A comparative analysis of perceptions of teachers and pupils of causes of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe: Case studies of Gweru and Shurugwi districts

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts in organisations are inevitable. For conflict to be managed and transformed appropriately, one needs to be aware of the causes of these conflicts. This study was necessitated by a realisation that heads of schools use short-fix interventions to conflicts. Teachers also use short-fix interventions to conflicts. The state of affairs negatively affect teaching, learning and peace in primary schools. The study focused on the causes of conflict in primary schools in a bid that appropriate interventions could therefore be established. The sample of the study consisted of 134 teachers, 120 children and one District School’s inspector for the district under study. The sample was purposively chosen. A qualitative research methodology was employed. A case study design was adopted. The major findings of the study were shortage of resources, dictatorship, competition, gossip related to teachers and name calling, bullying, stealing, unfair treatment, abuse, hatred and rudeness related to pupils. The causes of conflict did not differ between urban and rural areas. Some of the recommendations were that schools in clusters need to pool resources, practise multicultural education and inter-faithism and establish a cooperative context.

Key words: Causes of pupil related conflicts, causes of teacher related conflicts, primary schools, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable at all levels of human behaviour (Sellman, 2003; Kreitner and Kinicki, 1997; Jandt, 1985). In order to come up with appropriate conflict resolution strategies, one has to be aware of the causes of conflict. Researcher in this regard has been a teacher and a head in primary schools for twenty two years and throughout this experience, realised numerous occurrence of conflicts among pupils, teachers, stakeholders and administration in schools. These conflicts, in the case of pupil conflicts, are time consuming to teachers and heads, making them pay less attention to their core businesses. Teachers and heads do not seem to be aware of the causes of conflicts and tend to offer short-fix solutions. This leads to the escalation of conflict affecting the effectiveness of teaching, learning and peace in schools. Informal talks with teachers and heads reflected their inability to deal with conflict. They therefore, require training on the causes of conflict and how to handle these forms of conflict. The above problems were also noted in the American education system in the 1990’s (Johnson and Johnson, 1996). In Zimbabwe, only few researches has been undertaken to unearth the causes of conflict in Zimbabwean Primary schools, consequently leading to inappropriate conflict resolution strategies and ineffective learning, teaching and peace building. Notable researches on causes of conflict between heads and teachers were undertaken by Makaye and Ndofirepi (2010) in Masvingo Province Secondary schools, Tumbo and Moyo (2013) in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province, and Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2012) in Nkayi District. To the best of our knowledge, no research on causes of conflict in Gweru District of Midlands has been undertaken.
Statement of the problem

Teachers and heads in primary schools do not seem to be aware of how they can handle conflicts with their pupils and teachers, respectively. This might reflect their unawareness of the causes of conflict, how to manage and transform them in order to maximise learning, teaching and peace. The main research question therefore is “What are the prevalent causes of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?

Sub-problems

The sub-problems guiding the study were:

1) To what extent are shared resources a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?
2) To what extent are differences in goals a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?
3) How are differences in perceptions and values a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?
4) How are disagreements in role requirements a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?
5) To what extent is the nature of work activities a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?
6) To what extent are differences in personalities and internalised conflict a cause of conflict in primary schools in Zimbabwe?

Purpose of study

The study was intended to establish the causes of conflict in Zimbabwean primary schools so that conflict could be managed and transformed appropriately.

Significance of study

The study was important to: 1) teachers and heads, as they identified the causes of conflict and came up with appropriate strategies of managing and transforming it; 2) parents, as they identified the causes of conflict in schools and; 3) policy makers and administrators, as they identified the causes of conflict and craft appropriate policies.

Limitations of the study

The study had some limitations. The first limitation was that the study was a case study and as such, the data collected could not be generalised for the whole country as it was confined to one district. Thus the strategies could not be applied to all districts in the country.

This limitation was circumvented by triangulation of sources of information and data gathering techniques.

Other limitations were the use of paper questionnaires, research assistants and the distance from Gweru of some schools in the sample which made the exercise to be expensive. The researcher made use of opportunities that arose from visits to student teachers posted in the district under study.

Another limitation was that one of the languages spoken in the district namely Ndebele made it difficult for the researcher to communicate directly with participants. The use of research assistants minimised the challenge.

Delimitations of the study

The study was delimited to primary schools in the Gweru District of the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Only participants from schools that could be accessed were invited to participate. The study focused on the causes of teacher - and pupil- related conflicts in primary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related literature will explore the concept conflict, the theoretical framework of the study and empirical review of related literature.

The concept conflict

Various authorities understand conflict from diverse perspectives as demonstrated by the definitions advanced by a number of experts in education. Differences in viewpoints are inevitable, and often enriching. Unanimity is more unlikely when we consider that, in addition to natural differences such as male and female, there are those brought about by a range of other dimensions: status, power, wealth, age, the role assigned to our gender, belonging to a specific social group, and so on (Fisher et al., 2007: 3). These indicators of position in society often mean that people want different things from the same situation, sometimes these goals clash, or are incompatible. It is then there is a conflict.

Rue and Byars (2003: 285) contend that conflict is “an overt behaviour that results when an individual or group of individuals think a perceived need of the individual or group has been blocked or is about to be blocked”. This definition stresses the importance of basic needs like physiological needs, security needs, social needs, self-esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1991).

Fisher et al. (2007: 3) say that “conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups), who have, or think they have, incompatible goals”.

However, Wright (1951) cited in Sellman (2003: 23) uses the Latin word “confligere” meaning to strike together. Wright (1951) cited in Sellman (2003) says
confinige has two meanings, one that highlights conflict as a fight, battle or prolonged struggle between opposing forces, which can include beliefs and ideas that may result in a physical clash and another meaning which states that conflict can occur psychologically, as emotional distress between incompatible wishes within a person. In this context, conflict has both a conceptual as well as a behavioural property at both individual and group levels. The duality of conflict is emphasised by Fink (1968) cited in Sellman (2003: 25) who views conflict as any social situation or process in which two or more social entities that are linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation (internal conflict) or at least one form of antagonistic interaction (external conflict).

Conflicts are a fact of life, inevitable and often creative. Conflicts occur according to the definitions given above, when people pursue goals which clash. Disagreements and conflicts in schools are usually resolved without violence, and often lead to improved situation for most or all of those involved. Conflicts arise from imbalances in relations. That is, unequal social status, unequal wealth and access to resources and unequal power (Fisher et al., 2007: 4).

The theoretical framework of the study

The study was premised on social pedagogy theory. Hatton (2013) cited The Social Pedagogy Development Network, defining Social Pedagogy as an academic discipline that is drawn on Care theories from various related disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology and philosophy. In essence, it is concerned with the well-being, learning and growth of a child. This is underpinned by humanistic values and principles which view people as active and resourceful agents, highlights the importance of including them into the wider community and aims to tackle or prevent social problems and inequalities. This is done through active involvement of the people concerned and getting their views despite their differences.

Petrie et al. (2006) speculate that social pedagogy emphasises team work and value the contribution of others in bringing up children. The child is seen as a social being, connected to others and at the same time with their own distinctive experiences and knowledge.

ThemPra (2015) also advances the following pathways as Social Pedagogy:

i) Providing opportunities for learning;
ii) Building strong and positive authentic relationships which are non-hierarchical;
iii) Enabling children to empower themselves;
iv) Working with the head, heart and hands in everyday activities; and
v) Cultural impact on what is possible in practice.

Empirical review of related literature

Causes of conflict

The occurrence of conflict in primary schools is influenced by a variety of precipitating, situational, and inter-group factors. In addition, since it is apparent from the wide range of individual differences in frequency of involvement in conflict (Jack, 1939; Jersild and Markey, 1939 cited in Ausabel and Sullivan, 1970), variables, such as temperament, personality and family environment, are important determinants of conflict in primary schools.

The major precipitating causes of conflict during the primary school years are disputes over shared resources, differences in goals, differences in perspectives and values, disagreements in role requirements, nature of work activities, misunderstanding of each other’s motives and intentions and by the discord engendered when a child tries to force his/her way into a group or activity where he is unwanted (Mado et al., 2001 cited in Sellman, 2003). The following details are written about each of the following causes.

Shared resources as a cause of conflict

Organisations have limited resources, that must be allocated fairly and some individuals or groups might get less than what they need. In a school, budgetary allocations for different departments might differ. Allocation of textbooks to groups in a classroom might differ. The differences may cause conflict (Madziyire et al., 2010).

Resources could include the following; space, money, property, prestige and food which might prove difficult to share (Mullins, 1999). In Zimbabwean primary schools, resources are limited and their sharing might result in conflict (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1996; Moyo et al., 1998). Berridge (1993) pointed out that in Zimbabwe, teaching resources are scarce particularly in rural schools. In rural areas children share learning resources. Zvobgo (1999) also pointed out that the resources in schools were scarce from 1980 to 1999 due to increment of school enrolments. Magagula (1993) argued that the provision of adequate instructional facilities and
materials in classrooms is an important element to teacher commitment to work which in turn enhances student learning. A study on causes of conflict between heads and teachers in Masvingo undertaken by Makaye and Ndofirepi (2010) established unequal distribution of resources as one of the major causes of conflict.

**Differences in goals as a cause of conflict**

Literature refers to differences in goals as a source of conflict (Kasambira, 1998; Mullins, 1999; Mesoon et al., 1999). Sub units in most cases are specialised and differentiated (Mullins, 1999). In primary school, there are infant, middle junior and senior. The departments might turn inwards and concentrate on achievement of their own goals (Kasambira, 1998). Besides the departments mentioned above, there may be other departments, such as administrative and bursary (Kasambira, 1998). These could, like the other departments mentioned above, have different goals as well.

**Differences in perceptions and values as a cause of conflict**

Differences in the way one view things may lead to conflict (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2010). The way one perceive the real world and the meaning of what one see differ (Mullins, 1999; Northcraft and Neale, 1990). From perceptions, valued judgments are made. Values are what a society perceived to be most important (Deutsch, 1973). In regards to a school situation, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (2010) gave an example where some members of the School Development Committee believe that old fashioned cultural discipline is plausible, while others believe in more modern permissive approaches to discipline. The actual or perceived differences do not necessarily lead to conflict but values that are imposed on a group or when groups are prevented from upholding their value systems cause conflict (Deutsch, 1973).

The following ideas emphasise differences in perception as a cause of conflict apart from what has been stated already. Many types of conflict emanate from beliefs or facts, information, knowledge or beliefs about reality (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2010). Conflict may arise from the way two or more people view an issue or object (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2010). Basic assumptions about how things relate to one another might result in conflict. In Zimbabwean primary schools, children and teachers come from diverse cultures, thereby increasing chances of conflict (Matsiska, 2012). Furthermore, children and teachers’ individual differences may lead to conflict (Sadomba and Hlatswayo, 2012).

**Disagreements in role requirements as a cause of conflict**

An expected pattern of behaviour associated with members occupying particular positions within the structure of an organisation is referred to as a role (Owens, 1991). The way in which people behave may not be consistent with the expected patterns of behaviour (Kasambira, 1998). Kasambira (1998) discussed two types of role conflict namely intra-role and inter-role. Inter-role conflict results “when various members of a role set simultaneously and legitimately make differing demands on a single role” (Kasambira, 1998:139). Intra-role conflict is defined as simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make it more difficult to comply with the other (Kasambira, 1998). Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2010) contends that role conflict occurs as a result of role ambiguity, role incompatibility, role overload and role under-load. Where role definition is inadequate or inappropriate, conflict usually ensues.

Some people are fond of playing roles that are not theirs. In class, a student who is not a class monitor might end up playing this role. This will cause conflict between the real class monitor and the intruder (Madziyire et al., 2010). This happens when role descriptions are not specified or are ambiguous (Kasambira, 1998).

**Nature of work activities as a cause of conflict**

Mullins (1999) pointed out that where the task of one person is dependent upon others, there is a potential for conflict. In a classroom situation, there are a lot of examples of such situations. The work of the class monitor is dependent on work of group leaders. In a school situation, a department might have its budget cut when another department is dependent on it (Madziyire et al., 2010). Performance of junior grades is dependent on the performance of infant grades. If the infant grades’ budget is cut, it might influence the way the students perform at junior grade (Madziyire et al., 2010). The scenarios articulated above can cause serious conflict between monitors and group leaders, various level teachers and departments.

**Differences in personalities as a cause of conflict**

Psychologists have found that people have individual differences (Mpowfu, 1994). Some individuals cause conflict through debates and arguments that escalate into full scale battle. People who are highly authoritarian or have low esteem of others may frequently anger their colleagues over mild disagreements (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 1995). In a school, individuals with bad behaviour may be present (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education,
Table 1: Causes of conflict in a primary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Generates more conflict when factor is:</th>
<th>Generates less conflict when factor is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gossip/ rumour</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tribalism</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>Inconsistent</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nepotism</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Authoritarian/centralism</td>
<td>Democratic/ transparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Regulations</td>
<td>Many and rigid</td>
<td>Few and relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>Mechanistic</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Religious beliefs</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Favouritism/Prejudice</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hunger</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Exam pressure</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Amount of work</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Unity of command</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Straight forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2010). Head who acts unilaterally has been cited by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as one of the causes of conflict in a school. This cause of conflict may be minimised by resorting to team building (Madziyire et al., 2010). This technique requires taking people away from the work place, bringing them together and asking them to de-role.

**Internalised conflict as a cause of conflict**

Frustration and aggression in individuals can be a great source of conflict (Gunduza and Namusi, 2004). Frustration and aggression in a group can also be a cause of conflict. The former could be a source of interpersonal conflict, while the latter could be a source of intergroup conflict (Madziyire et al., 2010).

**Other causes of conflict typical in primary schools**

Mnkandla (1996: 120) presented twenty two causes of conflict in schools in the form of a table, indicating high or low occurrence (Table 1).

Table 1 shows the various causes of conflict in a primary school and how they can be heightened or lowered.

Sadomba and Hlatswayo (2012) pointed out that there are a number of intergroup factors influencing conflicts. They indicate that student to student conflict is caused by name calling, teasing, exclusion, rumours and fighting while parent and school conflicts are caused by poor student management, class allocation, uniform, fees and homework demands. Parent to teacher conflicts are caused by lack of supervision, indiscipline and bullying, while teacher to student conflicts are caused by heavy workload, pupils not doing homework, lack of punctuality, bad behaviour and irresponsibility. Teacher to administration conflict is presented as being caused by poor working conditions, unfair duty allocation and poor teaching methods while teacher to teacher conflict is caused by unequal distribution of resources. The above findings were also established in Nkayi South Circuit by Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2012).

Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012), in a study on conflict resolution between heads and teachers in schools in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, found out two major causes of conflicts namely unequal distribution of resources and the grapevine or gossip. On the other hand, a study on Zimbabwean schools by Tumbo and Moyo (2013) indicates the causes of conflicts as lack of effective communication, failing to adapt to change, misunderstanding, poor promotion procedures at work, child sexual abuse, different ideologies, different thoughts, bullying and existence of cliques. The study was conducted in three
provinces of Zimbabwe and was qualitative in nature. The study was undertaken in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province but not in Gweru District of the Midlands Province. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the causes of conflict in Gweru District.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative research paradigm. This is so because the researcher intended to find issues that require common sense knowledge of people (Lederach, 1997). A case study design was adopted. Multiple case studies were employed. These were intrinsic case studies where no attempt was made to generalise beyond the single case or even to build theories (Silverman, 2010). The study used quester - views, open – ended interviews and focus groups discussions. The quester-view enabled the researcher to gather data because it is easy to construct and cheaper to administer (Denzin, 1997). Individual in-depth interviews enabled participants to express unique or controversial perspectives without fear of censure (Cresswell, 2008). Focus group discussions were collective interviews. In collective interviews, participants, through their interaction, provided data and some insights, which could not be revealed through interviews with individuals. Focus groups result in collective synergy (Kruger and Casey, 2000 cited in Gall et al., 2007). The sample consisted of 227 teachers including heads, 180 children and the District school’s inspector of Gweru. The sample of teachers was purposively selected and children were also purposively selected. Only those who showed interest were chosen. The researcher followed Merriam’s (2009) analysis of qualitative data. The study was undertaken within one year. This time allowed for member checking.

RESULTS

Perceived causes of conflict

The questionnaire findings revealed that eighty percent (80%) (n=182) of the teachers viewed some causes of conflict as common in urban and rural areas, while 20% (n=45) were for a particular area; urban or rural area. The findings of Question 9 of the questionnaire are thus explained in detail. Shortage of resources, such as books and furniture, as a cause of conflict was prevalent in urban and rural areas of the two districts. Poor communication was also a cause of conflict in Gweru urban, Shurugwi urban, as well as Shurugwi rural. The same goes for cultural differences and religious differences. Lack of religious tolerance affected Gweru urban and Shurugwi urban. Competition as a cause of conflict seemed to exist in both the rural and urban areas. The forms of competition that caused conflict included competition in sports and classroom performance, particularly in individual competition. Role ambiguity only affected Gweru urban and Shurugwi rural as a cause of conflict. Status differences affected both urban and rural areas.

Questionnaire responses also revealed that dictatorship featured in both urban and rural primary schools in both districts under study. Gossip also prevailed in both urban and rural primary schools in both districts. Gender discrimination was perceived as a cause of conflict in the urban and rural areas, as well as differences in opinions, beliefs and needs.

Favouritism of some pupils by teachers and some teachers by heads was found to be another cause of conflict identified in the primary schools in both districts under study. Other less acknowledged causes of conflict pointed out by teachers from the two districts were: power differences, lack of expertise, deviation from rules and regulations, educational qualification differences, underperformance, pride, lack of transparency, ignorance, lying, big classes particularly in urban areas, truancy by pupils, jealousy, grudges and need for identity.

The majority of focus group participants and interviewees revealed the same causes of conflict in the areas identified in the questionnaires. The majority of children’s focus groups and interviewees identified different causes of conflict from the ones identified by teachers namely name calling, bullying, favouritism, gender discrimination, competition and taking others’ friends. Other less acknowledged causes of conflict revealed by the pupils to the interview Question 3 were; abuse of female pupils in the form of fondling of breasts and touching of private parts by boys and some male teachers which was revealed by girls, gossip, lying, hatred, rudeness, selfishness, differences in perceptions, not keeping secrets, noise making during study, not being given chance to air their views, copying of other pupils’ work by others, gossip and shortages of resources.

The in-depth interviews with District Education Officers revealed that the common causes of conflict were sit-ins and go slows, boarding school strikes, teachers not making pupils pass, abuse of children by teachers which included fondling of breasts, beating and not recognising human rights. What is apparent from the findings is that there are no differences between causes in the rural areas and those for the urban areas. There also does not seem to be any differences between the causes pointed out by the male teachers and those pointed out by the female teachers. Pupils pointed out some causes not mentioned by the other groups. Below are excerpts from participants in interviews and focus group discussions:

Teachers voiced the following sentiments:

Prominent causes of conflict at this school are differences in opinion, differences in perceptions, violation of human rights, gender discrimination and shortage of resources, religious differences and cultural differences (Female
Below are sentiments of pupils on causes of conflict:
- I hate being compared to those who beat us in performance our class (male pupil 1).
- Some big boys and girls do bully us on our way home because we perform better than them in class (Female pupil 1).

Below are views of those in administration:

The prominent causes of conflict in this school include the following: favouritism, socio-economic background, gossip, ignorance, disability and superiority complex (deputy head 1).

Among other causes of conflict in primary schools are not giving incentives, love affairs that is child abuse of girl children by male teachers, beating of children by teachers, not observing pupils rights, shortages of resources and non-involvement of parents, teachers and children in decision making (District Education Officer 1).

**DISCUSSION**

**Comparison of causes of conflict in primary schools**

The causes of conflict pointed out in the findings are in line with the causes reflected in the review of related literature. The causes confirm the causes raised by a number of authorities (Mnkandla, 1996; Makaye and Ndofirepi, 2012; Sadomba and Hlatswayo, 2012; Tumbo and Moyo, 2013). Causes of conflict for pupils differ from those for adults.

With regards to shortage of resources as a cause of conflict in the schools, the findings corroborate with views by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (1996), Moyo et al. (1998), Berridge (1993) and Makaye and Ndofirepi (2010).

Bullying as a cause of conflict as pointed out in the findings confirm the findings of Sadomba and Hlatswayo (2012), Tumbo and Moyo (2013), Chronicle 15 December (2015), Team Zimbabwe (2015) and Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2012).

Religious differences as a cause of conflict in primary schools confirm views of Mnkandla (1996) and Tumbo and Moyo (2013). The views of Marashe et al. (2009) are in agreement with the findings, as well. The finding on tribal differences causing conflict corroborates with the views put forward in a number of news paper reports (Sunday News, July 15, 2014; Standard, June 29, 2014).

Further, the findings from pupils regarding the causes of conflict in their schools agree with those advanced by Sadomba and Hlatswayo (2012). These are name calling, teasing, rumours and fighting. While the finding on gossip as a cause of conflict confirms the findings of Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) and Mnkandla (1996).

Any conflict resolution strategy that is significance could be tailor made to address the causes that were unearthed in the study. The strategies could include resource mobilization as clusters of primary schools mitigating the shortage of resources problem. To mitigate bullying, the recommendations advanced by McEachem et al. (2005) could be adopted. The recommendations include programmes to reduce incidences of bullying in school, which must start early in the elementary grades were children are taught about bullying to increase awareness of the seriousness of the acts and be taught conflict resolution and problem solving skills to help them resolve disputes without resorting to violence or the use of derogatory remarks. In trying to achieve the aforementioned there is need to use the Peace Education (PEF) curricular materials to educate the students, teachers and parents as recommended by McEachem et al. (2005). To address the cause of religious differences, the use of a framework advanced by Moix (2006) could be adopted, while cultural differences could be addressed by adopting the ideas of Kimmel (2006) on intercultural explorations and use of constructive controversies and peace building strategies. Pedersen’s (2006) two cultural grills could also be employed to resolve the problems of cultural differences. The problem of dictatorship could be resolved by taking on board the views of Emmett and Monsour (1996) on open classroom meetings (OCM). It could also be addressed by having as national curriculum subject referred to as citizenship as in England and Wales which endorses the political values of pluralism and democracy, a view advanced by Sellman (2003). Some of the areas are better delivered to pupils through the curriculum, as pointed out by Sellman (2003). The methodology of delivering the curriculum could follow the advices advanced by Abebe et al. (2006), Fountain (1999) and Amatruda (2006). Johnson and Johnson (1995) however, argue that there is need for the creation of a cooperative context first before any other strategies of conflict resolution could be instituted. The creation of a cooperative context may eradicate some of the causes, such as unhealthy competition which might lead to subsequent problems such as cheating during examinations and copying which are pin pointed as some of the causes of conflict by the participants and informants in this study.
CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings:

1. Prevalent causes of conflict in Gweru District primary schools include shortage of resources, competition, poor communication, dictatorship, gossip, gender discrimination, as well as differences in opinion, beliefs and needs related to both teachers and pupils.

2. Less acknowledged causes of conflict in Gweru District primary schools are; power differences, lack of expertise, deviation from rules and regulations, educational qualification differences, underperformance, pride, ignorance, lying, big classes and lack of identity.

3. Pupils have some causes that is peculiar to them only, such as name calling, bullying, stealing of belongings, unfair treatment, abuse, hatred, rudeness, selfishness, not keeping secrets, noise making during study, copying of work and not being given chance to air views.

4. Both rural and urban primary schools in Gweru District experience the same causes of conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the aforementioned conclusions, the following recommendations are advanced;

1) Schools in clusters pool resources so that children in the clusters could use these resources and minimize shortages;
2) Schools should resort to teaching and practising multiculturalism and inter – faithism;
3) Schools should institute cooperation rather than competition;
4) Schools should resort to democratic management;
5) Schools should resort to peer –mediation to manage and transform conflict;
6) Further research should be undertaken regarding parents and community leaders.

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