Management of School-Community Conflicts in Selected Primary Schools of Livingstone District of Zambia

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to analyse school-community conflict management strategies in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. The objectives of the study were to find out if conflicts existed between the school and the community, to establish the types of conflicts that existed and to find out the strategies which management used in resolving these conflicts between school and community in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. The study embraced a qualitative descriptive design and homogenous purposive sampling was used to select a total number of 102 participants. Twenty four teachers were subjected to semi structured interviews while 18 members of the parent teacher committee (PTC) and 60 pupils were subjected to focus group discussions. Data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The findings of the study showed that there were conflicts between schools and communities. The common types of school-community conflicts were government policy related, land boundaries, partisan political inclination, school fees , social life, matters of faith, pride, immorality, academic failure, unruliness, technological, material and property acquisition. The conflict management strategies included; home visitations for conflict mediation and arbitration, annual general meetings, admission of guilty on both sides, intervention of government authorities, disciplinary measures and involving civic, traditional and church leaders. This study recommended that there was need for the schools and the communities to understand the types of conflicts which existed between them. The government should set up periodic training in conflict management strategies tailored specifically to the school management and PTC. Parents and teachers should have more regular meetings to resolve the conflicts.

Keywords: *community, conflicts, school, conflict management strategies*

Introduction

In Zambia, the concept of conflict and management has been highlighted by different scholars within the circles of academia and Ministry of Education has put forth a well spelt out policy model. Bowa (2016) stated that conflict is ongoing and therefore, communicational strategies need to be applied to avoid conflict from occurring. Bowa's study concluded that communicational strategies were not intentionally practised and that there was a deliberate decision of not wanting to communicate in order to avoid conflicts. Communication plays a significant role in the management of school-community conflicts. If schools and communities do not communicate, there is a likelihood of conflicts arising between them. In view of this, Limbo (2018) stated that dialogue and mediation are conflict management strategies employed in secondary schools. He added that teachers employ negotiation and counseling to resolve conflicts among learners and the strategies have been found to lead to a reduction in conflict.

A school is a complex and dynamic organization with different needs and varying group dynamics having many challenges that arise from many conflicts, which are inevitable in any school set up including primary schools. For example, conflicts between parents and teachers, between pupils and teachers and between teachers and pupils exist. Maunjiri and Uzhenyu (2017). Conflict can be found at both ends of the community, school managers, and teachers and even throughout the educational hierarchical structure Sergiovanni and Starrat, (1987). Conflict between the community and the school is a common problem in primary schools and adversely affect the involved pupils, the community and staff, as well as the schools from attaining their desired outcomes.

The school is not a standalone institution in the society. Basit et al. (2010) state that the school relates daily with different groups of individuals and other institutions that play a role in its existence. It is well-known that parents have a role in the running of affairs of the school. Teachers and pupils have a significant role to play in the day-to-day affairs of the school. Psychologists like Bronson (2009) describe conflict as a problem of generation gap. He explains that intergenerational conflict exists because experiences, attitudes and values of young people are different from those of 30 years ago and different from those of their parents. Bronson (2009) observes that there are two major sources of contention between the community and the school. The first one is the parents' failure to show recognition of adolescent achievement and secondly, the adolescents' rebellion against parental control and school rules. In addition, Cole (1998) looked at conflict as a condition that arises whenever the perceived interests of an individual or a group clashes with those of another individual or a group in such a way that strong emotions are aroused, and compromise is not considered to be an option.

A study by Kilmann and Thomas (1975) established five styles of conflict management which are widely used by the present-day educational administrators which include avoidance, accommodation, compromise, competition and collaboration. Similarly, Rahim and Magner (1995) also highlighted some styles of managing conflicts which include integrating or collaborating style, obliging or accommodation style, dominating/competing style, and compromising style. These conflict resolution styles are used by different administrators to solve conflicts in different organisations.

The Zambian school system has not been spared from school-community conflicts. According to district education board secretary in Livingstone, it is reported that some primary schools in Livingstone district have had challenges of conflicts with the communities that they relate with. Mwamba (2016) noted the causes of conflicts in schools and classified them in two main categories namely structural factors which relate to the nature of the organization and the way in which work is organized. The other source of conflict was to do with personal factors between the school and members in the community. He added that the other possible sources of conflicts include poor

communication, competition for common but scarce resources and incompatible goals. All these noted conflicts are source of insecurities in school communities. When a school and its local community are in conflict, safety concerns can arise for students, staff, and community members (Mubita, 2018; Mubita, 2021). Conflicts can create a hostile and stressful environment for everyone involved. According to Mubita (2018) emotional safety becomes a concern, as pupils and staff may feel anxious, scared, or threatened, affecting their mental well-being and ability to focus on education or work. Livingstone has schools and communities which depend on each other by working together to support learning and development of the school and community but it is not free from conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

The problem which this study analysed was school-community conflict management strategies used in the management of conflicts between the community and primary schools in Livingstone district. Studies by Lang (2009); Sergiovanni and Starrat, (1987); Ramani and Zhimin, (2010) and Omoko, (2010) have revealed the importance of conflict management in organizations. Conflict management helps to find solutions to social problems and helps to eliminate stress and confusion in organizations such as schools. This is because when problems are addressed at the right time it prevents conflict and its adverse effects at a later stage.

Nevertheless, studies conducted in Zambia by (Sompa, 2015; Mwamba, 2016; Kaonga, 2016) only concentrated on interpersonal conflicts between teachers, head teachers and pupils in the school set up as well as the role of school leadership in conflict management and sustainable dialogue. The researches contained that conflict management is better resolved by only examining it from the pupils and teachers roles neglecting the school community at large. For example, a number of school-community conflict incidences have been reported during PTA meetings from various primary schools in Livingstone. Unfortunately, there has been lack of evidence that shows the rate and the statistics indicating the causes and the strategies of

managing them. It is against this background that this study was therefore undertaken to identify the main causes of conflicts and evaluate the strategies which are currently used to manage and resolve school-community conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone district.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyze the school-community conflict management strategies in selected primary schools of Livingstone District.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

i.   Find out if conflicts existed between the schools and the communities in selected primary schools of Livingstone District.

ii.   Establish the types of conflicts that exited in selected primary schools of Livingstone District.

iii.   Identify the strategies which management used in resolving conflicts between schools and communities in selected primary schools of Livingstone District.

Methods

This study utilized a descriptive research design to answer to the set research questions. Descriptive research is designed to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally happens. The study population was the schools, teachers, parents and pupils of Livingstone district To hviews from both urban and rural schools, three rural schools and three urban schools were randomly sampled. From the rural public primary schools, the schools which were sampled were Chaba, Mahululo and Kasiya primary schools. Then from the urban public primary schools, the schools which were sampled were Mujala, Nakatindi and Holy Cross primary schools. From the six primary schools, the sample included 60 pupils, 18 PTC members and 24 teachers making a total study sample of 102 participants. Data from teachers was collected using interviews while data from the PTC and pupils was collected using focus group

discussion. Data was analysed using thematic analysis using these steps.

i. Familiarisation with the data: This phase involved reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.

ii. Coding: This phase involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involved coding the entire dataset, and after that, collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis.

iii. Searching for themes: This phase involved examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then involved collating data relevant to each candidate theme, so that the researcher can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.

iv. Reviewing themes: This phase involved checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that they show a convincing story of the data and answers the research question. In this phase, themes are typically refined, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded.

v. Defining and naming themes: This phase involved developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the 'story' of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.

vi. Writing up: This final phase involved putting together the analytic, narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature

In order to adhere to research ethics, the researcher took the following measures; firstly, permission was granted through Ethical Clearance Committee at the University of Zambia. Secondly, permission was sought from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) to conduct this study in the selected schools. Thirdly, at the study sites, the relevant school authorities and ward stakeholders were briefed on the importance of the research and the procedures the researcher would use to collect data and permission was granted to interact with the study participants. Anonymity and confidentially were ensured to the participants as their names and identities were not written by the researcher whilst collecting data. An informed consent form was signed with each participant and group before data was collected. As for the pupils, permission was sought for from both school administration and their parents. They were assured that the information given was strictly for academic purposes and was treated with the highest level of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy.

Data presentation

Overview

Section presented the findings of the study on the school-community conflict management strategies in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. Data is presented using findings based on the research objectives of the study. The research questions were as follows: (1) are there conflicts between school and community in selected primary school of Livingstone district? (2)what types of school-community conflicts are in the selected primary schools of Livingstone district? (3) what strategies does management use to resolve school-community conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone district?

Are there Conflicts between School and Community in Selected Primary Schools of Livingstone District?

The first question sought to find out if there were conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. One participant stated that:

> Yes conflicts are there and we experience them each and every day…..sometimes a week will not pass without witnessing conflicts and these conflicts end in fights (PL 3, 2020)

Another participant had this to say.

> Last week there was a serious conflict between the head and one of the parents. It was a serious issue

which caused confusion in the school premises. I can confirm that yes there are conflicts between the school and the community (PL 7, 2020)

What Types of School-Community Conflicts are in the Selected Primary Schools of Livingstone District?

The second question sought to establish the types of school-community conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. It was stated that conflicts between the school and the community manifested in the following types of conflicts: government policy-related, land boundary, partisan political inclination, social life, economic life, financial embezzlement, matters of faith, pride, immorality, academic failure, socialization, unruliness, gender inequalities, technological, material and property acquisition and cultural.

Political Type of School-Community Conflicts

The participants revealed that the school community conflicts were politically related at times. The study revealed that political conflicts are the ones that deal with the state and systems of government. The study established that the political statement and policies conflicted with the school management implementing the policies and other government directives. Such kind of conflict entails analysis and implementation of government policies, ideas, ideologies, institutions, policies, processes and behaviours in the education system. One participant had this to say:

> *We have been told that as parents we are not supposed to be paying money to the school in form of project fee. But we have been paying project fees for the construction of a school poultry and piggery. I don't know if government has allowed some schools to make parents pay and other not or what. I can't understand this government and the teachers in this school (PC 9, 2020).*

When the teachers were asked on the allegations, the justified the payments as legal and were recognised by the Ministry of Education and the PTC are aware of the fees. One of the participants said:

> *It is not easy for the school to run without money. The money that you are asked to pay is PTA fund and fees for ID's so that your children are able to write exams. The school needs paper to run every day and for examination and office purposes. There is need to understand the requirements that schools demands (TC 5, 2020).*

Another issue that emerged from the participants was the complaint over the policy of the introduction of Comprehensive sexuality education. It was observed that in as much as sex education helps pupils to gain information, skills and motivation to make healthy decisions about sex, pupils were trying to practice sex after receiving sex education. This was said to have contributed to teenage pregnancies and sexual immorality in the community as a result of the teachings in school. One participant said that:

> *I don't understand why my grade 5 child should be taught about sex, family planning and the use of condoms. My daughter is too young for that. She was trying to talk about sex with me and I asked her where she heard about sex and she literally told me that they were learning about it in class. Her behaviour has changed, and I am very worried because she might have started having sex as she is practicing what is being taught. Teachers, please teach the right things to our children (PC 6, 2020).*

Social Type of School-Community Conflicts

The respondents stated that envy, hostility, and betrayal of trust are the most predominant forms of social conflicts which existed between the schools and the communities. The respondents said that revealed that pupil-pupil conflicts occur mostly followed by parent teacher conflicts and eventually spread over to the community. Another participant said that:

> *In our societies, there are those that have and those that seem not to have and surely conflicts are bound to occur among the schools, teachers and learners. The community has parents and guardians. The parents influence the school teachers and the teachers also influence the community members and in this way conflicts arise. This influence is in relation to financial and social respect in the community (PL 4, 2020).*

Technological Type of School-Community Conflict

This has seen some aspects of conflicts at the teachers; managers and community members adjust to these advances. The participants explained that while it was good to have advances in technology in the schools and teach well, there were challenges which came with such technological advances and in the end; conflicts arose in the process of implementation. For example, not all community members may have equal access to ICT resources, such as computers or the internet. This digital divide can create disparities in educational opportunities, leading to tensions between the school and community, especially if certain groups feel excluded or disadvantaged (Chirwa & Mubita, 2021). Moreover, schools did not allow learners to come with phones and computers in school when they were not allowed by the teacher and those who brought them were confiscated which brought conflict. It was observed by one of the participants that:

> Technology has contributed to moral decay in as much as it is good. Instead of learning, pupils concentrate on browsing, gaming and social networking and takes away valuable learning time. Some children come with laptops which their parents have bought and use them in school. Unfortunately, they do not allow their friends to learn with them which bring classroom conflicts (PC 14, 2020)

Technology seems to be less understood by the parents hence there are conflicts in the schools between teachers and the parents. What can be seen is technological abuse (Chirwa and Mubita, 2021).

Morality Type of School-Community Conflict

On morals, the respondents stated that some teachers were having sexual affairs with their children in the community despite them being married. This brought about conflict as the women did not respect the male teachers and their wives. One participant stated that:

> We have challenges with some of the male teachers who fail to respect themselves and come around the community to sleep around with our daughters. If I can remember well, last year we had about three conflicts where two teachers were beaten for impregnating women from the community because they denied responsibility. Later, they were made to come to terms, and they paid for damages. (PC 13, 2020)

Religious Type of School-Community Conflict

Other respondents said that the one other significant nature of conflict was that which was to do with religious inclinations. Respondents said that it is a well-known fact that teachers, community members and learners belong to different religious affiliations. They stated that in the process of teaching some teachers derail and teach according to their religious beliefs at church which brought about conflict in school and extended to the community. One participant said:

> It is unfair for co-curricular activities to take place during the weekends. I belong to the seventh Day church and I won't allow my child to attend sports or other co-curricular activities on a Saturday, our belief is to keep the Sabbath holy. As a school, you need to change the day for such activities and should take place during the week otherwise teachers and the management will be taking part in the co-curricular activities if you don't comply (PC 11, 2020).

Language Type of School-Community Conflict

Language of instruction is another form of conflict in the school and the community. The teachers interviewed, the school managers and the members of the community, which included the PTAs stated that language of instruction in the school was a major form through which conflict arises. It is a well-known fact that the schools teach predominantly using English as a medium of instruction. But the respondents went on to state that the learners were not understanding some concepts as a result of teaching in the English language. Also, the Ministry of General Education introduced the local languages as a medium of instruction at the lower grades. In Livingstone this has been a

source of challenge because Livingstone is a cosmopolitan city, made up of a consortium of languages and other dialects, leading to conflicts in terms of teaching and learning. One of the participants from the urban population had this to say:

> *Our children don't understand Chitonga which the school uses a medium of communication to teach, it is very unfair. We grew up from Copperbelt and came to Livingstone on transfer, how do you expect our son to understand the language you use to teach? Teachers are always giving homework in Chitonga and we have to call our neighbors just to be able to answer answers given as homework. It is high time pupils use English language as compulsory because the literacy levels of our children are going down (PC 18, 2020).*

Another participant said:

> *The language problem seemed simple from the onlookers, yet it had deep roots and a source of conflict between the school and the community.*

Economic Type of School-Community Conflict

Economic sphere is another aspect through which conflict manifests between the school and the community. The economic aspect may include all the activities which people do in order to earn a living. The economic activities influence the day to day living of the people. The participants interviewed stated that the people do a lot of things to ensure that they live. One of the interviewed participants said that:

The participants stated that they engage themselves in economic activities and in the end; the same activities negatively influence the smooth operations of the school. This therefore becomes a sure way of springing conflicts in the community and the school. The demands of the school and that of the community means the schools and the communities are in constant tangle with each other. Another participant stated that:

> *The rate of learner absenteeism is very high especially among grades 5, 6, and 7 pupils in this community because of vegetable farming. Most of the times, I have met these pupils selling vegetables at the market in order to survive. The school has*

> *questioned many parents about this but the responses from parents is that there's no one to go to the market and sell the vegetables as they are perishables and need to be sold immediately after harvesting. The money they raise is the same they use to feed from making it hard to attend to classes' every day (TC 4, 2020).*

What are the Causes of School-Community Conflicts in Selected Primary Schools of Livingstone District?

The study further sought to describe the causes of school-community conflicts in the selected schools of Livingstone district. The following themes were generated from the data regarding the school-community conflicts and these were; land boundaries between the schools and the communities, poor academic performance of learners, social status differences between the teachers and the community members, extra marital affairs, school fees in the education system, witchcraft, influences of politicians, poverty levels in the communities, policies introduced by the education system, the school system and the religious organizations and general breakdown of morality and behaviours among school going children.

Land Boundaries

Schools are established on land. The land is usually given by the people in the community. The realization of the participants is that the issue of land where schools are established usually brings in a lot of conflict. One participant interviewed actually said:

> *When schools expand and become big, there is demand for more classroom space. Once this happens, the demand for more land becomes inevitable and this forces the school authorities to extend to other areas within the available area. The extensions bring about conflict as the community forgets that the school belongs to them and their children, but they direct the anger on teachers who are innocent (TC 12, 2020).*

Poor Academic Performance of the Learners

Another source of conflict between the school and the communities was the issue of poor academic performance of the learners. The schools are supposed to be centres of excellence

and places where learners excel in their academic activities. However, the participants observed that this has never been the case in the schools. The results of the learners have always been very poor. The head teacher for Primary School 1 stated that:

> *I was shocked to receive the results for the learners at my school for 2019. All the 21 learners that wrote the grade 9 examinations had failed. They did not make it to grade 10. They did not pass in any 6 subjects and failed to obtain full certificates but obtained statement of results. This forced the community members to call for an urgent meeting at the school to establish the root cause of the learners not making it to grade 10. This was an embarrassing moment for me to be asked by the community on what happened for the learners to fail (TC 16, 2020).*

Social Status differences between the teachers and the community members

Yet another source or cause of school-community conflicts in the schools was over the social status differences between the teachers and the community members. Livingstone district is predominantly urban. The community members are mostly well to do individuals. This entails that even their children who go to school are also well to do in a way. They automatically inherit the social status of their parents or guardians. The teachers on the other hand are of humble social status. They are neither very rich nor very poor. Conflict in this case arises when the school tries to advise the learners not to misbehave in class.

Witchcraft

Witchcraft is another area that brings in a lot of conflicts although it had no direct evidence and people to point at. The participants revealed that whenever the teachers complained of witchcraft being practiced on them, the prime suspect was the community surrounding the school. The PTA is brought in to solve the accusation because teachers leave such schools when the situation is not brought under control.

Poverty

Poverty is another cause of conflict exhibited between the school and the community. Poverty is the general lack of something. The participants explained that most of the families cannot afford all the school requirements. This makes them to send their school going children to the streets of Livingstone and go and sell commodities like bananas, oranges and fritters to supplement the income of their parents.

The study findings have provided evidence that there are many causes of school community conflicts which exist in the primary school of Livingstone town.

What strategies does management use to resolveschool-community conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone district?

The study further sought to identify the school-community conflict management strategies in selected primary schools of Livingstone district. The school managers interviewed outlined the conflict management strategies as conducting PTA meetings, conducting home visitations, involving civic leaders, involving the traditional leadership, involving the religious leaders, mediation, negotiations, arbitration, availability of good office and conducive working environment and the involvement of the Teacher Unions in conflict management.

PTA Annual General Meetings

One of the strategies which were used to settle the conflicts between the school and the community was using the PTA annual general meetings. The main role of the PTA is to build strong working relationship among the parents, teachers and the school in supporting learners. One participant said:

> *Some AGM are hot and parents bring out the issues which they have been observing for the period of a one year. After presenting these issues, the parents and teachers come to a consensus on how to progress through the challenges. Dialogue plays a critical role in solving the school community challenges (TC 16, 2020).*

Home Visitations

The other strategy which was used to solve the school-community conflicts was through home visitations. The participants established that

some conflicts could easily be resolved by visiting the homes of the sources of conflicts as a way of arbitration and mediation between the two parties. The parents also confirmed that occasionally they received school authorities from the school visiting them at to try and resolve the conflicts. One participant explained that:

School-Community conflicts have been easily resolved through home visitations. People involved in conflict easily open up and allow conflicts to be resolved easily without any arguments because they feel honoured by visiting them in their homes. Home visitations show some sense of humility and calms down the tone of the conflict no matter how serious the conflict may because it is somehow a privilege to be visited by the head of the school in the process of resolving conflicts (PC 16, 2020).

The study also found that the people being visited feel comfortable to talk about issues or conflicts in the comfort of their homes without fear or intimidation from anyone. The disadvantage of home visitation is that some people are not comfortable to be visited especially if they are the ones that are offended. They feel as if the whole world will know because they will be exposed. Such people want to withdraw from problems and would then prefer staying in one place and be confined there. Exposure is very critical here as explained by the head teachers and the PTA executive.

Involvement of Civic Leaders

The civic leaders are also another conduit through which conflicts in the schools and the communities could be resolved. The respondents stated that the civic leaders include people such as Members of Parliament, Councillors, Mayors and Council Chair persons. They said that these officials have a critical role to play in the resolution of conflicts. One of the participants said that:

I remember in 2016, we had a conflict between the school and the community which had to do with absenteeism of female pupils because it was the season for initiation ceremonies and a number of girls were initiated for a month meanwhile, they were missing classes. It had to take the help of the

of the mayor in Livingstone to talk to the village headmen to stop initiating girls during the learning period since they could not listen to the school management and that's how the conflict was resolved (TC 2, 2020).

Involvement of Traditional Leaders

Involving the traditional leadership is one of the strategies which the school managers use to solve problems. Just as the respondents explained earlier, some of the forms of conflicts in education system are of social nature and so the involvement of the traditional leadership is very important. The traditional leadership here are the chiefs and the village headmen since the land for the school is in the traditional land, there are bound to be wrangles over the land boundaries. One participant said:

I remember there was a time when the school garden was invaded by goats belonging to one of the community members and a lot of plants were destroyed. The owner of the goats was communicated to in order keep his goats away from the school garden but unfortunately, he could not comply. That problem kept repeating itself and the conflict was worsening because the owner of the goat was not helping at all. The issue was reported to the headman and it was resolved immediately with the authority of the headman. Village headmen are fast at resolving school-community conflicts (PC 4, 2020).

While we may state that this strategy is effective, there are some challenges. The traditional leaders may be subjective in passing their judgments. They tend to favour some people at the expense of following objective judgment and guidance.

Involvement of Teacher Unions

Mediation through the union leadership is another strategy that is commonly used in the schools as explained by the teachers. The interviewed teachers from the selected schools stated the use the unions to settle down their scores. They tend to be very supportive of teachers and what they pass through; the teachers stated that many times they have requested the unions to intervene in the conflicts. The teacher-head teacher conflicts and

teacher to teacher conflicts are common conflicts which attract the teacher unions who act as mediators. One teacher said:

> One head teacher was treating teachers as if there were his children. Scolding them at anytime and he was not respecting them. As a result, teachers revolted, and one teacher had to slap him which resulted into a fight between the head teacher and the teachers. It took the community leadership and the teacher unions to talk to the head and that was how the conflict was resolved (TC 17, 2020).

The responsibility of the teacher unions is to work with the teachers and the community to ensure that there was sanity in the schools.

Results and Discussion

Types of the School-Community Conflicts in Primary Schools of Livingstone

The findings and discussions are presented using the themes which emerged from the study results. Each theme and findings have been discussed to ensure consistence in the presentation of data.

Conflicts of an economic nature, poverty and education prestige

The study established that the conflicts in the sampled primary schools came about as a result of the differences from an economic point of view as well as property acquisition among the teachers and the community members. The teaching staff was accused of constantly belittling the parents of the children as failures and lacked the necessary education to be compared to the teachers. The teachers commanded a better economy as compared to the community members. Such conflicts were as a result of the economic status which the parents and teachers found themselves in.

The study findings are consistent with Phiri (2015) whose study revealed that teachers and parents in the communities were having conflicts as a result of parents borrowing money from the teachers and failed to pay back on time or teachers borrowed and failed to pay back on time. These types of conflicts brought about

property grabbing from the households of the community and teachers at times and any resistance brought even fighting. Despite the community being dependent on the teachers for some income ventures and the teachers depending on the community for some services, their lack of fulfilling the promises brought about conflicts. These findings are similar to Filmer (2005) whose study found that the school and the surrounding communities were constantly in conflict because the teaching staff regarded themselves to be educated and had more financial muscle than the parents around them. From the foregoing, it can be seen that economic gaps between the teachers and the community became a spring board of conflicts between the schools and the communities.

The study further established that witchcraft was another area that brought about conflicts although it had no direct evidence and people to point at. The participants revealed that whenever the teachers complained of witchcraft being practiced on them, the prime suspect was the community surrounding the school. The PTC was brought in to solve the accusation because teachers left such schools when the situation was not brought under control. Consistent with the findings, Phiri (2015) holds that the main cause of school community conflicts in the rural schools was the practices of witchcraft between the community and the schools. It was found that some teachers challenged the community in witchcraft practicing which made them earn respect amongst some community members and others resorted to confronting the teachers during the day to be bad people. As a result of the witchcraft challenge, such conflicts resulted into the teachers who did not practice the magic to be culprits and failed to sleep in the night.

The findings also established that poverty was another cause of conflict which existed either in the community or among the teachers. It was established that some parents sent their school going children to the streets of Livingstone to go and sell commodities like bananas, oranges and fritters to supplement the income of their parents because they didn't have enough income. This made the school to request the parents to bring the child to school while the

parent fumed at the school authorities. The findings are in line with the findings of Isabu (2017) who contends that the causes of conflict include poverty in the community which make them envious and feel jealousy of the teachers. As a result of poverty and low education, it brings about difference in perceptions, limited resources and overlapping authority amongst others. As a result of poverty, community members steal from the teachers' compound and make teachers become desperate for security.

The study findings have also established that the other sources of conflicts were the user fees which parents failed to pay. The school usually charged PTC fees which were minimal but some parents in the community failed to pay and when they were asked to make the payments, they raised their voices on the school and this brought about conflicts. Phurutse (2005) supports the findings by stating that parents became confrontational when they were reminded of their obligation of paying school fees for their children. Some parents ended up fuming and confronted the teachers in the schools instead of paying the funds they owe to the school for the child's education. Such sources of conflicts were common as some parents never wanted to make contributions to the growth of the schools in their communities.

This discussion is in line with the group process theory of the study under the types of conflicts which include communicational, structural and personal. The theory states that structural conflicts are conflicts related to organizational roles and personal conflicts are conflicts steaming from individual differences (Robin, 2003). It can be seen that the schools were both closed and open structures where there are teachers and members of the community who live their lives as individual human beings entitled to their personal life.

Land encroachment

The study also established the fact that the whole problem of land encroachment of community members on school land was brought about by government which constructed the schools without consultation with the community and without title deeds. In the past, there were moments when government went into an area and constructed infrastructure, be it schools or hospitals or something else, without consulting the community members. Even if government is in charge of the whole country, it is important to be diplomatic, respectful and recognise the people settled in those places by sitting down together and consult them so that there is some agreement in order to avoid future ramifications. The study findings are supported by Mwabungula (2015) who indicated that the school land was being encroached in by the villagers of the surrounding community which reduced the land for the schools. The parents did not have much say to protect the school and they were even telling the teachers that they found the school and they would leave it just like any other teacher who had worked there. At the interest of protecting the school land, conflicts escalated and resulted into some teachers leaving the school because the community was more influential than the teachers. Besides that, in Zambia constitutionally land is in the hands of the traditional leaders.

Witchcraft

The study further established that witchcraft was another area that brought about conflicts although it had no direct evidence and people to point at. The participants revealed that whenever the teachers complained of witchcraft being practiced on them, the prime suspect was the community surrounding the school. The PTC was brought in to solve the accusation because teachers left such schools when the situation was not brought under control. Consistent with the findings, Phiri (2015) holds that the main cause of school community conflicts in the rural schools was the practices of witchcraft between the community and the schools. It was found that some teachers challenged the community in witchcraft practicing which made them earn respect amongst some community members and others resorted to confronting the teachers during the day to be bad people. As a result of the witchcraft challenge, such conflicts resulted into the teachers who did not practice the magic to be culprits and failed to sleep in the night.

School-Community Conflict Management Strategies in Primary Schools

The study found that the offending part may just apologise or show remorse in one way or another, and thereafter continue living or working together with the offended part. Compromise as a conflict handling strategy means both parties involved in the conflict agree to move from their initial stance and give in to some new agreed upon position which may not be the best for each part, but for the sake of peace, is the best solution. In this case, each part loses something, but remains to enjoy something. It normally happens when there is a standoff and each side has raised some dust to some extent and in order to bring the warring parties together, a compromise is reached. Finally, collaboration as a conflict handling strategy means the culprit cooperating with the discussion and judgment in order to resolve the conflict and bring about peace. According to Robins (2003), there are about five strategies handling conflicts. These are competition, avoidance, accommodation, compromising and collaboration. Robins (2003) states that competition takes place when a certain group stresses their position without considering opposing points of view. Avoidance instead is a situation whereby despite knowing the offence committed and the culprit behind the offence, nobody talks about it, nobody complains about the sake of peace perhaps for fear of reprisals. Accommodation as a conflict handling strategy means despite being offensive, an individual or group is accepted or tolerated by the other part or victimised group to continue staying or working together.

Authority, Avoidance, Dialogue, Negotiations and Counselling

The teachers, head teachers and the PTC mentioned that authority, avoidance, dialogue, negotiation and counselling were some of the skills used to manage school-community conflicts in the primary schools. Participants said for the issue of the pride and wealth of the teachers against the poverty of the local community, the strategies which were used to settle the conflicts between the school and the community was the usage of the PTC annual general meetings and dialogue and transparency in the usage of school funds. The main role of the PTC is to build strong working relationships among the parents, teachers and the school in supporting learners. One participant observed that some AGM were hot and parents bring out the issues which they have been observing for the period of a one year. After presenting these issues, the parents and teachers come to a consensus on how to progress through the challenges. Dialogue plays a critical role in solving the school community challenges.

The PTC annual general meeting recommended that government through DEBS, Councillor and Traditional Leaders, the head teacher and the community members involved should come together and go through the boundary and plant trees. Since DEBS and the traditional rulers came and involved, it meant that authority was used. People normally just follow orders or whatever is said. In order not to be considered insubordinate, normally people do not speak back to the traditional leaders even if they are not happy. This means avoidance. In as much as they used authority, they also engaged the stakeholders concerned. So, there was some amount of dialogue, negotiations and counselling so that even as the boundary was being drawn, people could accept peacefully. This is consistent with Mwabungula (2015) who says that conflicts can be sorted out based on the use of school boards, regular staff meetings, guidance and counselling and altering human variables with the most effective methods applied in managing conflict resolutions. Isabu (2017) also concurs with the findings when he says that management strategies which were used to resolve school conflicts included accommodation, avoidance, collaboration and competition.

In addition to the five conflict management strategies raised by Robins, Chisha (2018) also adds dialogue, negotiations and counselling. The study established that the school community conflicts were solved by the stakeholders using dialogue, negotiations and counselling. He found that open dialogue, negotiation and counselling are conflict management strategies that teachers

employ in school to resolve conflicts among learners. Mwamba (2016) adds another strategy which is confrontation as a result of lack of knowledge of conflict management. Hence, most of the administrators handled conflicts through trial-and-error approach because there were no specific procedures and methods of managing conflicts. These strategies were the strategies mostly used and some of these strategies may be reflected in this research strategy.

Openness, Dialogue, Negotiations, Arbitration and Mediation

The executive of the PTC explained that it was not true that the said teachers had just been teaching Social and Development Studies. They had been heard clearly speaking in favour of a named opposition political party forgetting that they were civil servants. They were also seen relating a lot with some cadres of the opposition political party members. However, they were very grateful to the wise intervention of the head teacher, the PTC chairman and the constituency chairman of the ruling political party. This calmed down the storm and now they were relating well.

Therefore, it can be said that the strategy which was used was home visitation. The participants established that some conflicts could easily be resolved by visiting the homes of the sources of conflicts as a way of arbitration and mediation between the two parties. Sometimes, when people involved in conflict easily open up and allow conflicts to be resolved easily without any arguments because they feel honoured by visiting them in their homes. Home visitations show some sense of humility and calms down the tone of the conflict no matter how serious the conflict may be because it is somehow a privilege to be visited by the head of the school and the PTC chairperson in the process of resolving conflicts. One participant added that when the people you have a conflict with visit your home, it shows that they have respected you and they want to make peace. Traditionally, it is the best time to use your humble voices, calm down and ensure you create peace. This helps to maintain the relations in the

communities, and everyone comes to respect you when you settle a conflict in such a calm manner.

In going to the house of the constituency chairman of the ruling political party, the strategy which management used to resolve the conflict was through openness, dialogue, arbitration, mediation and negotiations. The teachers openly discussed their roles and entered into a dialogue with the constituency chairman and finally negotiated how to go about these issues. The study established that some conflicts could easily be resolved by visiting the homes of the sources of conflicts as a way of arbitration and mediation between the two parties. It was further learnt that occasionally, the community received school authorities from the school visiting them to try and resolve the conflicts and the community also sent representatives to the school.

With such kind of conflict resolution, Kaonga (2016) showed that school managers used the concept of "Sustained Dialogue" to solve conflicts which referred to a situation where people kept on talking over issues that occurred between two or more parties with the view of preventing the escalation and minimizing of the occurrence of conflicts until a solution to a problem was finally found. The use of mediation and dialogue was proved to be a more reliable way of resolving conflicts between the school and the communities in the primary schools.

Land encroachment

In resolving the problem of the encroachment of the primary school plot, the PTC executive started by blaming the government which constructed the school without consultation of the community and without proper documentation and title deeds. They went on further to explain how this conflict came to an end. They explained how through the Parents-Teachers Committee Annual General Meeting, the head teacher and the PTC chairperson were tasked to request the traditional leader, DEBS and councillor and the people involved in the wrangles to come so that the school plot is properly demarcated. So, the head teacher and the PTC chairperson carried out their task and

requested the stakeholders to come for the exercise. Finally, the stakeholders came, and the exercise was carried out and now everybody knows where the school plot ends. There is no further encroachment and there is peace now. However, one unanswered question was why government does not have title deeds for schools and perhaps other institutions.

In settling the land encroachment conflict at primary school 3, the PTC annual general meeting recommended that government through DEBS, Councilor and Traditional Leaders, the head teacher and the community members involved should come together and go through the boundary and plant trees. Since DEBS and the traditional rulers came and involved, it meant that authority was used. People normally just follow orders or whatever is said. In order not to be considered insubordinate, normally people do not speak back to the traditional leaders even if they are not happy. This means avoidance. In as much as they used authority, they also engaged the stakeholders concerned. So, there was some amount of dialogue, negotiations and counselling so that even as the boundary was being drawn, people could accept peacefully. This is consistent with Mwabungula (2015) who says that conflicts can be sorted out based on the use of school boards, regular staff meetings, guidance and counselling and altering human variables with the most effective methods applied in managing conflict resolutions. Isabu (2017) also concurs with the findings when he says that management strategies which were used to resolve school conflicts included accommodation, avoidance, collaboration and competition.

Witchcraft

Concerning the problem of witchcraft, the teachers explained that this problem was resolved by the teachers calling upon the PTC chairman and later on reporting to the village headman and the chief. Just as the respondents explained earlier, some of the forms of conflicts in education system are of social nature and so the involvement of the traditional leadership is very important. The traditional leadership here are the chiefs and the village headmen. So, when the matter was reported to the chief, he came to resolve this matter by talking to the community and remind them the importance of the teachers and the implications if it would have on the community if the teachers left. The chief threatened to bring a witch finder if the situation perpetrated. With that stern warning from the chief, the situation had improved.

One was the indiscipline of some teachers while the other one was witchcraft. In resolving the issue of witchcraft, it was difficult for many people to be involved because it is practiced dubiously incognito. So, it is difficult to know the culprits. That is why in order to resolve this conflict; the traditional leader used authority and a bit of dialogue. The study further established that matters to do with community practicing witchcraft on the teachers in school were resolved by the traditional leadership. It was learnt that some matters were reported to the community traditional leadership who came to resolve them through talking to the community and reminded them the importance of the teachers and the implications the situation had on the community if they left.

The findings are in line with Bowa (2016) whose study established that with life at stake, traditional leadership have the negotiating power to ensure that such sensitive matters are resolved to make sure harmony triumphs in schools and communities. Consistent with the findings, Phiri (2015) holds that the main cause of school community conflicts in the rural schools was the practices of witchcraft between the community and the schools. It was found that some teachers challenged the community in witchcraft practicing which made them earn respect amongst some community members and others resorted to confronting the teachers during the day to be bad people. As a result of the witchcraft challenge, such conflicts resulted into the teachers who did not practice the magic to be culprits and failed to sleep in the night.

Conclusion

The second objective wanted to ascertain the types of school-community conflicts in selected primary schools of Livingstone District. The study has established the different types of school-community conflicts. The types of conflicts which existed between the primary schools and the communities around them in Livingstone district were diverse. The conflicts included that the types of conflicts were conflicts of an economic nature, poverty and education status; conflicts of land encroachment; conflicts with a political nature bordering on policies; conflict from policy and religious beliefs; conflicts bordering on discipline and conflicts concerning witchcraft. Therefore, it can be observed that conflicts are not natural or coincidental. They are manmade either at school- community level or government level. Hence, at both levels, the stakeholders should pull their efforts to resolving these issues so that the schools and communities stay in conflict free zones.

The third objective was to establish the management strategies which were used in resolving these conflicts. These were avoidance, accommodation, compromising and collaboration, dialogue, negotiations, confrontation and counselling. In order to resolve these conflicts, it is important to avoid the blame game or name calling because antagonizing the other person makes it harder for him or her to understand your concerns. Listening and Trusting is also another vital conflict management strategy: A Bemba proverb says, '*umweo wamuntu waba mu kutwi'*. Literally translating, it means the life of a person is in the ears. Therefore, the more you listen the more life you have because you can receive information to avert danger and harm and hence live longer.

Recommendations

The government should set periodic training in conflict management strategies tailored specifically to all the school managers and Parent Teacher Association Members. This will enable the school-community conflicts to be resolved within the aggrieved parties in the community.

More meetings for the Parent Teacher Committee: Sometimes conflicts pile up because people wait for the Annual General Meeting. This meeting only comes once per year. People cannot wait all year round to bring out issues. So perhaps more meetings could be encouraged perhaps quarterly and if necessary, the PTC executive can be called upon to resolve issues and also do timely publicity, transparency, accountability and regular presentation of stewardship. Therefore, reports between the school administration and PTC executive could be encouraged in reducing and resolving conflicts over school-community issues.

It has been observed that some of the conflicts arise from government's failure to engage stakeholders in hatching out policies. The "I know it all" and authoritative approach being played by government is not helpful. It is therefore necessary that government should be engaging stakeholders (PTC and school management) when coming up with policies so that all the teething issues are taken care of before implementing.

Conflict of interests

No conflict of interest.

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