Challenges Impacting Community Participation and Their Effect on Teaching and Learning: a Case Study of Rural Areas

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Abstract
        This study sought to investigate challenges impacting community participation in schools and their effect on quality of education. The study was carried out in a qualitative paradigm in which a case study facilitated access to in-depth feelings, views, and opinions of community members and educators regarding their participation in providing education. Data were generated through focus group discussions with parents of children in the schools, community members without children in the schools, School Development Committee (SDC) members, and the teachers. In addition, data were generated through in-depth interviews with community leaders and school heads, observation as well as analysis of school documents such as minutes of SDC meetings, staff meetings, financial records, and children's progress records. Data were transcribed and analysed manually through the cut and paste technique. The study found out that communities were involved in providing primary education through preparing children for school by providing food, school uniforms and stationery. Parents were also involved in children's homework, as well as monitoring teacher and children's attendance. In addition, parents were involved in preparing schools for children through providing labour and materials for constructing classrooms. Further, parents financed school budgets, and were involved in school governance. Challenges impacting community participation were centred on parents' low standard of living, community attitude towards education, family income level, and school-community relations. Impact of community participation on teaching and learning included the following: hungry learners, narrow curriculum, unmotivated teachers, high rate of absenteeism and drop out, as well as ineffective school administration. The study recommended development and implementation of strategies for uplifting community standard of living through increasing family income levels and availability of food. The study, further recommends government policy on parent orientation on school processes and school based study sessions for parents and school children

respectively. Government policies that prohibits the practice of sending away of children from school for non payment of levies should be reinforced.

Keywords: Community participation; community impact; teaching and learning; participation challenges

Introduction

As acknowledged world over, community participation has the potential to improve quality of education in primary schools (WCEFA, 1990; UNESCO, 1994; Bray, 2000; Rose, 2003; UK Department of Education, 2012). In light of this recognition, most of the countries have community participation enshrined in national constitutions and various pieces of legislature, which include educational policies (Bray, 2003). In Zimbabwe, the government went on to make education policy that facilitates increased community participation for improving quality of education in the schools. The Education Amendment Act of 1991 directed that each education responsible authority establishes an SDC for all schools under their jurisdiction. According to (Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 87/92; section 4) parents should assist in the operation and development of the school; assist in advancing the moral, cultural, physical and intellectual welfare of pupils at the school; and participate in promoting the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future pupils and their parents and its teachers.

However, literature reviewed for this study show that some communities and especially the rural communities in developing countries do not seem to have the capacity to participate effectively in providing basic education in their schools. In Kenya, Ngesu, Gakuru, Okuro, and Kahingi (2013) observed that communities in rural areas had low morale and negative attitudes towards education of their children. They, further, observed that a high cost of living, high unemployment rate, and low morale have negatively affected community participation in developing early childhood development education centres. In concurrence, Chevedza, Wadesango, and Kurebwa, (2012) emphasised that poverty poses serious challenges to rural people's effort to provide educational support resources for their children in the homes and school, thus, most parents have low morale and negative attitudes towards participation in providing education. On the other hand, Capper (1993) cited in Howley and Maynard (2007) posit that communities in rural areas do not seem to value the education of their children. Capper further argued that most of the rural parents have lower levels of education than parents of children in urban schools, and they did not feel comfortable in being involved in school procedures and meeting with teachers. In agreement, Howley and Maynard (2007) argued that parents who themselves had not engaged in education beyond primary education usually failed to perceive the value of education for

their children and they had a resistant attitude towards participating in providing education.

In light of the belief in this study that community participation has the potential to improve quality of education, there is need to have some insight on indicators of quality education. Quality of education has been measured at both macro and micro levels. At macro-level, quality is assessed through quantitative measures such as pass rates, retention rates, transition rates, and completion rates. However, at micro–level, the preferred indicators are affective as much as cognitive and instrumental (Alexander, 2008). Indicators at micro–level focus on all dimensions of education system quality, which include the following: accessibility (UNICEF, 2000, learner characteristics (RAND, 2005), learning environments (Kaarina and Gonzale, 2011) education content, learning process, and outcomes (UNESCO, 2004).

In addition, several scholars provide explanation to the various quality dimensions. Sylva, Methuish, Sammons, Blatchford, and Taggart (2004) add that, children who are well fed and attend school regularly and their parents get involved in school activities are most likely to succeed in school. Also, quality teaching and learning takes place in an environment where relationships among teachers and children are friendly (Dorman, 2002) and parents support homework programmes (Protheroe, 2009; Davis, 2000). And, Stronge (2014) added that, qualified teaching professionals were seen to be more effective in managing teaching and learning processes than unqualified teachers. In this study, quality of education is seen in light of some of these dimensions discussed. This study, therefore, set out to investigate the challenges that rural communities in Zimbabwe faced as they participated in providing basic education. The study was guided by the following research questions: *How are rural communities involved in providing school education for their children? What challenges do rural communalities face in their participation in providing school education? How are challenges faced by communities impacting quality of education in the schools?*

Methodology
This study sought to investigate activities that were performed by rural communities in providing education, the challenges they faced in performing these activities, and how these challenges affected the quality of education for their children. Therefore, it was imperative that the people involved in the participation activities be provided an opportunity to tell their stories (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, Babbie, 2010) so as to express their lived experiences, as well as their views and opinions in performing these activities. Thus, this study was carried out in a qualitative paradigm in which a multiple case study design was used, as advised by Chisaka and Vakalisa (2000) that, it provides an

opportunity for mining in-depth data from participants. The multiple case study comprised three primary schools that were purposely selected basing on richness of data and convenience of access. The multiple case study comprised 1 school from a rural resettlement area, in which the main economic activities included subsistence farming, contract employment on commercial farms, and illegal gold panning; 1school from traditional rural village in former Tribal Trust land in which the main economic activity was subsistence farming; and 1 school from a small scale commercial farming area in which the main economic activity was small scale farming.

Data were generated through focus group discussions with class teachers, parents of children in the schools and community members who did not have current children in the schools; in-depth interviews were held with community leaders and school heads as advised by Stake (1995), White (2000), and Yin (2003) that participants close to the activities would provide relevant and reliable qualitative data through these. A total of 9 in-depth interviews*(1head teacher, 1councillor, 1headman in each school)* and 10 focus group discussions*(1-teachers, 1-parents, 1-community members without children in the school except for the small scale commercial farming school that had 2 for[1plot owners/1 workers])* were held with teachers, parents and community members in separate groups. Additional data were generated through analysing school documents and through observations made during the research process. As recommended by Park Studies Unit (2009), data were transcribed and manually analysed through the cut and sort method. In the process of reading and re-reading, comparing and contrasting, highlighting and coding, themes emerged as findings for the study.

Research Findings

The findings of study are summarised in table 1 below.

How are rural communities involved in providing school education for their children?									
Preparing children for school			**Preparing schools for children**			**Financing Education**	**School governance**		
Providing basic physiological needs .... *breakfast, break-time snack, bathing, uniforms, satchel,*	Providing children's stationery .... *Exercise books, pencils, ball pens, rulers, coloured pencils/pens, jotter,*	Providing children's text books .... *All subjects*	Constructing school facilities .... *Labour and materials for building Classrooms, teachers houses, toilets, sports fields, specialist rooms, school office, play centres, providing school equipment and gadgets*	Maintaining school grounds .... *Grass cutting, weeding, sweeping, planting flowers and shrubs,*	Maintaining school facilities .... *Repairing buildings, maintaining grounds, equipment and gadgets,*	Funding the school budget .... *Paying Building fund, sports levy, general purpose fund*	Monitoring school processes .... *Teacher attendance, pupil attendance, homework, children's learning progress, overall school performance*	Attending meetings/ special days .... *Annual general meetings, special meetings, consultation days, parents' days, participating in SDC elections*	School policy making School .... *Development Committee participates in making school policies,*
What challenges do rural communalities face in participating in providing primary school education?									
	Poor Living Standards		Community attitudes towards education		Family Income levels		School and community relations		
	Poorly fed children in school, children attending school without bathing, Children with dirty, torn, or no uniforms or shoes		Differences in attitude towards education, Differences in quality expectations in basic education	Low turn- out for providing labour. Inadequate funds for	Inadequate funds for maintaining and replacing mostly old	Low/no payment rate of set Building fund, sports levy,	Teacher resistance to community'	Limited community contribution to meeting agenda, meeting resolutions are pre-	Some sections of community not represented

				purchasing educational equipment and gadgets	buildings, Inadequate money for text books, inadequate money for supplying school stationery	general purpose fund	monitoring, parents lack time to monitor children's homework. Some parents cannot read and write	determined by school head and elected members of the SDC, community voice is not heard by the school head and SDC, some community members are afraid of interacting with teachers	on the SDC, inadequate/ no feed back on financial activities, token involvement in making school policies
How are challenges faced by communities impacting teaching and learning activities?									
EFFECT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING	Children are inattentive and some sleep in class because of hunger, some children fail to engage in physical education and sport activities			Inadequate parent support to teachers and children in educational activities. Teaching and learning takes place in sub-standard environment and with limited educational materials.	Teaching and learning takes place in unsafe physical and hygiene conditions , Some children do not participate in written exercises, teachers have difficulty in monitoring learning progress	Unmotivated teachers due to poor living and working conditions. Limited range of the school curriculum activities.	Strained teacher-child-parent relationship. Ineffective children's homework activities	Some parents stop attending school meetings thus cutting out essential teacher-parent communication. Some parents stop supporting implementation of school educational policies.	Some parents stop making effort to raise money for children's school activities.

Table 1: A Summary of the Research Findings.

Ways in which communities were involved in providing education

The study found out that communities were involved in providing school education through preparing children for school. Parents ensured that children were physically ready for school through bathing, feeding, and clothing them. In addition, parents provided school stationery and text books for their children. The communities were also involved through preparing schools for the children by providing labour and building materials for construction of facilities such as classrooms, teachers' houses, playgrounds and toilets. In addition, communities were involved in providing education through providing funding for school budgets as well as participating in school governance. These findings are in agreement with what other researchers, for example, Bray, 2000; Rose, 2003; and Chevedza, Wadesango, and Kurebwa (2012). When performed effectively, this form of participation would positively influence quality of education.

Challenges faced by communities in participating in providing education

This section focuses on discussing challenges that were faced in the three communities in their participation in providing education.

Low Income

Low standard of living by rural communities that participated in this study had some effect on their participation in providing basic education. The study found out that rural community members were generally engaged in subsistence farming and poor harvests were a real challenge to effective community participation in providing education. Some of the community members were experiencing a low standard of living that could not allow them to feed and dress their children well for school. The plight of the community members was also compounded by harsh weather conditions that prevailed. In a focus group discussion, a female participant summarised thus,

> ...some of us are generally poor and we just don't have the money. Our families don't have anything to eat or decent clothing... our children have their first meal after school... what can we do...this year we did not harvest anything, it was a complete right off...now the little money we may get, we first look for food for the children...soap and uniforms are not a priority...

One school head, in an in-depth interview, confirmed: "sometimes you see children coming to school hungry...without shoes...some of them fail to pay school fees, so they don't come to school...some of the children come to school without books..."

In agreement, Chevedza, Wadesango, and Kurebwa (2012) in a study of factors that militate against provision of quality education at Grade Seven level in Gokwe South Central Cluster in Zimbabwe, found out that among other factors, the shortage of resources in schools is a critical set back in rural schools. It follows, therefore, that some of the community members face challenges in preparing their children for school. Yet, it is widely acknowledged in literature that, the standard of living and pre- formal learning experiences that a child goes through in early life determine the nature of learner they can be. Children who are well fed and healthy show positive learning characteristics (RAND, 2005; Kleinman et al. 2002). They are usually cheerful, energetic and engross themselves in learning activities. They are more likely to experience success in formal school (Sylva, Methuish, Sammons, Blatchford, and Taggart, 2004).

Negative Attitudes

This study found out that community members' attitude towards education had some influence on their participation in school activities. It emerged that, while some of the community members had a positive attitude, others had a negative attitude towards education. Those who had a negative attitude towards education seemed to show less expectations and thus were inconsistent in contributing towards school needs for their children. The community members with some negative attitude did not turn out to provide labour regularly. In an in-depth interview, one school head explained,

> The attitude of the members of this community towards education is divided. There are former farm workers, others from traditional villages...their attitude is different...others are serious and want children to learn seriously and pass...for others, education has not been something very important. They have generally attained Grade Three and at times five level themselves... they say if a child is able to read and write then it's enough.

A School Development Committee member, in a focus group discussion added:

> As an example, some of our parents... for sure have a negative attitude.... as an example, it was 2009, we were offered 16 000 Euro...by a donor to construct a new classroom block. They said, ask parents to make bricks...we won't release the money before bricks are ready...20 000 bricks. We were given a deadline of two months. I called for a meeting...some parents came others did not. We discussed

how we were going to make the bricks ....if we delayed that money was going to be given to other schools... Those, that were able to make bricks. For sure, parents failed to contribute and that offer was withdrawn, we lost it. We could not make the number needed....some parents have a negative attitude...

These findings seem to agree with Williams (1994) who observed that the initial community attitude towards education had a significant bearing on the extent of participation, with a negative initial attitude retarding participation effort. Community participation in providing basic education is expected to yield positive results which include creation of quality school environments. A quality learning environment should have adequate and relevant physical facilities that include buildings such as classrooms, offices, toilets, specialist rooms; furniture and other teaching and learning materials and equipment; adequate teachers and children's textbooks ; sports fields and attractive school grounds. These physical facilities have some influence on teachers' working conditions and class sizes (UNICEF, 2000; Kaarina and Gonzale, 2011). In addition, a quality primary school is one in which facilities are available for an expanded curriculum that accommodates the needs of the community (Bowora, 2002). In addition, a quality school organises educational tours for the children as well as cater for a wide range of skills and interests in games, sports, clubs, and cultural activities (Lippman, 2010).

Participation approaches

Data that were generated and analysed in this study revealed that there were several challenges with regards to community members interacting with school teachers. It was mostly from school administrative issues that school and community relations were strained. School/community relations were strained through community members' monitoring of teaching and learning processes. These relationships which were strained among teachers and parents, subsequently affected the relationships among teachers and pupils. In a focus group discussion, a teacher noted,

Our relationship with parents is not friendly, sometimes you hear them shouting, 'you are late for school' but I will have genuinely been delayed on my way to work. If I delay by 5 minutes, they make a case out of it, the community members do respect our being professional....they can even shout at you on the road".

Another added:
"When some of the community members come into the school for other business, they don't even come to the classroom to see their

children's work, but the next thing they do is to come when there is a problem, a misunderstanding with the child, they come here to shout you down. They will be in bad mood and they shout you down. Really embarrassing you in public...in front of the children...it is embarrassing".

And in an in-depth interview one School Head summarised, "There are some members in the community who are rowdy by nature....they just say out school issues in the village....they come around to shout at us....and at one point these teachers had responded directly and had exchanged harsh words with them. The issue has since been resolved through engaging the SDC. However, these tense relationships tend to spill over to affect teacher and children relationships in the classes.

These findings seem to be contrary to the objectives of community participation in education. Community participation in providing basic education aims at creating space for constructive dialogue among teachers, parents and children thus creating a sound psycho-social environment for their school. The psycho-social environment should be safe for children, non threatening, peaceful, and non discriminatory (UNICEF, 2000). An ideal quality psycho-social school environment is one in which children interact with each other and their teachers in harmony. It is an environment in which the teachers are firm but friendly, and show some relaxed but distinctive teacher-pupil relationships (Dorman, 2002). Teachers and community members interact regularly in agreement and children feel safe and secure as they get along with learning activities. In addition, a quality psycho social school environment is one in which teacher and children's discipline prevails. That is, teachers are not too authoritarian but they are approachable and have a genuine concern for the welfare of the children. In agreement, Lavoie (2005) observes that children who experience a supportive psycho- social environment experience less learning difficulties. Finally, a positive school environment facilitates adoption of new teaching methods and prompt adoption of educational change (Kaarina and Gonsale, 2011).

Administrative Capacity

The study found out that the members of the SDC did not seem to have the capacity to administer school processes. They had challenges in handling meetings and school finances. Subsequently, communication and management of general meetings were major sources of strained relationships. In a focus group discussion, a woman summarised:

When we are called for meetings, the agenda is already set from the office; the issues that come from parents are not accepted. They simply say,' let us focus on what is on the agenda' and our issues are put as'

matters arising....' they come too late in the meeting. There will be no time...meetings are not transparent. We have had several meetings which do not get to conclusions; meetings end in confusion as nobody will be listening to anyone...people will just be speaking anyhow. Sometimes people just walk out. We have had several of such meetings. It has happened for a long time now.

Another added with a focus on transparency:

At the moment we have an issue with a classroom block...We are always being asked to pay money to repair that classroom block but up to now nothing has been repaired. We always pay...they always say, 'if a storm were to come, children will be at risk... they will be in danger...' but when the money is paid, nothing is done...we then wonder why repair work is not being done. We can say what is most disappointing to us is the way the money is being used, we are not satisfied.

These findings are similar to the findings by Nyandoro, Mapfumo, and Makoni (2013) in their descriptive survey on the effectiveness of School Development Committees in Financial Management in Chimanimani District – Zimbabwe. They found out that SDCs were facing challenges in preparing and managing school budgets. The SDC members were not fully aware of their roles and lacked skills in financial management. These findings are critical because the success of school programmes is also dependent on effective leadership. The school head in collaboration with the SDC, determine the major goals and objectives of the school, and design strategies for attaining those goals. For example, the school administration is responsible for planning school development, collect and disburse school funds, and look after movable and immovable school property (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 1993).

Impact of community participation on quality of education
School children lose concentration because of hunger
This study found out that school children had difficulty in concentrating, interacting, and doing practical activities in various subjects that they learnt at school. This lack of concentration was mainly due to poor feeding before children went to school. In some instances, children would sleep during lessons because of hunger. In a focus group discussion, one teacher revealed:

There are children who end up sleeping in class because they would be hungry. When you call out his name, you discover he has been asleep. When you ask, they tell you that they are hungry... they explain that...

As such, teachers had problems in covering planned work because some of the hungry children could not cope with the work. In a focus group discussion a teacher summarised:

It affects my work...the child does not concentrate when I am working with her, when I am pacing up to cover the syllabus, that child has no energy to do that. The child's progress is.... we can say retarded, it's slow. I do not achieve my targets on time. You can see that participation by a well fed child is more than participation and concentration by a hungry child. When you engage children in games, you see the hungry child failing to participate...."

Consistent with these findings, Kleinman et al., (2002) in their study on the relationship between breakfast and academic performance on 97 school children in the United States observed that students at nutritional risk had significantly poorer grades and more behaviour problems than students who were not. Similarly, Lippman (2010) advises that, children, especially the younger ones, need to be well fed for them to have quality learning characteristics such as high concentration and participation levels in class activities. Therefore, children of parents who did not have enough food in their homes were likely to perform less than their potential.

Lack of stationery
This study found out that some of the children did not have exercise books for writing exercises in Mathematics, languages and content subjects. In a focus group, one SDC member concurred: "If you get into a class you can see that this child is not writing, that one has no pen.... this child has no exercise book, and that is the trend in the classes....." As a result, teachers found it difficult to monitor children's learning progress as they did not have records of daily as well as end of unit evaluation marks. In a focus group discussion one teacher summarised:

The children do not learn well. It is not effective without exercise books. Even if you teach well, without the child writing it is not good..., without seeing whether the child is improving or not, without seeing whether the child has understood what I have taught.....so all this affects the children.

This predicament seemed to affect the children's learning progress. The children were unlikely to perform at their best in the given circumstances. In a focus group discussion one teacher reflected:

> For those children whose parents provide what the school requires, if it is books they bring, if it is fees they pay, the children are found excelling, evidence that learning was really taking place. They pass outstandingly well. For me, teaching in the infant classes. I get children scoring 25 out of 25. But those ones who don't have books, those who get books late in the term, and during fees payment times they are usually absent, they score low marks always. But they are not dull...

Therefore, some of the children, including those who had shown signs of high academic potential, did not seem to perform to their best in class. These findings implied that children of parents who did not provide stationery were likely to underperform at school.

Absenteeism

This study found out that children were frequently absent from school. Absenteeism was a direct result of various unfulfilled community participation related obligations. In a focus group discussion, one teacher revealed: "There is too much absenteeism in this school" In an in-depth interview, a School head concurred:

> At the moment, absenteeism is a problem. Sometimes a child is removed from the register....then later resurfaces. There are cases where children come to school for less than 10 days per term. You can even remove them from the register, only to find them come someday. And a parent added:

The SDC chases away of our children from school because of these money issues. They do not hesitate to send away our children away because of these issues of school fees. The child is sent back home...'go and collect the money....' and the child takes three to four days before going back to school. We are not happy with this.

In addition, absenteeism was also a result of parents' decisions. In an in-depth interview one School head confirmed:"At the moment absenteeism is a problem. Parents don't even monitor attendance. Actually, they are the ones who make them stop coming to school.... 'you are not going to school... remain behind and take care of the baby'...". In concurrence, a teacher added:

> If there is 'mutsvare' [local language for the activity of gleaning grain after farmers have finished harvesting their field] you don't see anyone

here at school. The whole of that week, we spend it alone here. You won't see any child in the school. When they finish searching for grain with their parents...that's when they start coming to school.

This scenario implied that some of the children missed school while attending to domestic chores. Literature reviewed for this study shows that effective learning takes place when children attend school regularly (Douglas and Ross, 2011). A situation where several children are absent from school implies that little learning takes place for those children. Therefore, parents' response to competing priorities was interfering with children's learning.

Drop out

This study established that some of the children who were frequently absent from school ended up as dropouts of the system. In a focus group discussion one participant confirmed: "when children are sent back home to collect fees, some of the children end up staying at home. They don't go back... for example, the children who stay up there....in this village" One councillor, in an in-depth interview concurred: "There are times when parents fail to get money for the child to continue with school." In agreement, one school head in an in-depth interview remarked: "when the pressure for fees is high, they [parents] can even make the child stay at home for the whole term."

In a focus group discussion one teacher summarised:

It is mostly at Grade Five level that the children start staying away from school. Some of the parents say 'what is important is for the child to know how to speak English.... 'I want my child to know how to talk in English, if he can talk in English, then he can come and work where I am working.

Quality basic education entails children persisting with learning up to the end of the cycle (UNICEF, 2000; UNESCO, 2004). These findings imply low persistence in the primary schools in this study. Therefore, community participation was not promoting children's persistency in education and subsequently negatively influenced school effort to improve quality of education.

Low teacher commitment

This study found out that teachers were not motivated in doing their jobs. They were not happy with the way they were being paid allowances [*top up money given to teachers by parents and was subsequently officially stopped in 2014 but continues to manifest in various forms*] by the parents. The payments were irregular and the amount of allowance was small. In a focus group discussion, one male teacher summarised the teachers' general feeling:

It affects me as a teacher, why? Because in some schools around and especially urban areas, they get more meaningful incentives, but we are all civil servants with the same training... and you really see that you are behind. So I won't be able to do my work properly and whole heartedly. If I'm motivated I give more advanced class work...and even homework ... but without motivation, I just give the minimum....

The literature that was reviewed in this study shows that teachers play a central role in children's learning processes (Stronge, 2014). Successful teaching and learning takes place when teachers are well motivated in doing their job (Haq and Islam, 2005). Generally, teachers in Zimbabwe were receiving low salaries (Madzimbamuto, 2012), and those in this study were receiving low incentive top up. These findings imply that teachers were not motivated in doing their jobs. Parents had not favourably influenced teacher motivation. Therefore, community participation had not favourably influenced quality of education in the schools.

Strained parent, teacher, and child relationships

This study found out that community participation in providing quality basic education had influenced the shaping of relationships between teachers and parents, and between teachers and the children that they taught. This study established that, although the general relationship between teachers and parents was cordial, in some cases it was highly polarised. In some of the cases in which parents and teachers got into misunderstandings with each other, the teachers subsequently begrudged the children, even to the extent of not teaching them. One male teacher in a focus group discussion confirmed: "It depends on what the parent has done to me but....it hurts, you get hurt by what they will have done to you, and sometimes you really become harsh on the child". In agreement, one school head concurred: "But do you think on the day this happens... can the teacher do her/his best? That's the day she will be moody... very moody... The child is bound to suffer on that day". A female participant in a focus group discussion summarised:

A poor relationship between a teacher and a parent makes it difficult for the teacher to teach my child well. As an example my experience... 'a teacher finds that I the parent has failed to do as the teacher requested, as my child will have done something wrong, then the teacher begrudged the child....the teacher does not even want to teach my child, the teacher doesn't like the child anymore.

These findings imply that the relationship among parents, teachers and children was no longer friendly and warm. Children learn best in a supportive

psycho-social school environment in which harmonious relationships prevail among parents, teachers and children (Dorman, 2002; Lavoie, 2005). The relationships among the teachers and children, as well as between the parents and teachers in this study were constrained. Therefore, the relationship was not favourable for effective teaching and learning. Community participation had not facilitated improvement of quality in the primary schools.

Narrow scope of school curriculum

The study found out that community participation had an influence on the scope of the curriculum that the primary schools could offer to the children. The study established that community participation influenced development of school facilities and hiring of skilled manpower. In all schools that participated in this study, the school heads had failed to introduce some of their locally desired school subjects due to lack of facilities and equipment. Data that were generated and analysed revealed that some of the schools did not have enough classroom facilities, sports fields, and equipment for their children. In a focus group discussion one teacher summarised:

> Our school should have some computers for teaching children..., even home economics, we should have a special classroom where each class goes for home economics lessons... where they actually do the ironing, the actual practical, and simple cooking since it is primary....

In agreement, another teacher added: "There should be equipment for Physical Education, Home Economics, and Carpentry ....." In a focus group discussion, an SDC member concurred: "Our classrooms are so few. It is disturbing for Grade Six and Seven children to be learning in one room, facing different directions." A school head in an in-depth interview added: "the classrooms should have electricity so that there will be computers, I can say all information technology taking place, it should happen in the classroom." In conclusion, one male participant, in a focus group discussion emphasised:

> We need some tools for the school...like shovels, hoes...and a place where gardening activities can be done...If they are doing building...there should be a place where building lessons take place, there should be computers because you see that if our child competes with one from.... school, there will be a big difference because we don't have what they have there....

This study found out that schools did not have adequate financial resources to hire qualified teachers for the ECD classes. The parents had managed to get the services of unqualified local women to save as teachers for

the ECD classes. In an in-depth interview one school head summed up the context:

> We must have a well constructed ECD classroom, adequate teaching and learning materials, then we should also have someone who is qualified to teach the ECD, currently it is taught by a local woman...not properly trained.... the children learn very little...

Given that the government expected communities to hire teachers for ECD classes attached to primary schools in rural areas, the SDC had made effort to ensure that teachers were availed for the ECD classes at their schools. However, the situation in the schools in this study implied that the children in the ECD classes were being taught by unskilled teachers who did not have enough knowledge of content as well as appropriate teaching methods. Effective teachers are characterised by a high mastery of subject content knowledge, understanding of learning objectives to be achieved, and lesson delivery skills (Stronge, 2014). This means that untrained ECD teachers in the schools were not likely to neither provide a wholesome curriculum nor be effective in their teaching activities. Therefore, untrained teachers that were hired by community members were inappropriate for the ECD classes and were likely to impede the improvement of quality in the schools' ECD programmes.

Conclusions

The study makes the following conclusions:
Some of the community members:

o   Could not feed and supply children with school stationery
o   Did not have a living income base
o   Had negative attitudes towards education
o   Lacked appreciation of school education processes
o   S lacked administrative capacity
o   participated in a way that   negatively impacted quality of education
o   Lacked public relations skills for communicating with teachers

Recommendations

Basing on the research conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

•   Develop strategies for multi-sectoral approach to community and school development

- Design and implement capacity building programmes for school Development Committees
- Design and implement school based homework programme
- Advocate for sponsorship for school feeding scheme
- Design and implement school teacher-parent orientation programme
- Advocate for policy shift on provision of ECD teachers

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