

The Legal Framework Governing Parental Involvement with Education in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT This research aimed at investigating the legal framework for the implementation of Parental Involvement (PI) programmes and school governors' and managers' understanding of the legal documents. A survey design was used to gather data on the biographic information, legal statutes and perceptions of the respondents towards PI by means of a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four pre-coded response items. The combined responses of fifty-one education managers and forty-seven school governors (98) indicated that participants were cognizant of the legal engagement of parents in the delivery of education and the resultant impact it could have on school performance. The research also revealed that citizen participation adopted by schools within the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy enhances the availability of educational resources and the quality of service delivery. Significant, though, was the failure of educationally sound school governors, to hire and fire personnel although mandatory. Empowerment workshops were recommended for both stakeholder groups.

INTRODUCTION

Global competition demands that schools stand shoulder to shoulder with the best if they are to have a place to stand in this world of stiff competition and survival (Burke and Picus 2001). In that light, the adoption of a TQM model as a new paradigm shift in the Zimbabwean educational management domain in particular and world over in general, is not a fluke as it calls for a participative style of management with other community stakeholders in its attempt to achieve competitive performance as it evolves out of the post-scientific era. Schools can only realise this dream through well-orchestrated PI programmes. The assumption in this article is that parents by virtue of their parenthood are the natural and primary educators of their children (Burke and Picus 2001). Koross et al. (2009) corroborate this view when they assert that parents have a natural right, as the first gate-keepers, to make decisions that affect their children. Thus, education managers and parents have to work together in a legally organised and planned fashion. However, advocates of such a paradigm shift from

the post-scientific era to TQM in the education arena, propound that PI is empowerment which brings about its complications as it brings about 'unsolicited interventions' into the school set up by parents of different attributes and perceptions (Fitzgerald 2004). In that view, intervention strategies such as the TQM philosophy employed must be legally tailored if the PI programme is to dovetail well with the aspiration of the school. Consequently, school managers will neither view parents as being meddlesome, a threat to their professional autonomy, nor an intrusion in their sovereign institution (Heystek 2003). Hence, the purpose of this research is to establish the perceptions of school governors and education managers towards the legal statutes which demarcate PI programmes within the TQM framework.

Background to the Research

The Zimbabwean education system has undergone some form of metamorphosis ever since its inception in 1980 as that which existed by then favoured the White settlers (Zvobgo 2004). The government's policy of education which sought to educate all the masses regardless of the resources available was indeed a tall order for a government which was at its infancy (Zvobgo 2004). This called for citizen participation in the provision of education amid celebrat-

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ed cases of parents who ended up using instituted legal parental boards as springboards to launch their petty-wars against the educational authorities (Chikoko 2008). Government despite these odds was determined at all cost to democratise the education system in Zimbabwe motivated by celebrated success stories in both developed and Third World countries. However, the universalisation of the education system which was pronounced and adopted in 1980 (Zimbabwe African National Unions (Patriotic Front) (ZANU PF) 1980) was no longer sustainable as the government's financial base had been eroded because of the massive expenditure on the reconstruction of educational infrastructure which had been devastated by the revolutionary war (Chikoko 2008).

Even the majority of masses who benefited from the free education provided by then, faced with the financial realities on the ground advocated for cost-sharing strategies on a dollar to dollar basis (Zvobgo 2004). These financial problems made central government decentralise some of its management functions to local authorities (Chikoko 2008). Consequently, the 1987 Education Act, in particular the statutory instruments No. 87 of 1992 and No. 70 of 1993 about School Development Committees/Associations (SDC/A) (Government of Zimbabwe 1987) which are offshoots of the *ZANU PF Manifesto of 1980*, offer starting points for decentralisation of management functions to lower tiers (Zvobgo 2004). The SDC/A statutes were put in place to bring parents on board. This was in line with the giant steps which White-dominated communities in private and independent schools had made in the area of PI, hence, presenting a serious challenge to public schools. The ultimate goal of incorporating PI programmes in the management of the school system was to legally increase citizen participation in school development to boost the mobilisation of local resources (Zvobgo 2004). In that way organisational efficiency and effectiveness would be realised, hence, the need for the investigation of perceptions of school governors and education managers towards the management of PI programmes within the legal framework as schools adopt the TQM paradigm.

The Total Quality Management (TQM) Model

Pressurised by the PI revolution, proactive Zimbabwean education managers adopted TQM

which was a paradigm shift from the post-scientific models of management they subscribed to in the past. TQM is a set of management practices throughout the organisation, geared to ensure the organisation, in this case the school, consistently meets or exceeds customer (parents and students) requirements through the philosophy of continuous improvement (Algozzine et al. 2005). It places strong focus on the process measurement and controls as means of continuous improvement. The improvement of internal processes is what leads to customer satisfaction. When it is properly implemented, this style of management can lead to decreased costs related to corrective or preventive maintenance, better overall performance, and an increased number of happy and loyal customers (Algozzine et al. 2005). The principles which therefore motivated the adoption of this model in the implementation of PI programmes were: the synergistic relationships which had to do with the pooling of talents and experiences of individuals; the continuous improvement by all stakeholders either personally or collectively through a process of self-evaluation; the on-going process of evaluation embedded in the model with the intention of removing the flawed processes before the end product, without apportioning blame to the individual; and super-ordinates had to work with their subordinates so that the latter would achieve their best through continuous improvement. However, these principles need to take place in a legally binding environment and schools that adopted the TQM model needed to be aware that its benefits do not occur overnight, hence, the need for thorough planning.

The Legal Statutes

The adoption of PI programmes in Zimbabwean public schools within the TQM framework was necessitated by the global trends which were sweeping across schools worldwide. The legal statutes that gave birth to the SDC/A statutes and regularised parental engagement programmes are discussed below.

The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) Patriotic Front (PF) Manifesto of 1980

This ZANU PF policy document was a blueprint of all the legal documents which were en-

acted at the attainment of independence in 1980 by the Zimbabwean government. It was meant to transform the education system. Its major thrust was to address the racist educational policies which characterised the colonial government by then. This was achieved by abolishing all forms of discrimination and establishing a free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all Zimbabwean children. Education, like in any other developing African country and the world over was declared a fundamental right as it was viewed as a panacea to all the problems which beset a country such as Zimbabwe which was at its reconstruction phase (*ZANU (PF), Manifesto 1980*). This document therefore became the benchmark of what Zimbabweans aspired and what transpired on the ground.

The Education Act of 1987

The Education Act (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987) Sections 4,5 and 6 did not only repeal the Education Act of 1979 (Government of Rhodesia 1979) which advocated for piece-meal changes to the provision of education for blacks, but clearly articulated the fundamental rights which governed the provision of education in Zimbabwe. All forms of discrimination were abolished. Contrary to the earlier claim of making both primary and secondary education free, only primary education was declared free and compulsory although the latter view was not mandatory. The government's responsibility was to avail subsidies and grants as provided for by the state. Within this framework of rights, the philosophy of Education with Production (*ZANU (PF), Manifesto 1980*) was supposed to be pursued as well. This was meant to prepare the African child for the world of work which their European counterpart had been empowered with before by the colonial Education Acts.

The Education Act of 1996

The Education Act of 1996 (Government of Zimbabwe 1996) on SDCs authorises the establishment of such a committee which would be vested with the control of financial affairs of the school and its composition and financial procedure would be prescribed by the Secretary for Education, Sports and Culture. The statute on the formation of SDCs was further revised in the

Education Act of 2006 (Government of Zimbabwe 2006) under Section 36 entitled as School Parent Assembly and School Development Committee (SDC).

The Education Act of 2006

This act gives parents and guardians of school-going children authority to constitute a School Parents Assembly which in turn will establish a School Development Committee (SDC). The composition, function, duties, procedures and powers of SDCs shall be as contained in the constitution of the School Parents Assembly. It is this legislature which led to the amalgamation of SDCs and (SDAs) (Government of Zimbabwe 2006) regardless of authority and location, thereafter, the adoption of the former name, thus amending the previous establishments of these formations.

The Legal Stipulations as Regards School Development Committees

Although at the inception of Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 (SI 87 of 1992), (Section 29A (1), (2), and (3) of the Education Amendment Acts of 1991, 1996 and 2006 was meant to establish a committee that is known as the SDC for non-governmental schools (Government of Zimbabwe 1987), of late, Statutory Instrument 70 of 1993 (SI 70 of 1993), generally called the Education (School Development Associations) (Government Schools) Regulation of 1993 (Government of Zimbabwe 1993), was also incorporated in the alluded to piece of legislation (Government of Zimbabwe 2006). Such a committee, if established, has to be approved by the Secretary of Education, Sports and Culture. The committee composition, functions and procedures are prescribed in Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 and 70 of 1993.

The objects of both instruments are clearly pronounced in SI 87 (Government of Zimbabwe 1992):

- (a) to provide and assist in the operation and development of the school;
- (b) to advance the moral, cultural, physical and intellectual welfare of pupils at the school;
- (c) to promote the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future pupils and their parents and its teachers.

In that regard some of the powers of the SDCs are as follows:

- ♦ to preserve and maintain the facilities of the school by means of insurance policies;
- ♦ to hire and fire teaching and ancillary staff with the approval of the Minister;
- ♦ to borrow money, receive grants and donations, whether from parents of pupils at the school or from other persons;
- ♦ to take professional advice on all matters affecting the committee and its institute;
- ♦ to carry out developmental projects, alterations and additions through levies in the best interest of its present and future pupils, their parents and its teachers in consultation with the head and approval of the Secretary;
- ♦ to use the land, buildings and other facilities at the school for educational, sporting, recreational or any other purposes which benefit the school as a whole;
- ♦ to help in the organisation and administration of secular and non-academic activities of the school in consultation with the head;
- ♦ to submit on request audited books of accounts of the committee to the Secretary;
- ♦ to charge or impose a levy in respect of each child enrolled at the school;
- ♦ to increase levies and charge a capital development levy for a fixed number of terms;
- ♦ to submit a budget to justify an increase in the levy or charge of a capital development levy.

What needs to be noted above is that, because the Education Act of 1979 (Government of Rhodesia 1979) promoted elitism, and government intended to control what transpired at public schools, measures were put in place to protect the downtrodden and impoverished masses. Levies charged were therefore controlled by the statutes and proposed ones were supposed to be by consensus with the communities in which these schools operated in.

However, the legal control by government of the provision of education in schools did not auger well with independent and private schools. The White-dominated ones which had been converted into 'community schools' when the Education Act of 1979 was ushered in viewed this piece of legislation as a way of politicising learning institutions and stalling the giant steps they had achieved in infrastructural develop-

ment (Zvobgo 2004). Even the rationalisation and equitable distribution of resources which government embarked on to address the anomalies brought about by the colonial biased policies were viewed as 'recipe for uniform mediocrity' (Zvobgo 2004) by White settlers. This negative view led to perpetual battles in the courts between the state and independent schools. Despite that controversy, the government of the day managed to control the prohibitive levies which were being charged in such schools. This stance by the government was applauded by progressive and pragmatic educationists who wanted to see how far the concept of free primary education would live to the bill as levies charged in White dominated schools exceeded the proposed government fee structure which had been introduced in 1991 (Government of Zimbabwe 1991) by far.

Membership of the School Development Committees

The SDC statute (Government of Zimbabwe 1992) is very clear on who belongs to the Committee:

- (1) Section 6 Clause (1) (Subject to Subsections (2) and (3)) determines that a school development committee shall consist of five persons elected by parents of pupils at the school namely: the head of the school, a deputy head of the school, a teacher at the school, who shall be appointed by the Secretary, and where the responsible authority of the school is, a local authority, a councillor appointed by the local authority or any other authority or body, appointed by the authority or body.
- (2) If, at the date of commencement of these regulations, a school is managed by the board of governors, the Secretary may, by written notice to the responsible authority of the school, declare that the board of governors shall be the school development committee established for that school, provided that the Secretary shall have the right to appoint one person as a member of such a board of governors.
- (3) Where the Secretary has made a declaration in terms of Subsection (3), the board of governors concerned shall be deemed to be the school development committee for the school concerned. The provisions

of these regulations relating to the election, appointment and terms of office of members of the school development committee shall not apply to the board of governors.

- (4) The Secretary may at any time, by written notice to the responsible authority of the school concerned, revoke any permission granted in terms of Subsection (3) or declaration made by him in terms of Subsection (4).

The SDC statute (Government of Zimbabwe 1992) goes further to stipulate that persons declared insolvent or bankrupt and have not been rehabilitated and those with a criminal record shall not stand office. Even a spouse of the person elected to handle finances of the committee is not eligible for any post. The office bearers are supposed to hold office for a year and thereafter be eligible to stand for re-election. In all cases the head of the school shall remain an ex-officio member of the committee as long as s/he continues to be head of such a school and is regarded as the accounting officer who should superintend the financial books of the committee. In cases of rural schools where the level of literacy may militate against the appointment of a Treasurer, the schools through this statute are mandated to choose an honorary Treasurer with the concurrence of the Secretary for Education who will also be answerable to the head of the station. Consistent with that view is the establishment of the finance committee which has the jurisdiction of authorising the purchasing of materials for both curricula and capital projects.

For checks and balances, although there are four signatories, any two, one from each party, that is to say, the head/deputy or chairman/Treasurer or Secretary may sign. This is meant to prevent any act of conspiracy between the separate two parties. The same committee authorises the generation of income at schools be it in the form of civvies, levies, school fees and any other fund raising activities the school may think of. It goes further to authorise monthly payments of purchase vouchers and utilities. In the case of an increase in whatever fees chargeable at the school, if it exceeds ten percent of the fees charged, permission to do so must be sought from the Secretary for Education. The letter motivating the increase must include the following information: the budget to justify it, the number of parents present and an explanation on how

they voted. Moreover, SDCs are expected to submit their audited books of accounts to the Secretary for Education annually for scrutiny before they terminate office. It is, therefore, their legal responsibility to present a financial report to the parent body before any election of new office bearers is done.

However, in the event that the committee or the Treasurer or whoever is in charge of finances, is suspected to have misappropriated funds payable to the school or its fund or is found to have incurred debt recklessly or without proper regard for the financial resources of the school, the person will be liable to prosecution (Government of Zimbabwe 1992). In this regard, the Secretary for Education is empowered to suspend the committee while investigations are underway and abolish it if it is deemed that funds were misappropriated. Thereafter, they are open to prosecution.

The Acts of Parliament and SDC statutes alluded to above are a clear testimony that PI in Zimbabwean public schools should operate within the dictates of the laws governing the dispensation of education. Interesting to note is the silence of the legal documents on the extent of parental engagement in curricula issues as management is being decentralised. Schools are populated by parents of different literate rates, which might militate against real engagement in the educational enterprise, hence this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this article, the researchers are seeking to answer the question: 'What are school governors' and education managers' understanding and perceptions of the management of PI programmes within the legal framework governing education?' A quantitative (normative) paradigm was adopted in the form of a survey design. Issues raised in this regard were the legal documents of PI and the respondents' perceptions of the legal framework governing PI. A self-completion questionnaire was developed containing 24-items and was used to collect quantitative data from both school governors and education managers on their biographic data as well as their perceptions towards the management of PI within a legal framework. Their responses were rated by means of a three-point Likert-type scale with options ranging from agree, disagree and undecided as an escape clause. The fixed re-

sponses were meant to enhance the response rate of the respondents within the stipulated time-frame and facilitate the statistical analysis of the data collected using the Statistical Analysis System software package (SAS version 9.1) by a professional statistician based at the University of South Africa. The questionnaire prototypes were pilot tested and modified accordingly in order to minimise ambiguity and enhance clarity.

For this study, a research sample of 55 education managers and 55 school governors of the Zimbabwean government primary schools in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province were selected using a combination of the convenient and purposeful non probability sampling technique. The schools selected were arranged alphabetically and this constituted a distribution register which was used to dispatch questionnaires to respective schools within this jurisdiction and collected them at an agreed date. On collection of questionnaires, the distribution register was destroyed to enhance anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected.

The analysis methodology followed acknowledged the fact that data collected were of a nominal nature since various variables in the data were classified into categories. Frequency tables and descriptive statistics were used to describe each questionnaire included within this aspect.

The Respondents

Fifty-one of the sampled education managers' and forty-seven of the school governors' questionnaires were used thus resulting in a response rate of (93%) and (85%) respectively. The four and eight questionnaires not included were either not returned or those returned were incomplete.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Questions 1-4 of the questionnaire captured the respondents' biographic data. The frequency distribution of the various biographic characteristics is presented in Table 1. The majority of education managers (52.94%) who participated in this research were women and of school governors (78.72%) were men. The former is so because urban schools administrative appointments are based on a gender policy meant to address the anomalies of the past which disadvantaged women. All the education managers interrogated were adequately qualified for the job with a significant number of them (37) being holders of degrees (73.54%). Similarly, of the forty-seven school governors investigated, forty-four (93.61%) were literate with only three (6.39%) ranging from grade one or seven. Of these, twenty

Table 1: Biographic data of the respondents

	<i>Education managers</i>		<i>School governors</i>		
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	
<i>1 Gender</i>					
Male	24	47.06	37	78.72	
Female	27	52.94	10	21.28	
Total	51	100	47	100	
<i>2 Academic Qualification</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	
Grade 1-7	0	0	3	6.39	
'O' Level	29	56.86	24	51.06	
'A' Level	4	7.85	0	0	
Other	18	35.29	20	42.55	
Total	51	100	47	100	
<i>3 Professional Qualification</i>	<i>Jobs</i>				
	<i>Education Managers</i>		<i>School Governors</i>		
<i>Attribute</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Attribute</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Dip/CE/T3	11	21.57	Professionals/Craftsmen	16	34.04
B. Ed.	30	59.82	Managers/Accountants	5	10.64
M .Ed	7	13.72	Self-employed	7	14.89
Other	3	5.88	Retire/unemploye	19	14.43
Total	51	100	Total	47	100

ty-one (44.68%) were still in active employment, seven (14.89%) were self-employed and nineteen (40.43%) were either retired or unemployed. In that view, the respondents were considered to be adequately qualified to make substantive inputs on this research.

Any innovation of whatever magnitude, for it to be acceptable and respected by all those who are supposed to benefit from it, must take place within the law. School governance in Zimbabwe is regulated by Acts of Parliament and relevant statutory instruments. It is therefore incumbent upon those who are privileged to manage schools to be acquainted with. The aim of this section was to explore the legal documents under which PI programmes operate in as school governors are brought on board. Questions 4 -11 were exactly meant for that purpose as portrayed in Table 2.

A closer examination of Table 2 reveals that SDC Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 is the most read legal document giving a combined positive response of (82.66%) followed by the SDA Statutory Instrument 70 of 1993 (80.62%) and the Education Act of 1987 (62.24%). Thereafter, the Education Act of 1979 (56.12%), the Amended Education Act of 1991(54.08%) and the Education Act of 1996 (50%) follow also in that order. However, there was a mixed reaction when it came to the ZANU PF Manifesto of 1980 and the Education Act of 2006. In the former, 44.90% had no access to the document, 15.31% were

not sure whether they had read it or not, giving a combined total of 60.21% of those who claim that they had not read the document. The 39.79%, who claim to have read this document, do not give more weight to the discussion, particularly as this was the policy document which gave birth to most educational reforms introduced by the Zimbabwean government at independence.

There could be three possible answers to why the ZANU (PF) Manifesto was given a low rate. Civil servants, who do not want to align themselves to the ruling political party of the day, may have deliberately avoided this important document, especially as at post-independence they were supposed to be apolitical. Secondly, it could be due to the unavailability of this kind of literature in schools, or thirdly, to passive resistance, especially as Matabeland North Province in general and Bulawayo Metropolitan Province in particular, has been in the hands of the opposition parties. First it was the Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU), before the two revolutionary parties amalgamated (ZANU PF and PF ZAPU) and then the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). When it came to the current document, the Education Act of 2006, there was equilibrium. Thirty-six (37.11%) responded in the affirmative while 37.12% indicated that they had not read it.

Table 2: Legal PI documents that respondents are most familiar with/have read

<i>Legal PI documents</i>	<i>Familiar with total/%</i>			<i>Mean</i>	<i>Total %</i>
	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>		
<i>Frequency table</i>					
4 Education Act, 1979	25	18	55	3.37	98
	25.51	18.37	56.12	(5)	100
5 ZANU PF manifesto 1980	44	15	39	2.74	98
	44.90	15.31	39.79	(1)	100
6 Education Act, 1987	23	14	61	3.53	98
	23.47	14.29	62.24	(6)	100
7 Amended Education Act, 1991	29	16	53	3.35	98
	29.59	16.33	54.08	(4)	100
8 Education Act, 1996	27	22	49	3.30	98
	27.55	22.45	50.00	(3)	100
9 Education Act, 2006	36	25	36	2.98	97
	37.12	25.77	37.11	(2)	100
10 SDC Statutory Instrument 87, 1992	8	9	81	4.00	98
	8.16	9.18	82.66	(8)	100
11 SDA Statutory Instrument 70, 1993	9	10	79	3.93	100
Total	201	129	453		783
	25.67	16.48	57.85		100

Despite these controversies, it was encouraging to note that parents and education managers in Bulawayo are operating within the law as noted by the majority of those who have had access to the SDC/A statutes or read them. These two are the operational documents which every school must have before the formation of the parent body. In that light, the researcher concluded that both school governors and education managers have the juridical expertise and knowledge of the operational legal documents which set the parameters of parental engagement. For better organisational effectiveness and efficiency, proactive education managers who want to have a real alliance with school governors should procure the non-available legal documents, and thereafter, orient the elected parents so that they understand what it entails to be part of the school management team. The situation could have been made worse by the fact that Government Printers which used to publish and distribute these documents freely has of late adopted cost saving measures by

charging schools. In that view, the already cash-stripped schools cannot afford to purchase such documents.

With parents and education managers aware of the legal framework under which they operate in, there was need to ascertain their understanding of these statutes when school governance is operational through Table 3.

A scrutiny of Table 3 reveals that both groups of respondents are aware that SDCs/As' formation are legal (96.91%) in government schools and the education manager is also legally an ex-officio member (95.92%) of the committee. This is true in the sense that parents (94.85%) are equally conversant with the legal statutes which govern their involvement, thus, confirming the exploitation of orientation workshops. This could be due to the fact that the function of the School Governing Board is clearly delineated (91.84%), hence, averting squabbles.

The statutes alluded to in Table 2 further assert that parents are supposed to be members of the Finance Committee which superintend all

Table 3: Respondents perceptions/understanding of the legal framework governing PI programmes

<i>Legal aspects</i> <i>Frequency table</i>	<i>Agreement rating</i>			
	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Total/%</i>
12 SDC/As are legal	2	1	94	97
	2.06	1.03	96.91	100
13 SDC/As are familiar with legal statutes	3	2	92	97
	3.09	2.06	94.85	100
14 Functions of SDC/As are clearly defined	2	6	90	98
	2.04	6.12	91.84	100
15 SDC/As hire and fire teachers	91	3	1	95
	95.79	3.16	1.05	100
16 Statutes give parent bodies much power	61	13	21	95
	64.21	13.68	22.11	100
17 Legal statutes empower parents to provide resources	11	9	78	98
	11.22	9.18	79.60	100
18 Decentralisation improves school resources	17	6	75	98
	17.35	6.12	76.53	100
19 Government to continue providing educational resources	63	11	24	98
	64.29	11.22	24.49	100
20 Parents in management monitor Heads	77	10	11	98
	78.58	10.20	11.22	100
21 Schools with SDC/As are well resourced	10	4	84	98
	10.20	4.08	85.72	100
22 Decentralisation improves the effectiveness of the school system	14	10	73	98
	14.43	10.31	75.26	100
23 SDC/As are involved in financial decisions	8	5	85	98
	8.16	5.10	86.74	100
24 Head is an ex-officio member of SDC/A	4	0	94	97
	4.08	0.00	95.92	100
Total	363	80	822	98
	28.70	6.32	64.98	100

financial obligations of the school within their jurisdiction for accountability purposes and as part of the decentralisation process. In that light, eighty-five (86.74%) of the respondents claimed that parents were involved in financial decisions. It is perhaps from this kind of involvement that such schools become well-resourced (85.72%) in terms of educational materials.

The provision of educational materials can only be made possible if parent representatives know that the legal statutes (Table 2) which they must have access to empower them to do so (79.60%). Little wonder that both groups of respondents view decentralisation as a way of improving the performance of the school (76.53%) as well as its effectiveness and efficiency (75.26%) as confirmed by literature reviewed on the attribute (Zvobgo 2004).

Encouraging in this context is the observation that the legal statutes (64.21%), do not give the parent body too much power. However, the management field is leveled by the fact that parents denied that their involvement is a way of sanctioning the powers of the education manager (78.58%) and that government (64.29%) should continue to provide educational resources single-handedly. This is an indicator that parents really want to be engaged in a genuine partnership with the school authorities. Despite parents' knowledge of the statutes and their level of education as observed in the above findings (Table 1), parents do not want to be involved in the hiring and firing of teachers (95.79%), another grey area for investigation on PI.

The evidence cited above indicates that PI in Bulawayo Metropolitan Primary Government Schools is juridical as noted by the positive responses on this attribute (see Table 3) and both education managers and parents are aware of their obligations within this jurisdiction. Educational resources improve immensely as a result of this partnership leading to the improvement of the academic performance of the school as institutions move towards achieving efficiency and effectiveness. Since legal statutes empower parents to provide resources to the schools they are attached to depending on their financial muscle, the decentralisation process yearned for in this article may improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system through the utilization of various potentials each individual possesses, hence, the need for education managers with the TQM orientation to bring all stakeholders on board.

CONCLUSION

The general view derived from this empirical research is that PI in Bulawayo Metropolitan Primary Schools is juridical and both education managers and school governors are aware of their obligation within this jurisdiction. Decentralisation of power to local communities improves the provision of educational resources immensely, culminating in the improvement of the academic performance of schools as they move towards achieving efficiency and effectiveness amid global competition. The availability of educational resources also leads to improved educational delivery, not only in Zimbabwean public schools but African communities as well as many a time resources are scarce in developing countries.

Encouraging though is the revelation that parental engagement does not give parents too much power which may influence them to engage in petty wars that are usually detrimental to the attainment of educational goals. This revelation is contradicting researches conducted elsewhere on this attribute which claim that education managers are wary of non professionals who are meddlesome in the professional business of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is against this backdrop of events that the TQM model advocated for in this article be adopted if parents are to be genuine partners in the delivery of the education service. Education managers with the TQM orientation can capitalise on its 'ever-improving' philosophy to modify production processes in the education system if needs of customers are to be realised. Above all, well planned and designed workshops can be manned at school level if negative sentiments expressed in this research are to be minimised or eliminated. Equally important, at ~~such workshops~~ are parents who need to be empowered to recruit and fire both teaching and ancillary staff. The empirical research revealed that they shun this responsibility although mandated to do so by the statutes. All things being equal, Zimbabwean parents, like their counterparts in other African countries, admitted that government's purse had been overstretched by the placing of education within the framework of fundamental rights and it was high time they were brought on board, in a legal fashion.

A TQM model emerging after the celebrated post-scientific management thought, seems to be a self-embracing model which seeks to bring everybody on board in a legal manner. In that view, there is need to hold training workshops, seminars and debates at both conceptual and operational level if the benefits which accrue to the school, individual and community are to be tapped to the fullest. Conflicts and battles which usually characterise such a paradigm shift may be averted.

At such workshops, education managers who are experienced, competent and knowledgeable in statutes and have PI programmes which are flourishing in their schools should be used as resource persons. Schools experiencing organisational conflicts as a result of this paradigm shift could be targeted.

Finally, the selling of legal documents to already cash-stripped schools does not augur well for such an innovation if it is to gather momentum at its infancy. Funds permitting, the department to distribute these documents to schools needs to be resuscitated. In that way, futuristic engagements may be juridical literate.

However the results of this investigation need to be interpreted with caution as the empirical research was confined to Zimbabwean public schools in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province and a quantitative research approach was employed. It is recommended that a replica be carried out either using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research designs in the same province or at a macro level so as to either confirm or reject some of these findings.

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