregnant – this being a source of conflict.
- Excessive beer drinking on the part of teachers.
- Role conflict with schools accusing parents and traditional leaders of interfering in professional matters in which they were not competent.
- Teachers not respecting traditional leaders.
- Low self- esteem on the part of traditional leaders resulting in them over reacting on some issues in the school.
- Some parents resisted some procedures considered as professional by schools, for example signing of indemnity forms when students went for sporting trips.
- Lack of transparency by traditional leaders.
- Stray animals vandalizing school property.
- Failure by the school to produce desired results.
- Teacher's absenteeism resulting in schools under performing in academic affairs of students.
- Unplanned meetings organized by traditional leaders resulting in resistance by both parents and the school.
- Traditional leaders being autocratic.
- Traditional leaders regarding teachers as passersby and not a permanent component of the community.
- Payment of incentives to teachers – parents complained that teachers already had a salary and that incentives were not necessary.
- Parents suspected that teachers misused financial and material resources when they went out on sporting trips.
- Disputes over land boundaries between the school and community- some parents resisted moving out of land designated for the school.
- Crises of expectations on the part of parents with parents expecting too much out of little levies they paid.
- Parents not valuing the importance of education resulting in them having negative attitudes towards school personnel.
- Parents agitated for being sued when they did not send their children to school.
- Vandalism of school property by members of the community.
- Conflict on use of resources meant for both the schools and their communities- for example, boreholes.

It was assumed that the list could not be exhausted but however, this covered a comprehensive spectrum of the field which constituted the causes of conflicts between schools and their communities.

Below are the views of respondents on what they considered as important skills and abilities of traditional leaders in handling conflict.

3.7. Skills and Abilities Rated as Critical by Respondents

Items Attributes		Chi-Square P Values			
Skills And Abilities Attributes	Mean Ratings Of Attributes (As Rated)	Sex	Position In School	Highest Level Of Education	Age
Being well organized	4.37	0.819	0.24	0.32	0.418
Ability to articulate solutions	4.13	0.445	0.44	0.155	0.723
Ability to facilitate discussions	4.19	0.095	0.066	0.084	0.184
Ability to manage time	4.01	0.371	0.541	0.329	0.609
Ability to elicit communication between disputants	4.25	0.792	0.669	0.613	0.923
Ability to detect root causes of conflicts	4.35	0.545	0.072	0.053	0.054
Ability to elicit dialogue between disputants	4.25	0.169	0.588	0.441	0.836
Ability to elicit contrition in disputants	4.4	0.477	0.532	0.605	0.772
Persuasive skills	4.14	0.796	0.43	0.22	0.939
Ability to make balanced judgment	4.18	0.536	0.113	0.049	0.369
Skills in deescalating conflicts	4.08	0.486	0.579	0.118	0.64
Ability to elicit agreements	4.33	0.378	0.721	0.263	0.805
Skills in building cordial relationships	4.23	0.882	0.546	0.76	0.638
Ability to elicit openness in disputants	4.13	0.167	0.119	0.51	0.581
Ability to draw plans in resolving conflicts	4.17	0.382	0.014	0.127	0.606
Ability to generate helpful suggestions to solutions	4.22	0.249	0.325	0.352	0.433
Judicious use of information	4.12	0.891	0.305	0.609	0.395
Ability to discern feelings of disputants	3.98	0.744	0.479	0.467	0.325
Ability to clarify issues in conflicts	4.23	0.678	0.232	0.291	0.078
Listening skills	4.28	0.802	0.322	0.372	0.358
Ability to detect elements leading to an agreement	4.24	0.297	0.324	0.105	0.468
Ability to assist disputants to be realistic in their demands	4.08	0.721	0.198	0.07	0.234
Ability to weaken disruptive stereotypes between disputants	4	0.817	0.314	0.391	0.681
Ability to motivate disputants to generate constructive solutions	4.03	0.854	0.032	0.077	0.756
Ability to grasp changing situations	3.92	0.256	0.781	0.763	0.531
Ability to work with people from varying backgrounds	4.12	0.418	0.83	0.698	0.966
Having people management skills	4.03	0.732	0.112	0.058	0.926
Ability to pick interests and concerns in disputants	4.09	0.749	0.435	0.121	0.887
Explaining skills	4.04	0.35	0.664	0.224	0.325
Ability to formulate strategies to deal with conflicts	4.24	0.791	0.875	0.388	0.919
Social competence	4.07	0.287	0.282	0.354	0.993

Table 4: N= 121 Summary of Statistics for Critical Constructs (Mean Ratings) and Chi-Square (P) Values

3.7.1. Emerging Patterns from Attributes Related to Skills and Abilities

From the table on skills and abilities, it was observed that those attributes which had been rated as critical, tended to fall under the following categories:

- People management skills
- Abilities to make inferences
- Ability to elicit solutions
- Ability to facilitate communication among disputants

Examples of such attributes which fell under the groupings listed above are as follows:

Abilities to Make Inferences

- Ability to detect root causes of conflicts
- Ability to make balanced judgements
- Ability to discern feelings of disputants
- Listening skills
- Ability to detect elements leading to an agreement
- Ability to grasp changing situations
- Ability to pick interests and concerns in people

Abilities to Elicit Solutions

- Ability to facilitate discussion
- Ability to generate helpful solutions
- Ability to clarify issues in conflicts
- Ability to assist disputants to realistic in their demands
- Ability to motivate disputants to generate constructive solutions
- Explaining skills

Abilities to Facilitate Communication Among disputants

- Ability to facilitate discussion
- Ability to facilitate communication between disputants
- Ability to elicit dialogue among disputants

People Management Skills

- Persuasive skills
- Ability to work with people from varying backgrounds
- Social competence

Additional skills and abilities suggested as critical by respondents

- Reflective skills
- Skills to observe whether the disputants are saying the truth.
- Perceptive ability to get to the real issues in conflict
- Investigating skills
- Skill to refer appropriately concerning cases which need to be handled at the next level
- Ability to justify a position one has taken.
- Ability to determine the way forward.
- Ability to pick useful points as suggested by assessors.

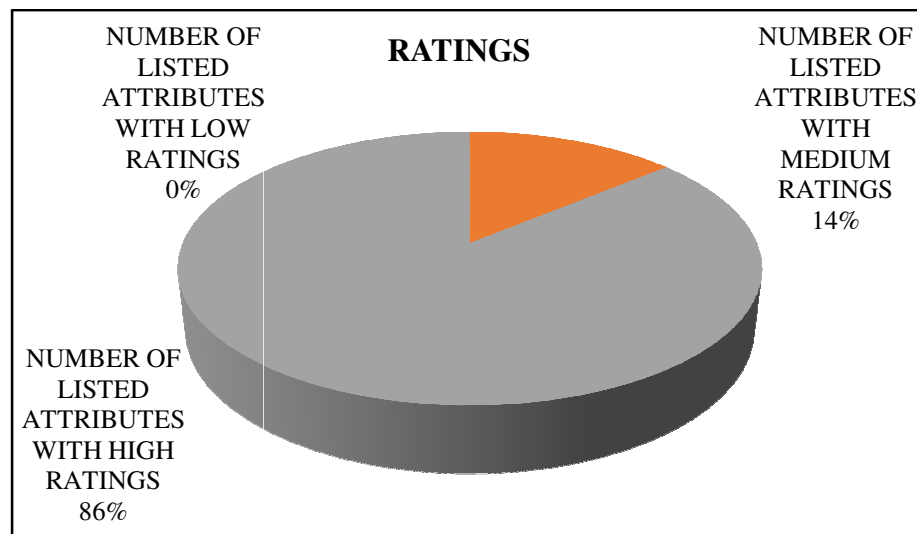


Figure 5: Rating patterns of respondents on skills and abilities of traditional leaders

3.7.2. Cultural Skills and Abilities Cited by Respondents to Play a Positive Role in Handling Conflicts When Possessed by Traditional Leaders

Respondents cited some skills and abilities associated with African tradition which play a positive role in resolving conflicts if possessed by traditional leaders. They cited the following cultural skills and abilities to be important:

- Ability to raise the self-esteem of an individual through the use of praise poetry to build a sense of recognition in disputants. When disputants feel recognized they develop a positive mindset to resolve conflicts as cited by respondents
- . The ability to use joking partners to de-escalate tension.
- The ability to reconcile disputants through the creation of functions which are incompatible with anger
- The ability to blend cultural practices with modern approaches of handling conflicts.
- The ability to use rituals to reconcile conflicting parties

3.7.3. Positive Developments Resulting from the Positive Attributes Cited above

- Parents supported schools through paying of levies which in turn were used for school developmental projects.
- More functional supplies were given to schools
- Parents and guardians directly got involved in school development projects. For example, they moulded bricks for school infrastructural development to improve learning conditions for students.
- Conflicts were resolved amicably leading to unity of purpose in developing schools.
- School personnel got motivated when traditional leaders minimized conflicts between the schools and the communities through carrying out education or advocacy on the value of education.
- School properties were protected as vandalism and destruction by stray animals were minimized when traditional leaders became firm on indiscipline in the communities.
- Schools got better facilities as traditional leaders interceded and advocated for such infrastructural developments like boreholes to improve water supplies to schools. This was achieved by influencing the communities to network for the schools instead of spending time bickering.
- Communities responded positively to matters which came up affecting the school.
- When traditional leaders gave more education on the value of education, rifts between schools and their communities were healed, leading to enhanced support to schools
- Peaceful atmosphere in schools due to support of traditional leaders to schools in times of conflicts between the schools and their communities.
- Schools got additional land due to the support of traditional leaders when communities demanded land at the expense of the schools.
- Increased enrolment in schools resulting from the encouragement of traditional leaders when there was resistance in communities.
- Schools personnel got more respect when traditional leaders firmly supported them in time of conflicts.
- Communities went out of their way to support disadvantaged pupils when traditional leaders interceded positively using Christian values. For example, some members of the community selling their animals to raise funds for the disadvantaged pupils.
- Resources like computers were lured into schools when traditional leaders minimized conflicts between schools and their communities.

- Communities modernised their schools when traditional leaders promoted healthy relations between the schools and the communities. For example, communities funded educational and sporting trips when traditional leaders minimized conflicts between their schools and communities.
- As communities gave more support to the schools due to the influence of traditional leaders especially through interceding in resolving conflicts, examination results improved and schools performed well in sporting activities.
- As traditional leaders fought destructive religious practices like the refusal of hospital treatment, health programs in schools went unhindered resulting in the general improvement of pupils' health and better performance in schools.
- Capital projects in schools like sinking boreholes, fencing of schools, construction of teachers' houses and improvement of roads to schools progressed well when traditional leaders minimized conflicts between schools and communities.
- Discipline in schools improved when parents and school staff worked together in harmony as the traditional leaders encouraged such relationships
- As resources improved due to improved community support and the general ambience became more pleasant, the quality of teaching relatively improved leading to better examination results.

3.7.4. Skills and Abilities of Traditional Leaders Cited as Having Positive Influence on School Education

The following were skills and abilities which were cited by respondents to be having a positive influence in schools and areas of their jurisdiction that had a bearing on school education:

- The ability to articulate teachers' plight in the communities surrounding schools to minimize misperceptions in the community which would lead to conflicts with the school.
- The ability by traditional leaders to network schools in areas of their jurisdiction to minimize conflicts resulting from the mobilization of resources to develop schools. For example, in some schools, the traditional leaders attracted distinguished people who would show positive examples on communities by luring resources into schools.:
- Ability by traditional leaders to maintain sound public relations in their communities which set appropriate contexts of peace
- Explaining skills to instill understanding of issues in the minds of both school authorities and community members in order to minimize conflicts between schools and communities
- Ability by traditional leaders to explain the bases of their actions.
- Persuasive skills
- Ability to articulate the value of education to communities to minimize negative attitudes towards schools
- Ability by traditional leaders to appoint competent aides to resolve conflicts
- Listening ability to allow disputants to vent out their feelings.
- The ability to listen in order to get to the root cause of conflict
- The ability to make inferences to get the real issues out of a conflictual situation

3.7.5 Skills/ abilities (lack of) which led to negative influence on school education on the part of traditional leaders as cited by respondents.

The following were cited as negative abilities and skills on the part of traditional leaders which led to negative influence on school education.

- Inability to detect the root cause of a conflict.
- Inability to analyses issues and simply jumping into conclusions. In this matter in one school an example of a teacher who committed suicide at the school was given where the traditional leader instructed the head of the school to fund the ritual for cleansing the school. When the head refused, because he was not related deceased, he was ousted from the school and the district including neighbouring districts.
- Lack of persuasive skills
- Inconsistency in handling conflictual matters of a similar nature. Any example was given where it was reported that at times political affiliation is used to decide issues.
- Lack of explaining skills in clarifying matters.

Negative outcomes on school education resulting from the negative attributes.

The following were cited as some of the negative outcomes resulting from the negative attributes.

- Lack of progress in school development resulting from traditional leaders' inability to clarify issues in conflictual situations.
- Parents being disinterested in school matters due to ineptness of traditional leaders or due to lack of persuasive skills on the part of the traditional leaders.
- Parents over interfering in professional matters of the school leading to demotivation of teachers – this occurred when the traditional leaders were not bold enough to deter communities from doing so.
- Lack of infrastructural development due to inaction on the part of traditional leaders.
- Outbreaks of diseases like measles and chicken pox due to lack of boldness on traditional leaders on those members of the community who had rigid religious practices like denying their children access to medical treatment. This resulted in children missing lessons.

- Some children even ran away from immunization due to negative influence of their parents when the traditional leaders did nothing about it. When the children avoided immunization, again disease spread in schools leading to many children to miss out in their lessons.
- Schools got disadvantaged when traditional leaders were biased against the school, for example, schools lost land to selfish members of the community leading to no space for building learning facilities.
- Schools being owed large sums of money when traditional leaders did not actively urge parents to pay levies – again this led to lack of development on learning facilities and paucity of learning materials like essential textbooks.
- Schools failed to generate the much needed financial resources when a large number of pupils did not participate in school projects which were considered by parents as unclean, for example, participating in piggery projects.
- General development on school education was stalled by traditional leaders who themselves resisted school development projects.
- Parents resisted payment of levies when traditional leaders lacked explaining skills on how the levies would be used in the development of pupil's learning facilities - this led to general paucity of learning materials and facilities.
- High staff turnover was experienced in schools where traditional leaders were biased against the school – this led to pupils being disadvantaged in their education.
- Low percentage pass rates were experienced in schools where traditional leaders were not supportive to school needs and when communities were against school developmental projects.

4. Conclusion

A lot of attributes concerned with skills and abilities of traditional leaders in handling conflict between schools and their communities were cited. It was noted that the attributes were among the following categories: People management skills, Abilities to make inferences, Ability to elicit solutions and Ability to facilitate communication among disputants. During both interviews and focus group discussions, respondents cited some Cultural Skills and Abilities which can play a positive role in handling conflicts when possessed by Traditional Leaders. These included Ability to raise the self-esteem of an individual through the use of praise poetry to build a sense of recognition in disputants, the ability to use joking partners to de-escalate tension, the ability to reconcile disputants through the creation of functions which are incompatible with anger. The ability to blend cultural practices with modern approaches of handling conflicts and The ability to use rituals to reconcile conflicting parties.

The study also revealed that lack of the important skills and abilities by traditional leaders would result in severe consequences in schools such as high staff turnover, high failure rate as a result of lack of trained staff. Also under development of schools as a result of persistent conflict between school and community which leads to parents not paying school levies. It was also noted that religion was an also one of the factors in causing conflict.

5. Recommendations

It was recommended that there should be increased communication between communities and schools through the school development committees and the traditional leaders.

Traditional leaders should be educated about conflict handling and their limits in the day today running of schools.

Profession issue should be separated from traditional ritual issues and political issues.

More training in conflict resolution for traditional leaders is necessary to avoid fueling conflict due to lack of skills in conflict resolution

Traditional Leaders to have some input in peace building to avoid escalation of the disputes between educational institutions and the community.

Traditional leaders should have a more representation in the Organ For Peace An Re-conciliation of Zimbabwe so that they can be able to hold workshops in their own districts on the subject.

The ministry of education should hold workshop for teachers, traditional leaders and school development committees so as to avoid role conflict and enlighten them on diving of function.

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