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# The role of school development committees in the implementation of decentralisation in Zimbabwe

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Under neoliberal inspired educational decentralisation, the government of Zimbabwe transferred powers previously vested in the higher tiers of the education system to individual schools and local communities through school development committees. The study was therefore undertaken in order to investigate factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by school development committees. A qualitative research approach that focused on purposively sampled participants was chosen for this study. The study was carried out in the interpretivist research paradigm which facilitated access to semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions from two different cases whose contexts varied substantially. One is an affluent school (Oxford) and the other is a poor school (Havana)[1]. Data obtained from the foregoing methods were triangulated with review of documents. Data analysis was qualitative using a thematic approach to elucidate emerging patterns from the data.

Findings suggest that shifting power and authority to schools increased roles and responsibilities for school heads, teachers and school development committee members in both schools. One of the findings is that the professional expertise and socio-economic status of parents and school development committee members of Oxford Primary School curtailed any autocratic tendencies by the school head. The study also found that the introduction of neoliberal market orientation into the school sector created new roles, such as that of entrepreneurial manager for school heads. Another compelling finding is that the neoliberal induced withdrawal of government education (tuition) grants affected the financial position of Havana Primary School more negatively than that of Oxford Primary School. This has led to a highly differentiated structure of schooling between the two schools which institutionalises educational inequality and widens disparities.

The findings are particularly relevant for policy makers as they provide insights into educational decentralisation. The research's original contribution is that it has to some extent, through practice-based findings at the micro-level, focused on the specific factors related to the implementation of educational decentralisation according to the lived experiences of various education practitioners; thus providing

[1] Havana and Oxford Primary Schools are pseudonyms.



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an in-depth understanding of processes. Even though the prescripts from which educational decentralisation is crafted are the same, its implementation differed across two public schools by virtue of their unique contexts. The research has shown that educational decentralisation as a government policy has not fostered equality and the protection of vulnerable children from discrimination.

The research highlights the seriousness of implementing educational decentralisation in order to increase participation in decision-making by stakeholders in the education enterprise.Specifically, this research could be taken forward through a series of new projects that would consider educational decentralisation and its effects on the professional roles of district school inspectors, school heads, and teachers.



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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Sipiwe J. Ngwenya, hereby declare that I have proofread and copy edited the research paper given to me by James Stephen Dhliwayo – Student No: 16306385, University of Pretoria.

I declare that the content remains solely that of the student and that any changes made, were only to correct language and grammar errors.

Yours faithfully

Sipiwe J. Ngwenya

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to my beloved, late father and mother. To my late father (Zikuyumo Elias Mabhanga Manjoko Nxusa Dhliwayo), a typical proletarian, whose toil and determination to support me financially, despite the odds, taught me the importance of education and personal integrity.

I thank the Almighty God for the grace, source of hope and strength during my studies.



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I am also indebted to all the participants in the study; without their willing participation, this study would not have been possible. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the school heads, deputy heads, teachers, parents, SDC members from the two schools, and the schools inspector, for welcoming me in their respective institutions and taking time to share with me their opinions and perceptions.

To my dear wife and all my children, who have journeyed with me through this research, may this achievement serve as an inspiration to them that one can achieve one's dream as long as one puts one's heart, mind and soul to it.



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## ACRONYMS /ABBREVIATIONS

BEAM - Basic Education Assistance Module

DSI - District Schools Inspectorate

ESAP - Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

MoPSE- Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

OECD - Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

PSLE - Primary School Leaving Examinations

SBM - School-based management

SDC - School Development Committee

Zanu (PF) - Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)

ZIMPREST - Zimbabwe Policy Reform for Economic and Social Transformation



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**Key**

OPS – Oxford Primary School

HPS – Havana Primary School



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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 Introduction

In this chapter an overview of the research study has been provided. Highlights of the policy context of education decentralisation are summarised in section 1.1 as the background. In section 1.2 the legal and policy framework for educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe is explained. An outline of the statement of the problem which underpins the study is discussed in section 1.3. Research questions which will assist in answering the research problem are in section 1.4. The rationale of the study, which contains reasons for conducting this study, is presented in section 1.5. Section 1.6 comprises the scope of the study and in section 1.7 the research methodology is introduced. In sections 1.8 and 1.9 clarification or definitions of terms and the structure or organisation of the thesis are outlined respectively.

In the education system, the decentralisation of decision-making is one strategy developed in order to increase parental and community involvement in school governance and management. Decentralisation of decision-making through increasing local authority and enhancing autonomy of schools have been common features in the organisation of public education in many countries. Advocates of decentralisation, for example, Faguet (2014), argue that those closest to the community and school have a better understanding of local conditions and are in a better position to make decisions about the educational processes that best serve local needs. Educational decentralisation has become an internationally acclaimed educational reform (Bray, 2000) that is consistent with the notion of good governance (Grant-Lewis & Motala, 2004).

A conceptual framework which examined school resources, school-based management (SBM), institutional capacity and community participation as concepts was used to explain educational decentralisation. The concepts established the framework in which the functions performed by school development committees (SDCs) in the implementation of education decentralisation can be analysed.



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The study focused on two public primary schools which have been in existence for more than 50 years. The study focused on the two schools' development committees. Selection was on the basis that both schools are well established with history and experience in being governed by SDCs. Highly qualified teachers are employed in both schools. Government education grant support for the schools stopped long ago. The primary schools' pseudonyms are Oxford and Havana, and this is for data identification purposes. Furthermore, these two cases provided contrasting academic and physical facilities. Oxford Primary School is located in a low population density suburb and enrols the majority of its pupils from modestly affluent families whilst Havana Primary School enrols its pupils from relatively poor households residing in a high population density suburb. Oxford Primary School has adequate classrooms, libraries, computer laboratories, playgrounds and sports equipment unlike Havana Primary School.

The participants selected for this study are the major stakeholders in each school and they constitute the SDC. A qualitative research approach employing a case study design was appropriate for understanding the factors influencing the implementation of education decentralisation in Zimbabwe. The research study applied in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and review of official policy documents to collect data.

I interviewed different stakeholders located at two different levels in the Zimbabwe education system. This was done over four months.The stakeholder participants at micro-level (the school) included two deputy heads, twenty-four teachers and eight parent SDC members, and at the meso-level (district) one schools inspector.The inclusion of different categories of participants was for the purpose of gaining a wider range of views from different perspectives, different backgrounds and different experiences. This was done in order to broaden the range of responses and gain richer information to the research questions. SDC roles are based on their agency and how they inter-relate within the decentralised education system with other professionals such as teachers, school heads and school inspectors. Under education decentralisation, SDCs' roles have been reshaped by making them



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accountable to other stakeholders such as local education authorities (district), parents and school administration.

### 1.1 Background

In the 1980's the policy of decentralisation appeared in public policy agendas in Western democracies, such as Australia, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Chapman, Barcikowski, Sowah, Gyamera & Woode, 2002). A decade after the initiation of reforms in these countries, a policy transfer was noted in other contexts, such as in former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America (McGinn & Welsh, 1999).

Following independence in 1980, the government of Zimbabwe gazetted free and compulsory primary education. As a result, the primary education system experienced phenomenal expansion in enrolments which according to Zvobgo (2000), simply could not be matched with available financial, material and human resources. Many problems affected the expanded primary education system, for example, poor infrastructure, shortage of instructional materials, and inadequate support from the government. It is likely that the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture in Zimbabwe envisioned decentralisation to be an appropriate policy to address the widespread challenges that resulted from the quantum increase in enrolments (Chikoko, 2009). Neoliberal policy on education decentralisation and cost reduction did not provide solutions to problems emanating from the education sector as envisaged. The education budget was drastically reduced leading to a discontinuation of education grants to schools in Zimbabwe. During the period 1980 to 1985, the educational budget represented 30% of the total budget allocation, but, following the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Policy (ESAP), there were significant reductions to an average 14% of the budget allocation through the 1990s (Nherera, 2000; Zimbabwe Human Development Report, 2003). During the period from 1991 to 2001, the rapidly increasing inflation had a devastating effect on all government services (Colclough, Kingdon & Patrinos, 2009). In addition to the economic difficulties faced by many families, school fees had been re-introduced in 1991.It was considered worthwhile for the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture



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to transfer some of its functions to local authorities that were nearest to the point of service delivery. As a result, parents were given this responsibility of managing and governing schools without any financial support from central government (Samkange, 2013).

The motivation to pursue community-level decentralisation for many countries including Zimbabwe emanated from increased pressure in the 1990s to meet the "Education For All" goals, which in turn put additional pressure on governments to increase educational access in a context of limited, or even decreasing budgets for education (Bonal, 2013). According to Samkange (2013), Zimbabwe adopted the World Bank/IMF-driven ESAP from 1990 to 1995 which was based on improving the utilisation of resources within the education sector and decentralising responsibilities more to the regional and district levels. Community-level neoliberal decentralisation based on relations of accountability between the community and the school, and for reasons of efficiency, was an option that was supported by international funders at the time. The community-level educational decentralisation was meant to receive greater financial contributions from communities and parents. However, it should be noted that the reasons, forms and degrees of decentralisation adopted depended on socio-cultural, political and economic contexts of implementation across the different countries in the world. In this respect, a description of the level of decentralisation of a country or where it is positioned on the continuum from centralised to decentralised depends on the aspects of the system that are being examined. Informed by both local imperatives and international trends, Zimbabwe adopted a decentralised system of school governance and management.

The government of Zimbabwe introduced decentralisation as a governance system (Samkange, 2013). However, decentralisation is seen as competing with centralised power and therefore undermining the authority of central government (Moyo, Moyo & Ncube, 2015). Decentralisation would mean the consolidation of the self-management of sub-national levels of government. It is because of the foregoing that central government was slow in developing clear strategies and procedures for public governance decentralisation (Chatiza, 2008). Decentralisation would also mean that central government would create units of government that are outside its control. The local units will be accountable to their constituencies instead of central government. Local government would be viewed as a competitor not as a partner in



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development (Chigwata, 2018). On the education front, there were fears that decentralisation would not support the whole purpose of equality and equity as the poor may end up sharing nothing. Dieltiens & Enslin (2002) posited that the concept would lead to segregated development in education, where one school would be better resourced than the other, depending on the economic status of the parents that constituted the parent body.

The Zimbabwe government put forward a number of arguments for decentralising education functions. Firstly, the Education Act of 1993 aimed at cost reduction on the part of government as part of the austerity measures supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund through the ESAP. Through this initiative, current and capital costs were to be divided between the government and the community. Secondly, the government aimed at cost recovery, whereby the tuition paid would generate revenue for both government and the schools. Shared responsibility was envisaged to improve quality of education by making resources available through collective effort, maintaining high standards and embracing community participation in school management and governance. The government transferred a considerable part of the responsibility for planning, financing and implementing the expansion of the school system to local communities and households (Chikoko, 2009). Zimbabwe introduced a decentralised system of education governance, allowing powers previously vested in the higher tiers of the education system to be transferred to individual and clusters of schools through SDCs.

Chifunyise (1999) stated that standards of education would remain a function of central government for a while (this has been the case until now), in order to ensure that high standards of education were maintained. Functions transferred followed from the Public Service Commission at the head office, to the head of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and to the Provincial Education directors. From the provincial education director's level, one of their responsibilities was to develop district education offices. The new district offices would then transfer power to schools and parental bodies.

In all post-independent structures, District Education Officers executed the following functions:

- Attending to decentralisation issues at district level



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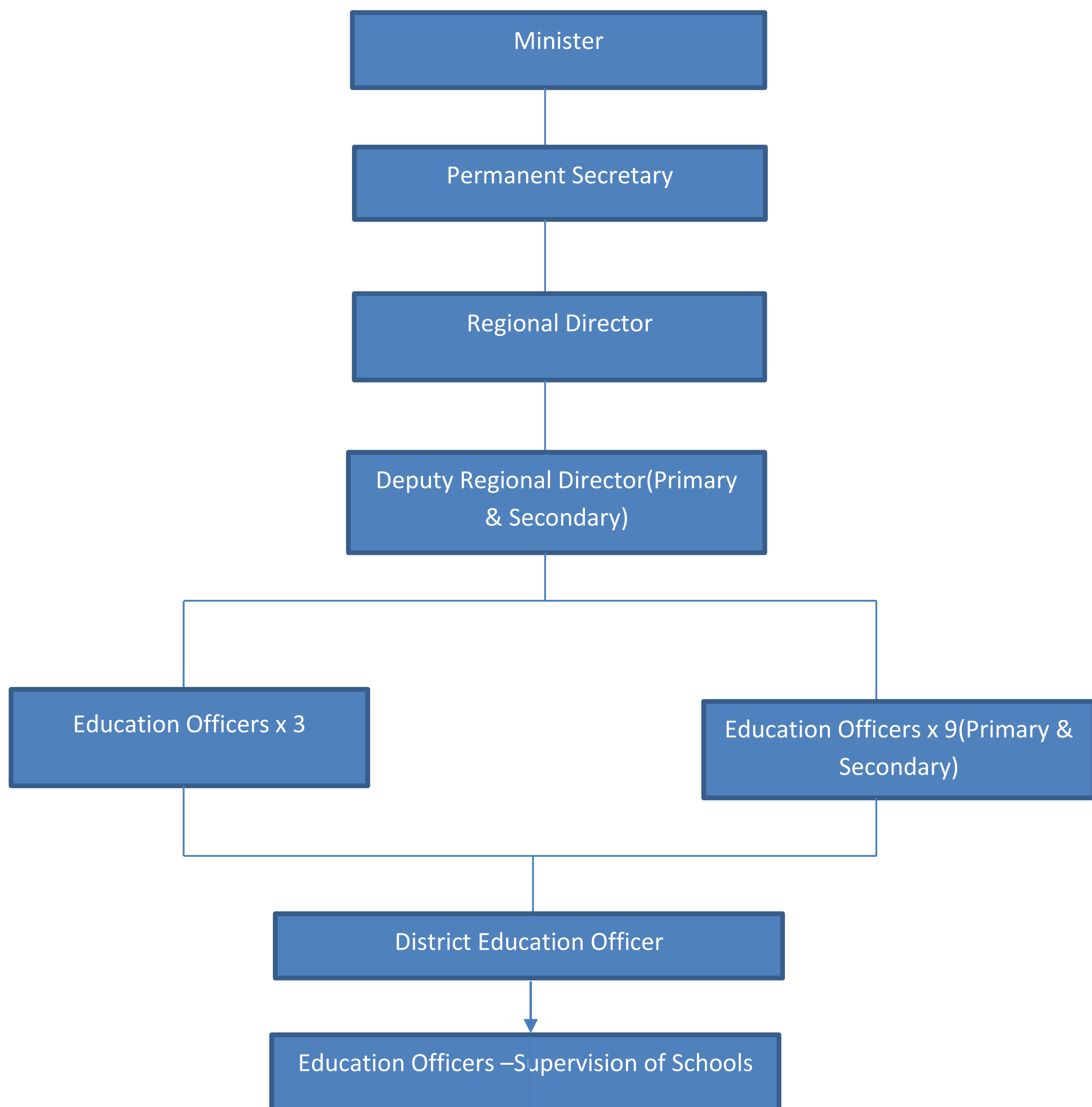
- Attending to all education issues at primary and secondary school levels
- Interfacing with all local authorities
- Staffing (recruitment and selection of personnel)
- Co-ordination of distribution activities

It is shown in the post - independence education structure in figure1.0, that SDCs exercised their functions so that they would provide and assist in the operation and development of the schools. Despite increasing attention being given to SDCs, relatively little information is known about factors that influenced their implementation of educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe's public schools.

**Fig 1.0: Post-independence education structure**




**Source:** Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture – Zimbabwe (October 1997).



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## 1.2 Legal and policy framework for educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe

In order to solve inequitable and discriminatory practices of successive colonial governments, the post - independence Republic of Zimbabwe government of 1980 introduced the policy of education as a basic human right, and committed itself to universal and equal educational opportunity for all (Samkange, 2013).The government of Zimbabwe gazetted free and compulsory primary education through the Education Act of 1984.

The Education Act of 1987 was passed and has been amended by a number of times. The Act has been amended by Act, No.26 of 1991, Act, No.24 of 1994, Act No.19 of 1998 and Act No. 22 of 2001. The Education Act of 1987 set out general principles and objectives on school education among which was decentralising the management and administration of the education system. However, it was through the Education Amendment Act of 1991 (later the Education Act of 1992), that powers previously vested in the higher tiers of the education system were transferred to individual and clusters of schools through school development committees (SDCs).One of the key measures that was included in the Education Amendment Act of 1991 was the decentralisation of the management and administration of the education system to promote efficiency and equity in the development of regions.

School development functions have been decentralised from the central government to local authorities as per Statutory Instrument 87 of Act of 1992 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1992) in an effort to reduce central government expenditure. The Statutory Instrument, among other things, clearly spells out that each public school shall elect a SDC whose major function would be to source for resources to develop its school and improve the welfare of the pupils and the teachers at the school. The development of schools falls under SDCs elected yearly at each school at a parents' Annual General Meeting called specifically for that purpose.

Fiscal matters have proved to be the main problem in Zimbabwe's decentralisation efforts. For example, development planning was decentralised in the 1980s, but the allocation of development funds remained centralised. The government was the major funding source for all schools; but it imposed a tight budget control over public education; cost reduction and withdrawal of subsidies (Moyo et al., 2015). For example, economic liberalisation in the 1990s through the ESAP (1990 - 1995), was associated with a re-definition of the functions of central government in favour of



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doing less direct planning and implementation of development programs, including pressure to reduce subsidies seen as increasing budget deficits and thus a cause of fiscal indiscipline (Coclough, Lofstedt, Manduvi-Moyo, Maravanyika & Ngwata, 1990). The ESAP framework had the standard features of the World Bank and IMF economic reform strategies (Chipika, Chibanda & Kadenge, 2000). ESAP in Zimbabwe entailed the reduction of Government expenditure by retrenching 25% of the civil service, withdrawing subsidies, introducing user-fees in the education sector, among others. However, the Government of Zimbabwe introduced a "safety net", Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) against the debilitating effects of ESAP on education. The BEAM ensured that vulnerable children had access to education and were retained in the system.

The Education Act of 1996 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1996) authorised the establishment of SDCs which would be vested with the control of financial affairs of the school. SDCs' 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 SDC.

Although educational decentralisation had been introduced since the early 1980s, little effective power had been decentralised (Chatiza, 2018). Some of the reasons were that schools experienced a number of problems such as scarcity of resources, withdrawal of government education grants, hyperinflationary environment, lack of institutional capacity, lack of united effort within school communities, and political interference. Chatiza (2008) further affirms that the ineffectiveness of Zimbabwe's decentralisation has also been made worse by a general focus on rural local government, which has been seen as lacking capacity, partly to explain the inevitability, and perhaps desirability, of centralisation. However, it was fiscal matters which proved to be a key problem in Zimbabwe's early educational decentralisation efforts. In addition to the foregoing, in October 1996 Provincial Heads of Ministries identified a number of inadequacies in Zimbabwe's decentralisation (Government of Zimbabwe, 1996) which included a lack of consultation, communication, and information dissemination. It was also reported that the decentralisation process was affected by limited stakeholder commitment, especially by Parliament and the political party, ZANU-PF.The Heads also noted that the national decentralisation



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process was not synchronised with time frames in individual Ministries, in part also affected by an absence of a national vision on the (desired) structure of government after decentralisation. As a result, Zimbabwe's decentralisation programme or process remained at the level of policy, more of rhetoric than reality. According to Chatiza (2010), local government law reforms needed to provide for decentralisation and to guide reconciliation of institutional arrangements or definition of the form of a decentralised governance system. It was argued that such legal clarity was bound to authenticate government commitment and allow easier implementation of decentralisation.

Zimbabwe started a process of decentralisation through legislative and institutional initiatives in a bid to improve service delivery (Chigwata, 2018). Decentralisation in Zimbabwe has been identified by a series of legislative enactments, directives and pronouncements, creating structures and procedures to facilitate the transfer of power and authority to lower levels of government. To allow local participation in development and decision-making, a re-organisation exercise of the pre-independence local government system in rural and urban areas was carried out. Pre-independence legal instruments (African Councils Act, Urban Councils Act, and Rural Councils Act) were amended and replaced by Rural District Councils Act 1998 in an attempt to show the new government's thrust. There has been references to decentralisation and people's participation in most of the Zimbabwe Government's policy documents including Growth with Equity (1981), the Prime Minister's Directive, the local government Acts and Zimbabwe Policy Reform for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST). Under the Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralisation and Development of 1984, further strengthened in 1996, the government of Zimbabwe introduced decentralisation as a governance system (Samkange, 2013). According to Chatiza (2010), the directives guided the establishment of grass-roots participation structures and provided a framework for coordination of government institutions' participation in development. These directives provided for the establishment of a hierarchy of representative bodies at the village, ward, district and provincial levels.

Chatiza (2010) argued that these directives did not show any stronger intent towards decentralisation of real powers to lower governments. However, the momentum for decentralisation increased with the launch of the Rural District Councils Capacity



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Building Programme in 1996 culminating in the adoption of the "Thirteen Principles of Decentralisation". The principles were concerned with a variety of areas including decentralisation of responsibilities and fiscal powers, capacity building and coordination of government activities (Chimanikire & Zinyama, 2019).

According to Musekiwa (2020), by 1996, the institutions set up to support the decen-tralisation process assisted central government to reach a consensus regarding general procedures and principles for decentralisation, which were consolidated into "The Thirteen Principles". These principles clarified central government's position on a number of critical issues, and provided a broad framework to guide the more detailed policy, legislative and the development of a comprehensive national decentralisation strategy. Amongst the most significant general principles delineated in the cluster of "thirteen" are those that: recognised decentralisation as critical for democracy; defined decentralisation in terms of the permanent legislated transfer of functions and authority from central government to local authorities; and recognized decentralisation as a process and not an event, which required the gradual building up of relevant human, financial and material capacities of local authorities, based on a learning-by-doing approach (Ministry of Local Government & National Housing ,1998). The following are the "Thirteen Principles":

1. That decentralisation is necessary and desirable based on the clear understanding that it promotes and strengthens democracy and civic responsibility as citizens participate in their governance and development. It also helps in minimizing bureaucracy by reducing levels of decision-making and thereby achieving greater efficiency of operations. However, it will not be taken as a strategy for dumping problems of sector ministries to the rural district councils.

2. That decentralisation be defined and understood to mean the legislated transfer of functions and authority from central government to local authorities such as the rural district councils on a permanent basis. Once provided for in law, such transfer of powers and functions can be reversed only on the basis of an amendment to the appropriate law.



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3. That there is need for all Ministries to use the same local institutions for the implementation and management of decentralised functions and not to create parallel or separate institutions. Where parallel institutions exist, these should be harmonised.

4. That decentralisation is a process and not an event, as such, it should be implemented cautiously and progressively, having regard to the human, financial and material capacities of the local authorities to whom the transfers would be made.

5. That in respect of those activities and projects to be undertaken by local authorities, sector ministries retain the power and authority to set standards, monitor performance and consistency to national policies and standards, and intervene appropriately to ensure compliance. This means that local authorities will, in executing their legal powers and responsibilities, be required to comply with the requirements of national policies, laws and regulations.

6. That an inter-ministerial committee of Ministers to manage decentralisation and capacity building be established. In this regard, the existing inter-ministerial Capacity Building Co-ordinating Committee will report to a Working Party of Heads of Ministries, who in turn will report to Ministers on policy issues.

7. That central government, in implementing decentralisation, shall strengthen financial, human and material resource capacities of rural district councils so as to make them effective institutions in the provision of the social and infrastructural services needed for sustainable local development.

8. That central government will continue to be responsible for the provision of trunk services which impact upon more than one local authority area or are of a national character. This refers to all social, infrastructural and economic projects that impact upon more than one local authority and call for more resources than can be mobilised by one local authority. For this purpose, line Ministries concerned will provide guidelines on which projects are to be undertaken by local authorities having regard to the social and economic impact of projects, the capital outlay required, and the level of professional and technical expertise needed to execute the projects.



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9. That the transfer of powers and functions by line ministries to rural district councils be done by the line ministry concerned and that the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development will co-ordinate and facilitate this effort.
10. That all monies for recurrent and capital expenditure sourced by line ministries and are earmarked for rural district councils be disbursed to the rural district councils soon after the promulgation of the Appropriation Act. Such grants will not pass through the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development.

11. That all loans to rural district councils should be channelled through the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development except for those loans from the National Housing Fund administered by the Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing which will be disbursed direct to the councils by that ministry. The Ministry of Public Construction and National Housing will disburse the loans only after the local authority concerned has been granted borrowing powers by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development.

12. That in Zimbabwe there be only two levels, which collect taxes, levies, and other user charges namely central government and local authorities. Thus, rural district councils should collect such taxes, levies, fees and user charges for those services they should provide in terms of any appropriate law, or regulation.

13. That the Public Service Commission will manage the transfer of personnel from central government to rural district councils where this happens as part of decentralisation.
Source: Chatiza (2020:11).

Guided by “The Thirteen Principles”, at the end of 1996, the Capacity Building Co-ordinating Committee (CBCC) drafted and a Committee of Ministers adopted proposals on “An Outline of the Decentralisation Implementation Strategy” as the guiding national strategy for implementing decentralisation. The Outline Strategy proposed a three-dimensional approach involving: acceleration of capacity building of local authorities; acceleration of the legislated transfer of functions from central government to local authorities; and creation of an enabling environment that facilitates the necessary capacity building and transfer of functions (Ministry of Local



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Government & National Housing, 1998).The "Outline Decentralisation Implementation Strategy" suggested, for example, that each ministry should "select and justify the functions it *wants* to decentralise and those it *wants* to retain and table this information" (Ministry of Local Government & National Housing, 1998).

The years 2001 to 2008 witnessed the stalling in progress towards decentralisation. Attention was diverted from efforts to decentralise to a deteriorating economy and the land reform programme. As the central government became weak and fragile, it developed tendencies to centralise, projecting power through controlling and directing local government operations and generally eroding the gains achieved in decentralisation efforts since independence in 1980 (Musekiwa, 2020). However, the period 2009 to 2019 marked the constitutionalisation of the decentralisation policy. The Constitution adopted in 2013 took decentralisation to the frontiers, at least in law. Besides recognising the provincial and local authorities as tiers of government, the new constitution adoptedS devolution as a guiding framework (Chigwata, 2019). Currently the issues of citizen participation and social accountability are at the core of decentralisation philosophy. It is no longer adequate to have decentralised structures that are not accountable to the people. Of late the issues of sustainability are coming on the fore following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. The government on 21 July 2020 committed itself to implementing the Devolution and Decentralisation Policy as enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment (20) Act, 2013. Section 264(1) of the Constitution oblige the Central Government to devolve more powers and functions to sub-national tiers of government (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).

Devolution was adopted as a key component of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe which, in Chapter 14, states that it is desirable to ensure the preservation of national unity, prevention of all forms of disunity and secessionism, the democratic participation in government by all citizens and communities, and that there must be devolution of power and responsibilities to lower tiers of government (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).

According to Government of Zimbabwe (2019), the objectives of the Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation Policy are:



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- To give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions on issues affecting them;
- To promote democratic, effective, transparent, accountable and coherent Government in Zimbabwe as a whole;
- To preserve and foster peace, national unity, and indivisibility of Zimbabwe as a sovereign State;
- To provide for the recognition of the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their own development;
- To encourage and ensure the equitable sharing of local and national resources;
- To transfer local fiscal responsibilities and resources from the national government to sub-national entities in order to establish a sound financial base for each provincial and metropolitan council and local authorities in rural areas.

It is envisioned that devolution will not only transfer political power from Central Government to sub - national tiers of government, but will also be augmented by a delivery of fiscal powers which will enable Provincial/Metropolitan and Local Authorities to spearhead economic and social development in their respective jurisdictions using leveraged local resources which will be enhanced by mandatory transfers of national fiscal resources to deveolved entities (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019).

According to Government of Zimbabwe (2019), the successful implementation of the policy will recognise and guarantee the continued existence of the powers of lower tiers of government to legislate by-laws, formulate own development policies, as well as manage their fiscal affairs as per the requirements of the Constitution and laws of Zimbabwe.

Provincial Development Coordinators will oversee the delivery of services being performed by various ministries and statutory bodies. As the implementation of devolution takes root, Provincial/Metropolitan and Local Authorities will not have sufficient financial capacities to provide services devolved by Central Government to



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them. Education has been identified as one of the critical services that require funding (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019).

Treasury disbursements to Metropolitan/Provincial Councils and Local Authorities will complement own mobilised resources to fund service delivery across various communities. Central Government transfers including grants for supplementary funding of devolved functions would be through Local Authorities budgets. Treasury's financial support is in recognition that it is necessary for government to avoid devolving responsibilities for critical service deliveries without funding to execute those mandates (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019).

Capacity building emerges as one of the key factors which will facilitate successful implementation of the devolution policy. Capacitation of officials will also be required for them to manage new devolved administrative responsibilities transparently and in an accountable manner. With increased mandates, there will be need for greater capacitation of the lower tiers of government. Devolving decision – making over local administration will enable local authorities to respond much faster to local delivery service requirements (Musekiwa, 2020).

### 1.3 Problem statement

Decentralisation has become a strategic policy for governmental restructuring in developing countries. The implementation of decentralisation by SDCs in public schools is considered to be an effective approach that increases parental and community involvement in school governance and management in Zimbabwe. The decentralisation of decision - making increases local authority and enhances autonomy of schools. However, policy makers and development administrators in Africa continue to express dissatisfaction with the way decentralisation policies have been implemented. Decentralisation is not always easily implemented; many developing countries have failed or are failing to introduce effective decentralised governance systems (Olum, 2014). In fact, educational decentralisation has been implemented and is being implemented in many developing countries without much success (Olum, 2014).

Some researchers have focused on the impact of fiscal decentralisation on education outcomes (Barankay & Lockwood, 2007; Galiani, Gertler & Schargrodsky, 2008) at the individual or at the local or regional level. Some studies analysed the



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impact of a country's general level of decentralisation on education outcomes measured with PISA test scores, for example, Diaz-Serrano & Meix – Llop (2012). I argue that there are a variety of factors or conditions that affect the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. There is limited research on the factors influencing the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. For example, a study by Chikoko (2009) focused on the effectiveness of school heads, teachers and parents governors in conducting school affairs (finance, human resources and curriculum) in selected schools in Zimbabwe. The study focused on decentralisation and improvement of quality. Another study by Ngwenya and Pretorius (2013) focused on the legal framework governing parental involvement with education in Zimbabwe. Thus, there remain questions about how those tasked to implement such a reform understand, experience and respond to it.

Education Statutory Instrument (SI) 87 of Act of 1992 decentralised the school governance and management system in Zimbabwe. The Statutory Instrument stipulated that SDCs were to manage schools. The education functions which were decentralised included recruitment and management of personnel, procurement of resources, resource management, financial management, maintenance, and school development in general (Samkange, 2013). Despite the establishment of user committees as a way to empower local citizens, there has been no research on the factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. In addition, how these factors are responsible for the varied implementation of education decentralisation from one school to another is also unknown. These factors also potentially result in relative variances in effectiveness of SDCs even when the prescripts for education decentralisation are the same in Zimbabwe. Questions have been asked on the level of competency, structures, resources and capacity of schools to properly execute the numerous and complex tasks assigned to them.

A wide variety of factors have led to the implementation of decentralisation in many countries. However, it is sufficient to base the statement of the problem for this study on four key factors which are institutional capacity, community participation, resources and school-based management (SBM). The study aimed to find out whether or not SDCs have the institutional capacity and resources to effectively carry



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out their roles in a decentralised education set-up of two different public schools, that is, one affluent and the other poor.

## 1.4 Research questions

Based on the research problem, one overall research question and five sub-questions guided the research. The main question that is directly linked with the title and which guided this study is: How did SDCs implement the decentralised governance and management functions? The main research question can be broken down into the following aspects from which sub-questions will be derived; stakeholders' understanding of decentralised functions, participation of role players in decentralised educational governance and management, capacity of role players to enable implementation and the processes involved. There continues to be conceptual confusion regarding the concept of decentralisation within the broader literature, so I realised the need to explore ideas around decentralisation on the basis of its existing reality in Zimbabwe (this connects to the legal and policy framework). Education decentralisation in Zimbabwe is the product of Zimbabwe's social, economic and political context and history. The study considers how different actors understand it. The following sub - questions were derived from the main research question:

(a) How do different stakeholders understand the concept of educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe?

(b) What are the experiences of the various role players in decentralised governance and management?

(c) How does the capacity of different role players enable implementation of educational decentralisation?

(d) How do educational decentralisation processes play out in practice?

(e) How does the SDCs approach the newly transferred functions?

The final product of this research study would enable people to learn about:



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- The context of education decentralisation;
- The dynamics of the implementation process;
- Participants' personal experiences and perspectives.

The research therefore focused on the study of the people, situation, phenomenon, content and process of two different cases of an affluent and a poor school.

### 1.5 Rationale

The gap in the national literature and research coupled with the novelty of the research subject matter represent the underlying reasons for doing this study. There has been research at the meso-level providing quantitative analyses of specific countries (for example, by Eskeland and Filmer, 2002) which does not deeply explore processes underlying their results. Studies which are in-depth at the micro-level are fewer (Dauda, 2004; Gershberg, Patrinos and Rubio - Codina, 2009). This study found it essential to focus on the examination of the processes of implementing educational decentralisation at the micro-level rather than on the assessment of outcomes. As a result, the motivation of this research study was to understand management and governance processes within two different public schools, and the potentially central role of SDCs in implementing education decentralization. Education decentralisation is particularly apt as a research area considering its importance to the broader transition that Zimbabwe is currently undergoing. In addition, a study that needs to understand that decentralisation is complex with many different actors with their behaviours and interrelationships cannot be examined quantitatively using a linear approach.

Another reason for conducting this study is that there has been a strong bias towards quantitative research and the production of statistical data in education decentralisation studies. The studies do not collect primary data from participants' real - life experiences using multiple tools from qualitative research. As a result very little in-depth qualitative research on education decentralisation in Zimbabwe has been undertaken. Education decentralisation has been based more on researches in Westernised contexts and there is an existing gap in Zimbabwe. The primarily theoretical studies reviewed (for example, Cheema, 2007; Steiner, 2005) lack such local contextualisation. Much of the research has been desktop reviews of the decentralisation policy and legislation, generated by donor agencies based on



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research commissioned and funded by these organisations in connection with their aid programmes.

None of these studies in Zimbabwe has focused specifically on what influences the implementation of decentralised functions by SDCs in a public school system. In addition, studies on decentralisation in Zimbabwe have not been comprehensive, mainly focusing on fiscal decentralisation (Conyers, 2007). Therefore, I perceived a situation that needed to be addressed. I saw the exploration of factors influencing the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools as a relevant question both for education and policy.

In addition, many of the studies on decentralisation in education have used comparative international data overtime and few studies have been directed at the micro-level of specific schools. This study applied a qualitative analysis that provided insights into processes that shape the decisions and strategies of educational decentralisation, how these decisions and strategies played out at an affluent and also at an underprivileged school. Similarly, there have been studies that have provided a historical overview of the decentralisation of education in Zimbabwe. However, the literature did not provide an understanding of the "black box" of school management and governance of an affluent and a poor school under educational decentralisation. This study obtained primary data (collected directly from first-hand experience at the two schools) by employing multiple tools from qualitative research methods.

Community participation in schools through SDCs has been observed through an exclusively institutional or administrative perspective. The research will challenge some of the mechanistic and taken-for-granted assumptions in which attempts to promote local management of schools in low income countries are premised. Despite the widespread adoption and implementation of decentralisation, there is still a gap in knowledge as to what influences the implementation of decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe public schools.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

Chegutu District in Zimbabwe was the focus of this study because through its district structures it experienced a decentralisation process in the education sector. The study while located in the broader decentralisation project in Zimbabwe focused on



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SDCs within the local school system, specifically. The focus of this research project is on how SDC members, school heads, teachers, parents and the schools inspector reacted to the introduction of decentralised functions at two of Zimbabwe's public schools. I purposefully selected two cases based on such predefined criteria as history, structures, achievements, and location. In addition, the two cases embody very different models of SBM and parent representation in SDCs. There may be many other factors which influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs, but the research only focused on SBM, institutional capacity, resources and community participation within the selected public schools.

### 1.7 Overview of the research methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted for this research. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), qualitative methods involve collecting textual or verbal data (data which cannot be counted). I chose this approach because it allowed me to gain insight into various actors' experiences with educational decentralisation at school level. In this research, participants expressed their experiences and subsequently generated textual data thus lending itself to the qualitative approach. A qualitative research approach explored the decisions actors and recipients of education decentralisation made and considered the actors' meanings and narratives. The data collection methods used for this research were suitable for the qualitative data needed in order to gain more in-depth understanding of the topic under study. The methods are essentially planned, scientific and value-neutral (Yin, 2013). What that means is that good research methods don't "just happen". Instead, they are deliberately employed in a way that is designed to maximise the accuracy of the results. The first group of research methods used in this study includes those methods which were concerned with the collection of data. The second group consisted of those methods I used to evaluate the accuracy of the results obtained. Research methods prescribe the data collection technique and the instruments that would be used to analyse the data collected for reaching a conclusion to the problem.

Research tools may vary in complexity, interpretation, design and administration (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Each tool is suitable for the collection of certain type of information. The different instruments I used for data collection for this study are:



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- Interview guides
- Focus group discussion guides
- Document review

The study was conducted at the practical/material level where there was interaction of school leadership, school governance, teachers and parents.This research was guided by the interpretive paradigm which understands how people make sense of the context in which they work or live. According to Cohen et al., (2011), the interpretive paradigm understands and explains actions. This research is underpinned by this paradigm because its intention was to understand perceptions and experiences of the various actors implementing decentralised educational functions and explaining reasons for their actions. An interpretivist research paradigm is used which believes that reality is in the mind of people and is socially constructed through interaction and thus its interpretation is based on the definitions people attach to the phenomenon in the social context (Sarantakos, 1998). In addition, the interpretivist perspective is based on the assumption that every situation is different and unique and requires analyses of the uniquely defined, particular contexts in which it is embedded (Denizen & Lincoln, 2011). The other interpretivist assumption is that human life can only be understood from within; meaning that human activities cannot be observed from some external reality. It emphasises that social reality is viewed and interpreted by the individual according to the ideological positions that she or he holds (Willis, 2007). Therefore, knowledge is personally experienced rather than acquired from or imposed from outside. Interpretivists affirm that reality is multi-layered and complex and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations (Merriam, 2009).

The research is a case study design that explores factors influencing the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. As proposed by Yin (2013) a case study can be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. Therefore the case study design fitted in well with this study since it explored and described experiences of various actors involved in the implementation of educational decentralisation within the two cases.Two public schools were purposefully selected as case studies. Purposeful sampling selected information-rich cases for the study in depth. Case studies observed effects in real-life contexts where data is examined within the context of its use. The case study design was



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deemed appropriate because educational decentralisation involves complex interactions among individuals within their natural settings. This research design focused on achieving depth of understanding of factors. The objective of exploring the factors fitted very well with a qualitative research methodology comprising semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions which elicited participants' perceptions. Conducting in-depth interviews will achieve a deep understanding of the issues under investigation. The research instruments were pilot tested by an external party for validity. By using these instruments, it was easier to get closer to research participants and the phenomenon under study. The two schools vary substantially in context as they are at different stages, in terms of history, culture and available resources. Oxford Primary School (pseudonym) is a small, well-performing school academically, attended by relatively wealthier middle-class students. Havana Primary School (pseudonym) is much larger though less efficient, enrolling the vast majority of learners from poorer households and communities. Qualitative research was the appropriate approach for this research because it is about interpreting social phenomenon according to the meaning which participants attach to it. In addition, it provided insights into processes that shaped decision-making under educational decentralisation.

Thematic analysis of data was applied whereby wide and varied text data were condensed and linked with research questions. The organisation of themes was in accordance with the conceptual framework. Various themes were connected to give a holistic view of educational decentralisation based on participants' accounts. A total of five themes emerged namely: (a) new and increased responsibilities for school heads ;(b) procurement of school resources;(c) management of school finances and collection of fees;(d) maintenance of school infrastructure; and promotion of school-community relations.

## 1.8 Clarification or definitions of key terms

### Group "A" school

It is a former government school that welcomed white pupils only during the colonial period, prior to independence. This school type reinforced the superiority of whites even though they were the minority of the population. White pupils historically



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attended Group “A” schools that offered highly trained teachers and a quality education (Nyagura, 1991). Soon after independence, this school type was attended by pupils from relatively wealthy families, who, irrespective of race, could afford the high fees that were charged in order to maintain the status or class of the school.The Group “A” schools were located in areas that are inhabited by people of average and above average economic means.

**Group “B” school**

It is a former government school that welcomed black pupils only during the colonial period. Group “B” schools were only available for African pupils and had fewer resources, funding and qualified faculty compared to Group “A” schools. Currently, the learner profile comprises a majority of black pupils who are generally poor, and the fees charged are relatively low. Group “B” schools were situated in areas inhabited by people of below average economic means.

The Zimbabwe government disbanded this classification system in an effort to achieve racial equality in all schools (Nkoma, 2013). White and black pupils have the opportunity to enrol in the same schools and receive the same education regardless of race.

**Public school**

It is a type of school open to all the citizens usually financed by the state or government.

**School- based management (SBM)**

For the purpose of this research, SBM has been defined as some responsibility for making decisions about planning, management and /or the raising or allocation of resources within schools and their proximal institutions, as opposed to government authorities at the central, regional or district level. SBM is a reform in which decision making authority is devolved to the level of the school (Falch and Fischer, 2012). Within this broad definition, there are three main mechanisms discussed, (i)reforms that devolve decision-making around management to the school level;(ii)reforms that devolve decision-making around funding to the school level; and (iii) reforms that devolve decision-making around curriculum, pedagogy and other aspects of the classroom environment to the school level.



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**School Development Committee (SDC)**

The SDC is the corporate body which ensures that parents and the communities contribute in the progress of education at the local level. It is the governing body of a public school in Zimbabwe. It is supposed to govern in the interests of the broader community in which the school is located (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, n.d). In discharging their duties SDCs are guided and bound by several statutory instruments and regulations which were established in terms of Section 36 of the Education Act of 1991. All schools (regardless of size, complexity and nature) have a SDC which should meet the interests and expectations of a range of its stakeholders. SDCs are made up of members from different interest groups but parents must form the majority.

Section 6 Clause (1) (Subsections (2) and (3) of the Education Act, No.5 of 1992 determines that a SDC shall be comprised of five parents/guardians chosen by fellow parents/guardians of children enrolled at the school. This is done at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is usually held at the beginning of the year which is held again after a year making one year as their 'term of office'. The school head, the deputy head and one senior teacher are ex-officio members who are in the committee by the strength of their positions in the school. 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. 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, will be a member. Government of Zimbabwe (1992), stipulates that persons declared insolvent or bankrupt and those with a criminal record shall not stand for office. Even a spouse of the person elected to handle finances of the committee is not eligible for any post. 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.

**School head**

The School Head is mandated with two different responsibilities: leadership and administrative roles. School Heads have the power and responsibility to make



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decisions and oversee school activities (Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007). The school assumes the ultimate responsibility for the overall management and operation of the school in accordance with the Education Act, Administration Code and school policies and regulations. The school head is accountable or reports to the District Schools Inspector.

It is the school head's responsibility to define, refine and propagate the vision, mission and goals of the school in line with the current Education Act of Zimbabwe. The other responsibility of the school head is to conduct frequent classroom observationsin order to analyse instruction and collaboarate with staff to ensure continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (n.d), stipulates that the school head prepares the annual budget proposals for the school and manage fundraising efforts by articulating the goals for which funds are being raised. According to the Education Amendment Act of 2006, the school head is an "ex-officio" member of the SDC, meaning that she/he is not elected into the SDC but becomes member, and remain so, by virtue of the official position she/he occupies in the school. The school head is bound by the decisions of the SDC of his/her school. It is the responsibility of the school head to ensure that he/she works with the SDC as a team in order to achieve higher levels of performance and quality education for their children. The school head oversees the implementation of all government policies, chair the finance committee and be a signatory to the school accounts. As per Secretary's Circular No.5 of 2015, the school head, is a sub-accounting officer.

The SDC gives the school head the authority to manage all other aspects within the school. The school head must ensure that the policies established by the SDC are applied on a daily basis and that the set objectives are achieved in the school setting.

According to the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture; Vacancy Announcement No. 8 of 2005 the duties and responsibilities of a school head are as follows:

- be a link between the school, the district office, the community and the general public;
- assess teachers' performance regularly and writing reports as may be required;
- evaluate the curricular objectives as well as school projects;



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- ensure that official records are kept up-to-date;
- implement performance management in the school;
- manage and efficiently utilise the available human and material resources in the school;
- prepare school development plans and budgets;
- To ensure adherence to regulations, procedures and rules by all staff members;
- manage and handle matters related to students, teachers and non-teaching staff members;
- monitoring of school projects such as construction and maintenance;
- management of infrastructure including school buildings and equipment;
- effective implementation of the curriculum, quality academic and maintenance of discipline and academic performance.

Apart from that, school heads are responsible for harmonizing conflict issues and delivering directives, which ensure that the information concerned with school development is conveyed to district level authorities and officers. These responsibilities were expected to be performed by all school heads. In addition to the administrative and management functions noted above, the school head was supposed to be an instructional leader. In some instances, the school head was assisted by SDCs (Chikoko, 2009). These had been formed with the view of not only assisting the school heads with school governance matters, but as a democratisation gesture within the education system, as well. In addition to performing the functions already alluded to, the responsibilities of the school head correspondingly increased with the decentralisation of education functions in Zimbabwe. Faced with such additional tasks, the decentralisation of education functions if not well handled would end up with the negative effect of overburdening school heads in addition to their job descriptions.

**Education grants**

According to the Education Act of 1987, assistance granted by government to education institutions is reflective of the historical imbalances in the education system.



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The assistance is in form of per capita grants, tuition grants and building grants. The schools are categorised according to geographical location. The categories are three, namely P1, P2 and P3 for primary schools and S1, S2 and S3 for secondary schools (Nkoma, 2013). In each case, 1 denotes schools found in the affluent, low density suburbs in urban areas while 2 is for those in high density suburbs in urban areas and 3 is for schools found in rural areas. The most disadvantaged – the rural schools, receive the greatest preferential treatment while those in the 1 category receive the least assistance. This 'positive discrimination' is meant to redress the imbalances of the past thus enhancing access and equal opportunities to all (Zvobgo, 2003).

Per capita grants in Zimbabwe are provided to assist registered schools with the recurrent costs of educating students. Recurrent costs are of an operating, ongoing nature and are distinguishable from capital costs on this basis. Non-government schools receive some support from per capita school grants, and government schools receive tuition grants. Per capita grants can only be used for operating purposes.The amount of per capita grants a particular registered school receives is determined by the student census which is conducted twice a year. The central government transfers such grants to schools to purchase school books and learning supplies. Under normal circumstances these transfers would support a fixed amount per pupil. Yet education provinces, having received much less grant revenue than anticipated in the tight fiscal environment, have rationed funds to support the neediest schools. Current low levels of public spending on non-salary support are inadequate to meet the basic costs of running a school, such as paying for teaching and learning supplies, and school utilities. This low level also cannot sufficiently maintain the operations of the MoPSE's national, provincial, or district offices, which often lack funding for basic needs, such as fuel to conduct audits or quality assurance functions (The World Bank, 2017).

## 1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters including the introduction (Chapter one) which states the background, the context of the study covering a historical context (soon after Zimbabwe's independence) upon which the policy of educational



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decentralisation is shaped. In this chapter I identified the research problem, rationale, and research questions that guided the study.

Chapter two's main task is to identify and assess existing literature on education decentralisation. The review also provides a synthesis of theoretical perspectives and the findings of previous research on education decentralisation. The review also places this research study in the context of what other scholars have posited.

Chapter three includes the conceptual framework on which the study is based. It discusses the concepts as they are employed in this study. It also establishes the structure in which the factors that influence the roles played by SDCs in the implementation of education decentralisation can be analysed.

Chapter four outlines the research methodology and design that supported the study. The chapter describes the research procedures followed in data collection and the process and techniques for data analysis. The chapter ends by elaborating the limitations of this study and ethical considerations of the research process.

In chapter five, findings are presented, discussed, and analysed on the following themes: (a) school heads' new and increased responsibilities; (b) managing school finances and collection of school fees by SDCs; (c) procuring material resources for the schools;(d) SDCs function of maintaining school infrastructure, and (e) the promotion of school-community relations by SDCs.

Chapter six includes conclusion, recommendations, and implications for decentralised educational governance and management, and the research's contribution to the literature on educational decentralisation. Finally, the chapter outlines future directions that may be undertaken as a way to further broaden and deepen understanding of decentralised school governance and management in Zimbabwe.



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# CHAPTER TWO: Review of literature

## 2.0 Introduction

The main task of this review is to identify and assess the existing literature on education decentralisation. The review also provides a synthesis of theoretical perspectives and the findings of previous research on education decentralisation. I reviewed the literature by conducting a wide search and then systematically filtered journal articles that met pre-defined criteria, organised according to common themes, provided a relationship between chosen categories and the wider subject area of decentralisation. The empirical literature on decentralisation was sorted into the following categories:

- Decentralisation defined
- Neo-liberalism and education decentralisation;
- Community participation and education decentralisation;
- Community participation and delivery of educational services
- Challenges to participation in education
- Shifting responsibility and authority to the school level;
- Decentralisation and school resources
- Decentralisation and institutional capacity
- Methodical approaches to measuring education decentralisation;
- Positioning the study within the literature on education decentralisation;
- Synthesis of the literature on educational decentralisation
- Conclusion

## 2.1 Decentralisation defined

Decentralisation is not a monolithic concept (Smith, 2003). According to Odoom (2016), decentralisation is a highly ambiguous concept that defies a single definition, and this is ascribed to the divergent understanding and context within which the concept is conceived. The term "decentralisation" which is used for such a wide range of activities is described by Bray and Mukundan (2003) as "slippery". The foregoing is supported by Agrawal and Ribot (2000) who contend that the diversity in conceptualisation of decentralisation is attributed to the different schools of thought



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and angles from which scholars and researchers tend to look at the concept. According to UNDP (2004), one of the most critical pre-requisites is to translate decentralisation from theory to practice in order to gain a clear understanding of the concept. Decentralisation is a relative concept with a multitude of dimensions (Rondinelli, Johnson & McCullough, 2007).

Cheema (2007) argues that the basis of decentralisation is the transfer of authority for decision-making, planning, management and resource allocation from the central government to the local government. However, Odoom (2016) posits that Cheema's conceptualisation falls short because he does not situate the concept within the issue of accountability which forms an integral component of decentralisation. The issue of accountability becomes crucially important when people can elect their local government officials who they can hold more directly accountable for their actions or inactions (OECD, 2011; Grindle, 2007). In the same vein, Ribot (2006) observes that with decentralisation the accountability of power-holding actors to their constituents is an important index as this broadens popular participation. I would build upon the definitions by including the involvement of central government because government need not be perceived as a "mere spectator" when power and authority are transferred to the periphery. Again, central government is in power because of the people, particularly those from local communities. As a result central government has to be involved in issues that have to do with the development of local communities. Decentralisation should revolve around a partnership between central government and local communities. Local communities would need central government input and direction in order to have a successful decentralisation. In addition, the aims of decentralisation should be included in the definition, for example, improved education outcomes for children, increased management efficiency at local level, increased local control, and enhanced provision of quality services.

Inherent in the definition of decentralisation are issues such as respect for local autonomy, and establishment of accountability mechanisms through enhanced participation which are critical to practitioners (Ekpo, 2008). Furthermore, human resource capacity ought to accompany the conceptualisation because at the local level it is one critical determinant of the success of decentralisation (Odoom, 2016). In addition, Odoom (2016), Channa and Faguet (2012), contend that though



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decentralisation requires the central government to assist local authorities, local actors should avoid depending heavily on central government.

The discourses of decentralisation potentially challenge the ubiquitous and central role of the state in education. An issue in decentralisation of education has to do with "which of the many functions in the system to decentralise" (King, 2004). It has been demonstrated by Bjork (2006) and Schiefelbein (2006) that total political and administrative decentralisation is never possible, since all policy decisions concerning finance, personnel and staffing retain varying degrees of centralisation.

Generally, literature on decentralisation distinguishes three main forms, namely deconcentration, delegation and devolution, which differ mainly in terms of the degree of autonomy in decision-making that the central government gives to its sub-national units (Stanton, 2009). However, in practice, it is not usually easy to identify definitive cases, since most correspond to hybrid types that combine elements of at least two forms of decentralisation.

### 2.1.1 De-concentration

Rondinelli et al., (2007) and Widmalm (2005) suggest that in its weakest form, de-concentration merely involves the shifting of workloads from the centre to lower levels. This is supported by Winkler (2005) who contends that de-concentration is the simplest form of decentralisation which involves the transfer of certain tasks and work, but not authority to other units in an organisation. Often central governments give local government responsibilities but retain decision-making power. De-concentration does not result in empowerment but rather a move to either ease work pressure or to reduce budget constraints (Litvack, Ahmad & Bird, 2003). Accountability remains with the centre and the centre determines the activities of sub-national units (World Bank, 2003). According to McGinn and Welsh (1999), de-concentration of the education system may be the first step taken by governments in efforts to decentralise.

### 2.1.2 Delegation

In an organisation, it is not possible for one to solely perform all the tasks and take all the decisions. Due to this, delegation and decentralisation of authority came into



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existence. According to Surbhi (2018), delegation means the passing of authority by one person who is at a superior position to someone else who is subordinate to him/her. It is the downward assignment of authority or it involves the transfer of decision-making authority to lower hierarchical units. A delegation of authority refers to a situation whereby the senior is handing over the decision-making powers to his/her junior. With the help of delegation, the workload can be divided to different individuals.

Berkhout (2005) suggests that delegation is a concept that is related to decentralisation. However, these two terms are often used interchangeably, but they are not alike. But, in reality, these two terms are different and do not indicate the same meaning. For example, delegation is a process whereas decentralisation is the end-result of delegation. Furthermore, delegation has a narrow scope as there is limited transfer of authority. Lower level managers of every unit carry out plans framed by the superiors. This authority that can however be withdrawn at the discretion of the delegating unit (Sarrouh, 2003). Delegation is possible without decentralisation. However, delegation becomes decentralisation when the dissemination of authority from a higher level to other levels of management is exercised in the whole entity, on a large scale. So the extent to which the rights, duties and powers are disseminated is important. The delegator continues to control the activities delegated to subordinates.

On the other hand, decentralisation refers to the dispersal of powers by the top-level management to the other level management. It is the systematic transfer of powers and responsibility, throughout the corporate ladder (Surbhi, 2018). Decentralisation is wider in scope as there is wide distribution of authority. Top management controls only strategic issues. Responsibility rests with the decision-making units. Control over routine matters is exercised by lower level managers only. Decentralisation is not possible without delegation. According to Nyendu (2012), decentralisation is the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy. Decentralisation covers a broad range of transfer of the “locus of the decision-making” from central government to regional, municipal or local government.



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Delegation is a prerequisite to decentralisation. Decentralisation is important for the organisation to remain competitive since every decision cannot be taken at the top level decision-making power has to be given to lower levels of management *(www.managementstudyguide.com).*

**Table 2.0: Comparison Chart – decentralisation and delegation**

| Basis for comparison | Delegation | Decentralisation |
|---|---|---|
| **Meaning** | Handing over of an authority from one person of high level to one of low level. | The final outcome achieved when the delegation of authority is performed systematically and repeatedly to the lowest level. |
| **What is it?** | Technique of management. | Philosophy of management. |
| **Accountability** | Superiors are accountable for the acts done by subordinates. | Departmental heads are accountable for the acts of the concerned department. |
| **Requirement** | It is a requirement and/or necessity for all organisations to delegate authority. | It is not a requirement to decentralise. It is an optional philosophy which may or may not be adopted by the organisation. |
| **Liberty of work** | Subordinates do not have full liberty. | A substantial amount of freedom is there. |
| **Control** | The ultimate control is in the hands of superiors. | The overall control rests with top management. Authority for day-to-day control is delegated to departmental heads. |
| **Relationship** | Creates superior-subordinate relationship. | A step towards the creation of semi-autonomous units. |

**Source:** www. elibrary.net

### 2.1.3 Devolution

Devolution is described as the transfer of authority to a unit that can act independently and autonomously, such as provincial, district or local authorities that are legally constituted as separate governance bodies (Smoke, 2003). The foregoing is supported by Rondinelli et al., (2007) by positing that devolution implies a shift in responsibility from the central government to local governments and must see the latter given autonomy and independence that is clearly perceived as a separate level over which central authority exercises little or no direct control. Ladd and Fiske (2009) state that central government through devolution creates units of government



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that are outside its control and have the status and power to secure resources to perform their functions. Permanent authority is transferred over financial, administrative or pedagogical matters and may not be revoked at the whim of central officials (Chettri, 2015; Faguet, Fox & Poeschl, 2014). It is often referred to as the most common understanding of genuine decentralisation. Devolution is an arrangement in which there are reciprocal, mutually beneficial, and coordinate relationships between central and local governments (UNDP, 2005).

Devolution is an inter-organisational transfer of power from the centre to institutions that are outside the general command of the centre (World Bank, 2003). The recipients of such power, usually local governments, exercise these powers with a significant degree of autonomy although the centre can still maintain supervisory powers (Hinsz & Patel (2006). The local units are accountable to their constituencies instead of the central government (Widmalm, 2005). Local government should have the capacity to fulfill its new responsibilities for education (Winkler, 2005). Only when the administrative bodies, which shall carry out the new responsibilities, have sufficient administrative capacity to carry out their new tasks, can the devolution process be efficient (Welsh & McGinn, 1999).

According to Stanton (2009), educational systems in the world are often combined systems of centralised, de-concentrated, delegated, and “devolutioned” organisations. Different educational systems can take different degrees of these three types of decentralisation. Similarly, Hinsz and Patel (2006) contend that these three types of decentralisation show that no simple and straight forward way to decentralise education exists. These different ways to decentralise education also explain why evaluations of decentralisation policies in education have generated very different results (McGinn & Welsh, 1999).

## 2.2 Neoliberalism and education decentralisation

Neoliberalism as defined by Rustin (2016), refers to the entire post-1980 capitalist economic system in which the “free” market is extended to every part of the public and personal worlds. Neoliberalism is a set of economic policies used to describe the movement towards using the market to achieve a wide range of social ends previously filled by government. The theory emphasises market-led development and advocates minimal government spending, for example, the provision of



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education is no longer one of the central roles of the state (Rustin, 2016). The main claim of neoliberalism is an assertion that the market should play the central role in the allocation and distribution of goods and services, pushing the state to a marginal position in the provision of products and services (Rizvi, 2016). Markets ought to determine educational priorities and policies. As a result, the neoliberal thought around decentralisation was conceptualised to embody and further market mechanisms in the provision of education, and a movement towards reform - thinking that is centred on accountability via market type relationships. The foregoing is supported by Daun (2003) who argued that the state, under pressure of "the market forces" and "neoliberal discourse", encouraged "decentralisation in education".

Daun (2003) posits that decentralising education authority leads to autonomy, flexibility, productivity and accountability as well as to more effective and less bureaucratic decision-making. The main reasons cited by neoliberals for education decentralisation include the deepening of the democratic process at the local level, and an improvement in the quality, access, and efficiency in the delivery of schooling.Decentralisation results in more efficient resource utilisation which will subsequently address more local education needs.

Neoliberal educational decentralisation reduces the role of the state in providing financial support to schools, leaving parents and communities to finance schools independently. Decentralisation is located within the locus of neoliberal educational reforms. According to neoliberal policies, a decentralised education system would be more responsive to local communities' needs. Thus, neoliberal decentralisation was widely understood as a means of encouraging local communities to absorb more of the costs of local schools. Neoliberalism is a politico-economic theory that promotes minimal public expenditure on social services (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The theory claims that personal liberty is maximised by limited government interference. The decentralisation aspect of neoliberalism enables the transfer of authority, resources and responsibility of decision-making to local levels (Horsley, 2014).

According to Kuehn (2008), a neoliberal approach assumes that market reforms will decentralise education by freeing schools from the restrictive control of bureaucrats and allow communities to take charge. Neoliberalism conceives of the capitalist



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market as the greatest mode of distribution because it can satisfy the desires and needs of a greater number of people with minimum cost and state intervention. With the rise of neoliberalism, there is an increasing attempt to transfer the cost of education onto the individual.

Neoliberalism has even construed non-wealth generating spheres like education in market terms, submits them to market metrics, and governs them with market techniques and practices (Rizvi, 2016). This introduces managerialism as the organisational arm of neoliberalism designed to institutionalising market principles. Managerialism is a belief in or reliance on the use of professional managers in administering or planning an activity. It is the application of managerial techniques of businesses to the running of other organisations, such as the civil service or local authorities (www.collinsdictionary.com). Education would be organised in such a way that there is fiscal discipline, transfer of control over budgets from central government to schools, privatisation of educational institutions, internationalisation of curriculum and aligning education policies to economic changes (Kuehn, 2008). In addition to the foregoing, Lynch (2014) stated that under managerialism, education is defined in terms of human capital acquisition and making oneself skilled for the economy. Managerialism involves the introduction of private sector techniques to public sector management in the name of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Schools are seen as central cogs in economic markets.

However, according to Marxist analysis, neoliberal education is seen as an instrument for sorting and grading learners (a process seen as "natural" to a class society). The purpose of neoliberal education is essentially to provide the workforce needed to sustain the capitalist economy. Saltman (2015) supported the foregoing by positing that neoliberalism consolidates the long standing social and cultural reproduction functions of schools that have historically prepared the next generation to fill the same class function as their parents.

## 2.3 Community participation and education decentralisation

Decentralisation is not merely a dispersion of control and responsibilities from the centre to the periphery. Decentralisation, both as a process and an end, requires the engagement of and commitment from the units receiving these responsibilities (Conyers, 2007). The notion of participation has taken on a greater currency as a



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fundamental tenet in the promotion of local governance of schools. According to Gaventa and Barret (2012), participation discourse experienced a renewed resurgence resulting from reactions to the influence of neoliberal market-based policies that fostered individualism and competitiveness. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines participation as giving people constant access to decision-making and power (UNDP 1993). According to Taylor (2007), one of the rationales for participation came as a result of the inadequacies and inabilities of the community to productively engage in the economic, political and cultural spheres of society. Another school of thought around participation is that the administration and delivery of services is improved when it is sensitive and aligned to community needs. Thus, policy initiatives need to work towards engaging communities in the delivery of public services by decentralising functions and accountabilities across various levels.

Marxist ideology argues that participation was a result of the structural and economic failures of society. This resulted in the suffering and disenfranchisement of the poor therefore prompting the need to build a broad-based movement through community organisation, conscientisation and action (Holcombe, 1995). The other reason that prompted the need for participation is modeled after a neoliberalist or market approach that focuses on the failure of governments and the rise of the free market. In this case, communities are treated as consumers and therefore this called for consumer empowerment.

It should be borne in mind that participation is context-specific. Thus, the application of any approaches and strategies to participation need to systematically assess and consider the historical, cultural, economic, social and political nuances and an analysis of existing mechanisms for participation within a given society (Lawrence & Deagan, 2001).The pervasiveness of participation in development literature and its universal adoption as a key strategy in human development can be attributed to the belief that participation can empower, and build commitment among people and communities to achieve greater command and influence in life choices (Mansuri & Rao, 2012).

Community participation is a process whereby communities and individuals are actively engaged in the process of decision-making in matters that affect their lives (Burns, Heywood, Taylor, Wilde & Wilson, 2004). Education decentralisation has



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been identified as one of the strategies that increase community participation in schools. Community-level education decentralisation gives parents responsibilities to manage schools without financial support from central government or the state. In the case of decentralised education systems, the inclusion of community participation in education was expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education because it is thought that communities would be able to hold schools accountable for the educational outcomes (World Bank, 2011). Decentralisation is seen as a mechanism for enhancing community participation through the promotion of a sense of shared responsibility in education (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). According to Edwards (2012), community-managed model of education decentralisation was seen as preferable to reduce and devolve responsibilities that had previously been seen as the domain of centrally-directed government organisations.

### 2.3.1 Community participation and the delivery of educational services

Some studies (for example, Berhman and King, 2001; Banerjee and Duflo, 2006) have given credence to the effectiveness of community engagement in school management. While it is common for communities and stakeholders to assist in resource generation and mobilisation activities, several countries have engaged the community beyond mere resource generation and mobilisation activities into other aspects of school management.

Community participation involves the collective body of parents, teachers, local leadership and residents in the school's development. The impact of community participation in school management differs according to literature. Empirical evidence, mostly from Latin American countries, has highlighted some impacts of community participation as increased attendance of pupils and teachers and of pupils' learning achievements (Bruns, Filmer & Patrinos, 2011). Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016) suggested the presence of an indirect positive relationship between community participation and learning achievements of pupils through improved school management in rural Malawi.

According to World Bank (2010), education output can be improved when schools are able to allocate resources according to local conditions and become accountable to parents and communities through their participation in school management and



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governance. Berhman and King (2001) state that greater parental involvement through participation in financing or through participation in school management committees is associated with better performance in schools.

Jimenez and Sawada (1990) studied the impact of community monitored schools, "E d u c acio´n con Participacio´n de la Comunidad" (EDUCO) in El Salvador. The findings included reduced teacher absenteeism and increased pre-school enrolments. Sawada (2000) replicated Jimenez and Sawada's study and found that student performance is positively and significantly related to a number of visits by Association for Community Education (CEA). The study also found that teacher level of effort was higher in EDUCO than in traditional schools. The finding by Jimenez and Sawada(1990) is supported by other studies that compare absenteeism rates of permanent and contract teachers, especially in India, showing that the community monitoring aspect is critical in enhancing education outcomes (Ramachandran, Pal, Jain, Shekar & Sharma, , 2005; Banerjee & Duflo, 2006).

Research in Cambodia, also found that the participation of families and community in education can increase the class attendance of children (Pellini, 2010).However, the foregoing studies used a production function model which is linear and therefore does not consider the effect of other intervening processes. In addition, the context in which the studies are conducted is not fully explained either. Thus, the extent to which the community is associated with improved education outcomes is rather unclear in literature. There seems to be a tendency to overlook school factors and processes in many instances. Community contribution to positive and significant education outcomes seems to be overstated. A number of education researchers argue that the participation of communities in education enhances children's performance at school and is the motivating factor for children to continue through to tertiary education (UNESCO, 2013a). The participation of parents and communities in education is argued to have substantial benefits in improving education.

In the Cambodian context, Save the Children Cambodia (2015) suggests that community contributions commonly take place in education to fill the financial deficiency in the schools. Communities contribute their available resources such as money, construction materials, labour and ideas for school development (Pellini, 2010).



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There are many studies on the effects of community participation in education (Nguon, 2012). Among other outcomes, the expectation is that, when the voices of parents and local community members are included in school management, the schools' responsiveness to the local priorities improves, strengthening teacher accountability (Crook & Manor, 2011). Improved accountability ultimately leads to better student learning (Gershberg & Winkler, 2009; Bruns et al., 2011). It is imperative to note that none of the aforementioned studies cited has analysed the process via which decentralisation might affect educational outcomes. These studies have primarily focused on analysing the effects of decentralisation on education attainment without concentrating on how sub-national governments achieve their goal of improving these outcomes seemingly disregarding the local and national context

### 2.3.2 Challenges to participation in education decentralisation

When decentralisation and community participation are undertaken as strategies in education delivery, several issues arise with respect to the level and depth of engagement that communities are allowed in school management. One critical issue that emanates from the introduction of community participation is the lack of a shared understanding and definition of what the term community means in the context of the school. Communities are not homogenous and therefore not a united entity which is free of conflict and politics. Both Daun (2009) and Bray (2001) highlighted the ambiguity and perceptual differences of stakeholders' understanding of this term. In defining the term "community," Bray (2001) raised critical questions that highlight its ambiguity, that is, is "community" defined by geographical boundaries or ethnic/cultural lines? Is it parents and students with the school administrators and educators that comprise the community? Defining and clarifying the boundaries of the term "community" is imperative if the school is to build and harness partnerships to realise its educational goals in a decentralised atmosphere. As a result, being a context-specific process, the application of participatory strategies may become onerous given the diverse character of most disadvantaged communities.

Ashraf, Bandiera and Blum (2016) contend that participation can only be constructive if it occurs within structures that enable it to make at least some minimal impact on events. Decentralisation can provide structures that can enable participation to have



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an impact, to influence outcomes. It is argued that unless this happens, increased participation will eventually cause those participating to become frustrated because their efforts produce next to nothing. Many decentralised systems require elected representatives to hold regular meetings at the grassroots at which all the residents are supposed to give their views on local affairs and, perhaps, take part in collective decision making but this seems not the case always (Rouhani, 2017).

When community participation is incorporated in education decentralisation, either as a strategy to improve educational outcomes or for its transformative value, several layers of complexity relating to autonomy, control and accountability are added (World Bank, 2007). Questions such as what functions are decentralised, how responsibilities are defined, and who is ultimately accountable for school outcomes need to be clarified as tensions can arise when these are debated and negotiated. Moreover, prescribing a single, "one size-fits all" and at times artificial model or mechanism of participation contravenes the need to examine existing participation mechanisms, community understanding, structures and power relations, building on existing mechanisms of participation in the community.

Another concern is the competence of the recipients of the devolved functions to deliver decentralisation initiatives (World Bank, 2007). While decentralisation may precipitate a new perspective in educational governance, recipients of the devolved functions may resist the change and attendant responsibilities and accountabilities that it brings. Possible reasons for this may be that they feel ill-equipped or lack the confidence to participate in school management. Even when communities are open to working together, participation requires a certain level of competence from residents so that they are able to negotiate the political arena. This may be a major impediment to community members who may not have the experience or possess the confidence to manage the processes of governance, and the intricacies of political negotiation and alliance building (USAID, 2006).

Another critical factor that affects community participation is school leadership (Hands, 2010). School leaders are in a strategic position to influence the breadth, depth and manner of how communities participate in school management. They may limit the participation of community stakeholders to trivial school concerns perceiving their lack of competence in assisting and addressing teaching or learning issues as



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burdensome or participation generally unnecessary to school management (World Bank, 2007).On the other hand, school heads, especially those who rose from the teaching ranks, may also be ill-equipped to perform their roles in a decentralised education environment. As a result, these school heads may prevent the expansion of community participation in school management fearing that this may expose their lack of competence in the new requirements of their role. The level and extent of participation is not only a function of leadership but also a function of perception that influences stakeholders' decision to engage. Perceptions are developed, moulded and refined through experience. Community engagement in schools has largely been confined within resource-extractive activities and this has undoubtedly contributed to a universal perception of school community partnerships being "school centric" rather than a reciprocal and mutually -- benefitting relationship (Shaeffer, 1994).

Some studies (for example, Brown and Duku,2008; Xaba, 2011; Grant – Lewis and Naidoo,2007) in South Africa reported that many parents in black African schools often defer decisions to teachers because of the teachers' class positions or identity, rather than being upfront and vocal. The transfer of decision-making power to lower (community) levels does not necessarily extend participation to the marginalised. Participation may only extend to expert elite or privileged groups. Constructing parental participation in school governance decision-making in elitist identity is rife. According to Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2007), marginalised parents do not have the power to challenge existing patterns of participation. Willingness and commitment are equally important in determining the extent to which communities can become involved and the higher level of participation, the better the expected education outcomes. Community-school engagement is a dimension of community power relations and it is important for the interaction between school and community to be understood from that perspective. This implies that those who have power determine who participates in school decision-making. This means that the interests of certain groups of the school community are not sought, accommodated or represented because they are not actively and significantly involved in decisions affecting the education of their children.

According to Brett and Thompson (2016)**,** one serious challenge to participation is when democratic processes become subverted by small groups whose interests do



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not coincide with those of society as a whole. As a result, participation will become costly and socially disruptive for those involved. Meetings will take an immense amount of time and discussions will generate conflicts, so users may well prefer to "hand over their participatory rights to professionals – thereby saving themselves time, energy and, in some instances, conflicts".

Another challenge to participation is linked to parental lack of awareness of the roles expected of them, and their obligations towards education. Chaka and Dieltiens (2006) indicate that education in historically disadvantaged schools has experienced problems that undermine initiatives to promote parental involvement. They identified unemployment, which contributes to the parents' low socio-economic status and which, in turn, prevents them from providing books and other relevant learning materials necessary for successful study. Parents demonstrate a consistent lack of awareness of the full content of education policies (misinterpretation of policies). According to Marphatia, Edge, Legaut and Archer (2010), in some communities, policies are misinterpreted by parents and have been known to cause controversy related to which roles and responsibilities should be allocated to parents and which should remain with the state. For example interpretation of policies raises a potentially more fundamental issue – that parents are uncertain of how to be involved beyond financial contributions. This raises issues related to ambiguity of parental roles in decision-making.

Parental responsibilities and their relationship to other stakeholders (e.g. teachers) are not clearly outlined nor are the policies and practices of their involvement in actual decision-making in schools. This can be attributed to weak policy frameworks and poor communication of these expectations. These factors can negatively influence their ability to engage in a positive and rewarding way (Marphatia et al., 2010). When attempting to engage in their schools, recurring setbacks can possibly lead to a sense of frustration in parents, producing a feeling of powerlessness. This is especially true for parents who are illiterate, have low education levels or have had bad experiences in schools (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). In some schools, especially those which are poorly endowed, parents are the least powerful and have the least amount of information and access to decision-making forums in schools and around education policy. Increasingly schools have become isolated centres for a few



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'powerful' members of school management committees, teachers, school heads and educational technocrats.

Another challenge to participation emanates from the complex relationship between teachers and parents especially in schools built in marginalised or poor communities. Teachers' inherent expectation that parental participation be limited to making financial contributions to schools and to attending school meetings does not provide much opportunity for parents to be involved in the learning process. According to Marphatia et al., (2010), most teachers do not actively reach out to parents or invite them to visit other than at the beginning and end of a term or at exam times. Teachers do not necessarily encourage parents to engage in schools either, viewing regular visits to classrooms as "interference". Mncube's (2009) study identifies sources of lack of participation as being related to the level of education of parents in general; a lack of education on parental involvement in school activities; a fear of academic victimisation of their children; the language barrier, and difficulty in attending meetings. Negative attitudes toward schools and feelings of inferiority prevent parents from being effective partners of schools. Parents really want to be engaged in a genuine partnership with the school authorities (Ngwenya & Pretorious, 2013).

School committees are frequently dominated by the wealthy and most powerful within a community (Gershberg et al., 2009). Some communities are better resourced than others because they have the human, physical and financial resources which give them the voice needed to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by education decentralisation. According to Brown and Duku (2008), research from other parts of the world has shown that parents' identity labels such as socio-economic status, employment status, and levels of education, race and ethnicity have been shown to have significant influence on their involvement in school governance.

By moving power to the lower levels of government, it is assumed that marginalised groups will be given better possibilities to influence education in order to address their specific requirements (Hinsz & Patel, 2006). Parent and community participation in school governance can have positive impacts on school performance and school –community relations by acting as a catalyst for collective action around community development issues (Gershberg & Shatkin, 2007). Pellini (2010),



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contends that community participation in education may hold substantial benefits to children's learning. There are several studies conducted on this topic in different contexts. In the case of Zimbabwe, SDCs were established as formal channels through which communities could have a greater say in the affairs of schools and to ensure a closer relationship between schools and communities, thus promoting a sense of local ownership of schools (Chikoko, 2009).There is a need to consider that community participation is embedded in its context, so it requires an understanding of the settings and stakeholders to define it. Through involvement in education decentralisation efforts, SDCs provide insights that lead to better decision-making in schools. However, little is known about the factors that influence the implementation of education decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe.

Lastly, although decentralisation is a crucial aspect of SBM, it does not guarantee community participation (Maley, 2002).What decentralisation offers is an enabling environment that provides the necessary conditions to allow community partnership in school management to develop. It is therefore incumbent on education stakeholders to maximise the potential of community participation within the context of a decentralised education management.

## 2.4 Shifting responsibility to the school level

Shifting responsibility and authority to the school level has become an important strategy for making schools more accountable and efficient. SBM is a vehicle of education decentralisation. SBM is a management framework which devolves decision-making to schools to enable them to make school-based policies to better meet students' needs and to improve learning outcomes (World Bank, 2004). Reforms for SBM have been tied to the formation of school committees where powers usually held by centralised bodies have been devolved. The theory behind school committees suggests that providing a voice for various stakeholders in schools will lead to better decision making and a greater commitment from all groups to improve educational outcomes **(**Odden, Monk, Nakib & Picus, 1995). SBM and school committees, it is argued, can help to foster accountability by building relationships among clients (parents), policy makers, and service providers (school staff) and by creating a mechanism to hold decision makers accountable (World Bank, 2004). Accountability means having to answer for one's actions, and



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particularly the results of those actions. Accountability is a multi-layered concept which defines a relationship of control between different parties, and has a connection to trust (Ranson, 2003). Where decisions were taken by the principal alone in the past, it is no longer possible. Principals may no longer be able to take decisions unilaterally because parents now have more power within the school and especially within the school committees. Giving account involves reporting and explaining or justifying the occurrence of education activities. It appears that the element of answerability creeps in and thereby invokes different types and forms of accountability. According to Elmore (2006), political and public accountability are concerned with being responsible to the mandate and function of that particular organisation in society, and being responsible towards the local community of which one is a part. There is also a professional accountability, where a person's commitment to a community of professionals makes him/her perceive a duty to adhere to the standards of the profession (Møller, Eggen, Fuglestad, Langfeldt, Presthus, Skrøvset, Stjernstrøm & Vedøy, 2007). Managerial accountability refers to a person's position in a hierarchy and responsibility towards superiors concerning tasks that are delegated. The point is that schools as collective entities are accountable to the higher levels of the educational system. When people talk about holding schools accountable for results, the dominating discourse across the world tends to be related to managerial accountability. It means that schools are held accountable for generating improvement in student learning outcomes. There is also a risk of ignoring that students require basic educational tools and resources like qualified teachers, books, high-quality instructional materials, facilities and safe schools. Accountability is inextricably linked to democratic management and other related concepts such as participation, decentralisation, empowerment and transparency.

Falch and Fischer (2012), and Patrinos and Fasih (2009), maintain that SBM is about self-managing schools whose focus is to make them accountable to parents. However, in practice, it has proven difficult to establish an empirical link between SBM, school committees, and improved educational outcomes. However, there is strong evidence of the positive effects of decentralising education to the lower levels (Gertler, Patrinos & Rubio-Codina, 2007). Various evaluations of SBM programmes in the United States have found evidence of decreased dropout and student



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suspension rates but no impact on test scores (Gertler et al., 2011). SBM is defined as a system designed to improve education by increasing the authority of actors at the school site (Gamage, 2006). In the context of governance, however, experience suggests that the key concept is downward accountability to the users. Downward accountability can be defined as the institutional mechanisms or processes through which executing agents or decision-makers are liable to be called to account by their beneficiaries or consumers (World Bank, 2004). Drawing upon four case studies of decentralisation from South Asia (India and Nepal) and West Africa (Senegal and Mali), Agrawal and Ribot (2000) demonstrate how downward accountability is a crucial element in decentralisation processes.

The argument in support of SBM is that actors who have the best information about schools' needs are best able to make appropriate decisions about the use of resources and teaching methods. Over the years there has been much accumulated literature on decentralisation of school management (Caldwell, 2012).While the extant literature abounds with empirical studies of SBM, we review some of the most renowned case studies.

> *if powers are decentralised to actors who are not accountable to their constituents, or who are accountable only to themselves or superior authorities within the structure of government, then decentralisation is not likely to accomplish its stated aims. It is only when constituents come to exercise accountability as a countervailing power that decentralisation is likely to be effective.*

The empirical literature on the impact of education decentralisation on education output in countries around the world, reflects no consensus on this impact. Case studies such as those in Nicaragua, for example, provide strong evidence that education decentralisation can improve education outputs. An evaluation of Nicaragua's autonomous schools by King and Ozler (2005) identified that autonomous schools make significantly more schooling decisions than traditional schools, especially on personnel matters and in determining the school budget. The school reform in Nicaragua relates powerfully to how market-oriented "neoliberal" strategies are incorporated into elementary and secondary school governance. The Nicaraguan case provides valuable insight into education reform processes labelled as "decentralisation" (Gershberg, 1999). However, the unique characteristics of the



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Nicaraguan reform is the extensive role of school-site councils in setting policy for school governance and initial results indicate that this arrangement is at least achievable and potentially beneficial.

The foregoing focused on an individual country analysis on the impact of education decentralisation on education outcomes. This approach is appropriate because characteristics of education decentralisation and education outputs are affected by social, cultural, economic, and political determinants which are country specific. However, there remains a need to extend the results through comparative case studies at the school level. Measuring education output has been a controversial issue in literature. The question to ask is whether education output can be measured by the number of students enrolled in school, the number of repeaters, or the results of test scores? Does decentralisation influence the measures aforementioned? Education decentralisation has been measured in different ways based on the variety of labels and strategies that it has taken. Differences in measuring education decentralisation in literature may explain the conflicting results. Gershberg (1999) admits that it is difficult to isolate the effects of such a complex reform as decentralisation on learning and educational attainment. He posits that decentralisation can contribute to excellent teaching, for example, when decisions on significant pedagogic matters are transferred, teachers are empowered and motivated to work collectively to improve the services delivered to students. This is debatable and shows that there may be a possible problem in the literature.

Bryk, Allensworth, Easton, Luppescu and Sebring (2010) evaluated the performance of SBM in Chicago with longitudinal case study data on 22 schools. Their findings suggest that an increase in local democratic participation has an impact on elementary reading and math test scores which showed consistent gains over the years. At the same time, Wong (2003) notes that graduation rates for high school seniors improved in 1997 after the reform in 1995. The foregoing is supported by literature from Behrman and King (2001), and Sawada (2000) which proffers that education decentralisation may have a positive effect on education output if the policy reform is based on community participation and SBM.

Mainly based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Students Assessments (OECD-PISA) data, researchers conclude that education systems perform better if schools can decide



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which textbooks they want to use, which teachers they want to hire, and budget allocation. They found that measures of decentralisation had a significant and positive correlation with changes in student enrolment. However, Fuchs and Woessmann (2007) posited that school autonomy only leads to better performance, in systems with rigorous accountability.

Other researchers, for example, Gershberg, González and Meade (2012); and Bandur (2012) report that SBM reforms have contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning, financial and administrative management, professional recruitment standards, academic performance and school management (Wong, 2003).Many scholars also affirm that the movement towards SBM is often assumed as the approach to serve students better by improving the school practices (Bandur & Gamage, 2009).

Previous studies have indicated that SBM as a vehicle of education decentralisation was associated with overall school improvement and improved educational quality (Gertler, Sebastian , Premand, Rawlings & Vermeersch, 2011).The most rigorous studies found that SBM policies actually changed the dynamics of the school, either because parents became more involved or because teachers' actions changed. Several studies presented evidence that SBM had a positive impact on repetition rates, failure rates, and to a lesser degree, dropout rates. Similarly, Skoufias & Shapiro (2006) showed positive results such as improvement on pass rates and reduced dropout rates. They found that school management committees improved education quality, and that SBM is associated with lower dropout rates, lower failure rates and lower repetition rates. The findings are similar to those of Gertler et al., (2011) who reported the same for parent councils in Mexico.

King and Ozler (2005) found that in the case of Nicaragua the school management at local level helped to improve test scores. Similar results were found in Kenya by Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2008), in Indonesia by Pradhan, Suryadarma, Beatty, Wong, Alishjabana, Gaduh, and Prama (2011), and in the Phillippines by Khattri, Ling and Jha (2010). According to Pradhan et al., (2011), Indonesia incorporated SBM principles into its education system through regulations and additional directives in 2003 and 2005. This move gave schools the authority to manage operations such as planning and budgeting. Teachers were meant to control



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pedagogy, learning plans, and the selection of textbooks, as long as they met the ministry's standards set centrally. The Indonesian government mandated schools to form school committees of both parents and community members. Simatupang (2009) found that more than half of Indonesia's municipalities experienced positive changes in education outcomes post-reform. There was an overall statistically significant reduction in dropout rates at primary and high school, post-decentralisation. The block grants had a positive effect on transition rates to junior high schools and on enrolment rates of poor students, and overall had also improved student academic performance. Similarly, no maximum authority for educational planning and management of material resources was placed in the individual schools since the school under SBM is considered the major decision making unit. The fact that parents were being deferential in the study indicated that there was lack of professional development on the leadership of school committees a complete departure from one of the key characteristics of SBM.

According to some World Bank publications, the reason why some SBM practices do not produce expected results is because they tend to devolve insufficient power to the parents (Bruns et al., 2011). However, other systemic reviews of SBM in developing countries indicate that even where the power to hire and fire teachers is transferred to school committees, the results are still mixed across different contexts (Carr-Hill, Rolleston & Schendel, 2016). There have been mixed findings from cross-country analyses of 42 countries participating in the PISA confirm that SBM's effects may, indeed, vary from country to country, implying that more thorough consideration of country context may be warranted.

Previous analyses have tended to examine the relationship between a measure of fiscal decentralisation and education attainment, measured at the individual or aggregated at the regional or local levels. Examples of analyses include Barankay & Lockwood (2007), who measures decentralisation as the ratio between local and total education expenditure, which is argued to correlate highly with local autonomy in the provision of education in Switzerland. Habibi, Huang, Miranda and Murillo (2003), focuses on the revenue side of decentralisation in Argentina, measuring it as the ration of controlled resources to total provincial resources while Galiani and Schargrodvsky (2002) and Galiani et al., (2008), analyse the effects of the education decentralisation in Argentina between 1992 and 1994. The general conclusion



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reached by these studies is that decentralisation is positively related to educational outcomes, and that it is more beneficial when sub-national governments have a low fiscal deficit (Barankay and Lockwood, 2007), and also when schools are located in non-poor municipalities (Galiani et al.,2008).

While the single country case studies have generated a good deal of useful information, there are a number of drawbacks that need to be addressed. For example, measuring the degree of fiscal decentralisation is a complex task that requires identification of sub-national autonomy and discretion with regard to expenditure and revenue arrangements (Ebel & Yilmaz, 2002). Thus, measuring the degree of fiscal decentralisation with a single variable, such as the share of sub-national expenditure or revenues, falls well short of providing a full picture of decentralisation.

Some studies have analysed the impact of a country's general level of decentralisation on education outcomes. For instance, Diaz-Serrano and Meix-Llop (2012) conducted a cross-section analysis on the effects of fiscal and political decentralisation on education outcomes, measured with PISA test scores, concluding that fiscal decentralisation exerts a positive impact, while the effect of political decentralisation is ambiguous.

There is evidence to support both positive and negative decentralisation outcomes, as with much of the research on decentralisation, results depend on context. Given differences in context across countries, analysts insist there is no single best approach to assessing the potential and actual impact of decentralisation on education outcomes. Much can be done to improve the body of evidence on education decentralisation in general and in specific areas. However, this study has found it essential to frame the current research so that it does not focus on the assessment of outcomes neglecting analysis of the processes needed for decentralisation to be durably effective. The focus of the foregoing studies on the effect of education decentralisation on education outcomes is quite narrow. These are quantitative studies whose focus on academic outcomes crowd out the other issues such as textbook availability and teacher-pupil ratio which are potentially affected by education decentralisation. Much of the literature is concerned with decentralisation to the regional instead of analysing decentralisation processes at the micro-level or local scale, which is the school level. There must be an



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understanding that schools are likely to be the focus of most education decentralisation reforms. There have been mixed findings in some cross-country studies on SBM. The efficacy and success of SBM has yielded diverse results and the evidence of decentralisation's effects is weak, incomplete and generally inconclusive.

This is a two-pronged case study at the micro-level which collects primary data from participants' real-life experiences by using multiple tools from qualitative research. This study is an in-depth qualitative analysis of the phenomenon of school governance in the context of educational decentralisation. Similarly, the study was done at the practical level through the interaction of school management, school governance, teachers and parents.

In conclusion, the number of credible studies on the impact of SBM is very limited. Although the rhetoric around decentralisation suggests that SBM has a positive effect on educational outcomes, there is limited evidence from low-income countries to support this general relationship (Carr-Hill et al., 2016). This is due to difficulties in attaining conclusive evidence because of too many intervening variables between the management device of decentralisation and improved student outcomes. Literature has not demonstrated a direct relationship between decentralisation and increased student achievement. Moreover, the few rigorous studies reviewed here used empirical strategies that are open to debate (World Bank, 2007). Nonetheless, these studies represent an important effort to quantify the impact of some SBM programmes on educational outcomes.

## 2.5 Decentralisation and school resources

I included the category "decentralisation and school resources" because without access to resources the real value of schools cannot be realised and they will have little or no impact in the community. In addition, the success of education decentralisation depends on the amount of thought and preparation that human and physical resources issues are given. There is need to consider resource implications at every step of the decentralisation process.

Through decentralisation, decision-making powers over resource mobilisation and allocation are transferred to local authorities and schools. Decentralisation efforts have had different levels of resources to support implementation. One of the



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economic motives is that decentralisation may generate increased resources at the local level to ensure more services. Similarly, decentralisation is shaped by inputs provided by governments, non-government and international actors. However, resources, for example, can be well developed and deployed to support decentralisation, or the opposite may occur. Without adequate and effective utilisation of the available resources under decentralisation, the education system may fail to achieve its desired results. Zafar (2003) contends that there are few systematic evaluations of how decentralisation affects school resources. Much empirical literature has been on how decentralisation affects development outcomes but according to Local Development International LLC (2013), it is limited and fragmented in terms of providing an adequate sense of elements and processes that must work together for effective decentralisation to be realised. Some of the empirical literature examines shifts in resource allocation under decentralisation. A core normative argument for decentralisation is that allowing decision-making to be done or taken closer to the beneficiaries will result in improved resource allocation. Some of the studies (Barankay and Lockwood, 2007; Galiani et al., 2008) examining the relationship between decentralisation and development outcomes point to the local government financial resources endowment as one determinant of effective decentralisation. According to OECD (2004), fiscal decentralisation is expected to increase responsiveness to the demands of local communities, and adopt resource management to local conditions. This is supported by Salinas (2014) who affirms that autonomy of sub-national governments to make decisions in education and to raise their own revenues has been shown to have a central role at determining the effects of decentralisation on education attainment. Most of these studies, for example, Eskeland and Filmer, 2002; King and Ozler, 2005, employ quantitative methods at the meso-level and only a few studies evaluate distributional effects of resource allocation shifts. Some studies point to local finances as a determinant of effective decentralisation. For instance, Geo-Jaja (2006) finds that a key factor in the negative influence of decentralisation on education equality in Nigeria is inadequate funding due to reduced tax revenues.

School autonomy over budgetary matters can provide schools with needed flexibility to use allocated resources in line with local needs and priorities. Literature analysing the effects of decentralisation on education attainment concludes that expenditure



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decentralisation is positively related to educational attainment (Barankay and Lockwood, 2007), and that it is more beneficial when sub-national governments have a low fiscal deficit (Galiani & Schargrodsky, 2001). In addition, experience in OECD countries indicates that an absence of resource autonomy at the school level risks constraining schools' freedom to maneouvre in developing and shaping their own profiles and creating inefficiencies in resource management. Leer (2015) found this phenomenon had a negative effect on teacher effort particularly in rural areas and among schools with inactive school committees. This finding demonstrates the limits of decentralisation in resource-constrained settings. Carnoy, Elmore and Siskin (2008), affirm that decentralisation increases community-based investments in educational resources such as library books. Existing research suggests that decentralisation can improve educational outcomes, but only when local governments, communities and schools have the resources to self-manage. Further, Bardhan and Mookherjee (2005) examine the possibility of capture of public resources by local elites under decentralisation through the allocation to their preferred uses. They argue that capture by locally strong interest groups is easier under decentralisation. In such cases, the non-elite have little voice in local decisions and their preferences and needs tend to go unfulfilled.

The results of the effect of decentralisation on school resources are mixed. However, studies have not analysed the processes through which decentralisation might affect education inputs. Without adequate and efficient utilisation of the available resources, the decentralised education system may fail to achieve its desired results. Some analysts, for example, Gravingholt, Doerr, Meissner and Pletziger (2006), and Khan, Faquet, Gaukler and Mekasha (2014), argue that decentralisation may worsen outcomes if local level institutions have inadequate capacity. However, there are grounds to be positive and optimistic about the overall impact of decentralised systems, especially when they are well designed and implemented.

## 2.6 Decentralisation and institutional capacity

Local level actors that oversee the implementation of decentralisation are critically important as they participate in shaping the lines of responsibilities and authority. The success of decentralisation hinges on the institutional capacity of local units to fulfill decentralised responsibilities. According to Klugman (1994), the organisational



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capacity of the local units of administration to which power is devolved or management assigned, determines the extent of responsiveness, including the ability to plan resource allocation. The level of leadership and professional capacity at the local level should be sufficient to sustain neoliberal education decentralisation efforts (Klugman, 1994). According to USAID (2006), there is need to have administratively and technically strong local level entities that would enhance efficiency and local innovation. The success of decentralisation frequently depends heavily on providing training for national and local officials in decentralised administration (World Bank, 2010). Similarly, the success or failure of neoliberal education decentralisation is ultimately determined by the quality of the planning and execution of decentralisation programmes (Nadim, 2016).

According to Bryk et al., (2010), in the context of education, capacity has been defined as the ability of schools to support effective instruction and student achievement. In addition, Coburn and Russell (2008) in their research promote a view of capacity that extends beyond teacher knowledge and skill to include support for learning and teaching at the school level. Thus, improving student achievement and schooling outcomes is dependent upon the organisational capacity that exists within the entire education system. Similarly, Gravingholt et al., (2006) contend that if decentralisation is to achieve beneficial impacts, it requires effective capacity to coordinate between different levels of government and fulfill the demands of the numerous functions transferred from central government. The foregoing is supported by Khan et al., (2014) who affirm that the success of any decentralisation implementation effort is dependent upon continually building adequate levels of staff and enabling institutional structures. This means that simply transferring authority to local levels to implement decentralised initiatives will not have the desired impact unless lower-level managers also have the human and physical capability to do the work (Faguet, 2014). There is need to consider the institution's capacity to implement decentralisation decisions bearing in mind that education is administratively intense, demanding high-level technical and managerial skills to deliver services and oversee ongoing processes. Decentralisation reforms may overwhelm the capacity of lower-level organisations to fulfill these functions. Decentralisation can therefore be impeded by the lack of local capacity.



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It is contended that national governments can support local governments in ensuring uninterrupted provision of education services during decentralisation by properly aligning and focusing on building the capacity of decentralised institutions, allowing for a gradual shift in responsibilities to them (Williamson, Davies, Aziz & Hedger,2014). However, detailed empirical evidence about decentralisation continues to be ambiguous and inconclusive. Litvack et al., (2003) attests that very little data on institutional settings and their autonomy generally exists in developing countries. A paper by Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrews (2010) underscore the fundamental mismatch between expectations and actual capacities of governments to implement the most routine administrative tasks under decentralisation.

A study by Adank, Kumasi, Abbey,Dickinson, Dzansi, Atengdem, Chimbar and Effah-Appiah, (2013) examining service delivery levels and performance of service providers and service authorities in three districts in Ghana, found that Water and Sanitation Committees that received monitoring and support visits from local government, performed significantly better. Better performance was mainly reflected on spare parts supply, periodic maintenance, revenue and expenditure balance and financial management (Adank et al., 2013). However, despite the evidence of positive impact, the study showed that on the whole local governments were not performing well as service authorities.This implies that the local level should be more technically able to administer the delivery of public services.

The school improvement role played by middle managers such as heads of departments and subject coordinators has been explored for some time. The link between teacher leadership and school improvement has been highlighted (Murphy, 2005) and bolstered by evidence that the link between principal leadership and student outcomes is largely indirect (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). These findings show that leadership capacity has to encompass a wider group of people and to maintain this link with school improvement, such capacity building needs to keep its focus on leadership that brings benefits for learning. Capacity building in schools is strengthened by communities of groups of teachers sharing and analysing their work (Little, 2002) and developing professional learning communities (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006). In addition, Harris and Muijs 2002) support the importance of teacher leadership by defining it as, “a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively”. Research on teacher



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leadership and improved student outcomes from Australia (Silins and Mulford, 2002); Canada (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000), USA (Marks and Louis, 1998) support the foregoing position.

The relationship between decentralisation and service delivery can be complex with several factors acting independently of each other or in conjunction to shape service delivery (Robinson, 2007). However, the role of staff quality remains distinct and appears to be a major factor among the causal variables of service delivery in decentralisation.

Although school management committees are being set up in many education systems in developing countries, there are tensions and contradictions in their roles and responsibilities that undermine their effectiveness (Dunne, Akyeampong & Humphreys, 2007). Research shows that principals still play a dominant role in meetings and decision-making Karlsson (2002). This dominance can be attributed to the principal's position of power within the school and level of education in contrast to school committee members. The dual nature of the role of the principal may encroach into roles of the chairperson or treasurer of the school council/committee.

### 2.7 Methodical approaches to measuring education decentralisation

There is need to have a look at some of the methodical approaches used in a growing number of studies conducted to analyse the impact of education decentralisation on education outcomes or other intermediate effects. There is an apparent correlation between education decentralisation and education output has generated numerous research studies and policy debates. The existing literature on this relationship abounds with country specific studies.

A survey of the main findings emerging from some of these studies is provided in this section. I will discuss measures of education output used in literature, and highlight some of the difficulties in measuring and assessing the impact of education decentralisation, theoretically and empirically.

Empirical literature can be broadly classified into quantitative and qualitative. The former uses statistical methods to estimate the effects of decentralisation on education and sought to establish causality. However, with their focus on impact, quantitative studies did not deeply explore processes and designs underlying their



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results (Channa & Faguet, 2016). Thus, many factors and relationships largely remain a "black box" (hidden or not readily understood).

Qualitative studies on the other hand, often focused on processes and sought to unpack the dynamics shaping the relationships between decentralisation and outcomes. These studies used field research to examine documents, collect data from observations and/or interviews. A few studies, for example, Faguet (2012), used mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods. This results in the synergistic integration of the methods and this has potential to provide robust insights into both outcomes and their underlying processes (Gavin, 2008), in a situation whereby the two methods are working together to produce an enhanced result. Both the research process and findings are superior than would have been obtained if an individual approach had been used (Creswell, 2014). The design problems would be, for example, concurrently using components of qualitative and quantitative procedures, with same sample or with different samples. Researchers, at least of the social persuasion, for example, Chikoko (2009), have long agreed that qualitative data can enhance quantitative data and also lead to a better understanding of the strengths of a given programme. The researcher seeks breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Researchers who are inclined to different theoretical positions may combine the use of data collection methods that are associated with either qualitative or quantitative research such as open-ended and unstructured interviewing and structured questionnaires respectively.

With respect to the level of analysis, empirical research on education decentralisation was also categorised into macro, meso and micro-level studies. The macro-level referred to cross-country analyses, the majority of which are quantitative. Such studies claim the most generalisability but accounting for context in more than a superficial way is challenging. A majority of empirical work is conducted at the meso-level, providing analyses (quantitative or qualitative) of specific countries. While findings are rarely generalisable, they may offer insights into useful approaches and lessons for other countries. Some research is also carried out at the micro - level, for example, Dauda (2004), providing in-depth studies on one or a few communities or subjects. More studies are qualitative, but a few quantitative studies involve detailed examination of factors determining education decentralisation outcomes in localized settings. Such studies need not be



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generalisable for the case country, but they provide a depth of detail and insight into how the various aspects of decentralisation work together that macro-and meso-level studies cannot.

An overview of the education decentralisation literature reveals that the most common approaches to the analysis of education decentralisation are either technical or political in orientation. An analysis with a political orientation considers decentralisation in-depth and as a process of social and political change. There are hardly any such studies reviewed in the foregoing sections. The analysis examines holistically, using multiple methods, all variables or factors or processes at play in their different contexts. By so doing, a fuller picture of how decentralisation functions is generated. Decentralisation is complex with many different actors with specific interests and approaches such that it cannot be examined using a linear approach. The analysis focuses on the beliefs, identities, behavior and interrelationships of local actors. For example, Gershberg et al., (2009) compared two community-based education reforms in Guatemala with differing levels of parental involvement. Using an analysis with political orientation, they found that schools allowing for greater parental role struggle more to achieve effective human resource management. Another example is Dauda (2004), who found that adoption of school fees in Jinja (Uganda) provides a strong incentive for parents to take school management responsibility and hold local government accountable. The outcomes of the foregoing researches depend on political, institutional and socio-economic contexts, which vary and often interact in different ways.

In general, technical approaches to education policy making and analysis tend to be concerned with “policy resources” or “policy mechanics” (Stein, 2002). Planners and evaluators seek to find relationships between specific policy inputs and financial, organisational or pedagogical outcomes. The category is made up of studies which which discuss positive effects of education decentralisation on educational performance (Glewwe & Maiga, 2011; Gunnarsson, Orazem, Sanchez & Verdisco, 2009; Galiani, Gertler & Schargrodsky, 2008; Eskeland & Filmer, 2002). Education decentralisation increased enrolment rates in Brazil (Gershberg, 2000), in Bolivia and Colombia (Faguet and Sanchez, 2008), and in Argentina (Habibi et al., 2003). In Indonesia, education decentralisation improved overall female literacy rates, years of schooling, and dropout rates for primary and secondary education (Simatupang,



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2009). A decentralised education programme improved test scores in Nicaragua King and Ozler (2005). Furthermore, fiscal decentralisation increases investment in social sectors, such as education (Faguet, 2004).

The aforementioned studies show that many technical analyses of education decentralisation tend to assess the effects of decentralisation by focusing on the change in the cost-effectiveness of education, measured by rates of student promotion, graduation and assessment relative to the resources expended per student (King & Ozler, 2005). These studies also compare the cost-efficiency of decentralisation to centralisation as measured by resource generation, utilisation, and allocation relative to the minimisation of per student costs (Oates, 2005). Underlying these technical approaches is the "misleading linear assumption" that education decentralisation follows a causal model in which an objective policy leads to clear and discernible outcomes (Rhoten, 2004). This linear analytic model cannot account for the factors that may affect government spending and decision making, parental commitment and contribution, and student performance. Moreover, by virtue of its unique concern with decentralisation as a mechanism to enhance proficiency and efficiency, the technical analytic approach fails to assess decentralisation as a process of social and political change (Rhoten, 2004). This study examined SDCs roles by looking at the behavior of individual people (teachers, school heads, learners, parents and community members) and the structures of the school in which they work. The study did not look at SDCs' role in education decentralisation using mechanistic assumptions.

Recent trends in interpretative policy analysis challenge the linear and naïve assumptions of these standard technical approaches. According to Riessman (2007), other interpretative approaches, internal and external of education, are concerned with `policy narratives'. Researchers link actors' subjective and objective views of policies with implementation in the hope of assessing a policy's appropriateness and effectiveness (Roe, 1994). Thus, interpretative approaches to policy analysis consider the actors' meanings and narratives as both observations of the process as well as platforms for action within the process (Ball, 1994) and social contexts.

This section has reviewed the methodological issues defining decentralisation. However, the empirical evidence is mixed, reporting both positive and negative



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outcomes. Under the existence of many favorable and unfavorable theoretical arguments, the consensus in literature is that decentralisation outcomes are context-dependent and must be solved by the conduct of empirical research.

### 2.8 Positioning study within the literature on educational decentralisation

The justification of placing this research within the literature on education decentralisation is based on the understanding that the international body of literature has been mostly on decentralisation's impact in Westernised contexts. Therefore, by studying two different schools, I am addressing an existing research gap while building on and being informed by previous research in Western democracies and in other developing countries.

I have sought to situate this study of two different case studies (an affluent school and a poor school) in the international literature which typically concerns the decentralisation of authority from national to sub-national level. Reflecting on the review of literature above, I position this study in the field of discussion by (a) focusing on understanding the roles of SDCs at two different schools under educational decentralisation; (b) investigating factors that influence the implementation of education decentralisation by SDCs at two different school contexts ; (c) examining the extent to which SDCs of two different schools(affluent and poor) are fulfilling objectives and expectations set for them under education decentralisation; and (d) identifying the powers and authority that have been shifted to SDCs and schools. The primarily theoretical studies reviewed (Cheema, 2007; Steiner, 2005) lacked such local contextualisation. The studies were rigorous but they did not emphasise some actors in a specific context thus failing to contextualise the data in specific local practices.

SDCs were equipped with power and responsibility to influence education policy implementation. Therefore, the expectation is that SDCs will be in a position to accomplish their responsibilities effectively. However, there have been contradicting views about their ability to perform their roles and responsibilities. The contradictory views indicate a research gap about the role SDCs play in the implementation of education decentralisation in Zimbabwe. Clearly, despite the establishment of user committees as a way to empower local citizens, there has been little research about



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the factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools.

The evidence produces somewhat contradictory results for the service delivery of education (Channa & Faguet, 2016). However, a number of case studies for example, Dauda (2004) provide strong evidence that education decentralisation can improve education outputs. Current literature makes it clear that the effect of education decentralisation may be difficult depending on the country, on the type of decentralisation reform, and on the method of measuring education output. However, most studies reported favorably for schools with community participation such as Ramachandran et al., (2005), Barrera-Osorio et al., (2009), and Bruns et al., (2011). Current school reforms argue that home-school partnerships result in effective teaching and learning. Decentralisation ensures greater participation and accountability of the local government to local actors. Many scholars have noted that the evidence on decentralisation effects is weak, incomplete, and generally inconclusive (Smoke, 2001; Litvack et al., 2003; Treisman, 2007).

## 2.9 Synthesis of the literature on education decentralisation

There is a category of studies that reported positive results (Faguet and Sanchez, 2008; Aslam and Yilmaz, 2011) from implementing of different decentralisation reforms in education. However, another wave of the theoretical literature disagrees with the foregoing category of studies that reported positive results (Khattri et al., 2010; Galiani et al., 2008). Thus; there is little agreement in the empirical literature on the effects of decentralisation on a number of important policy goals.

The preceding studies show that most of the empirical studies that have been trying to identify the effects of decentralisation have found contradicting results. This is corroborated by Treisman (2007) who concurs that there are almost no solidly established, general empirical findings about the consequences of decentralisation. The lack of consensus on the effects of decentralisation in many studies is striking (Channa & Faguet, 2016). While the question of the effects of education decentralisation is strictly empirical, the current empirical literature is mixed and limited. Most investigations conclude that the effects depend on whether basic assumptions have been met and on the type of education decentralisation policy that



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is being implemented. In addition, education decentralisation is multidisciplinary in that it not only encompasses responsibility for resources but also the decision making on specific functions in the education system, that is, organisation of instruction, management functions, and planning and structures. Empirical literature originates from a variety of disciplines, such as policy studies, economics, development studies and comparative politics, and therefore, evaluations of education decentralisation reforms are done in markedly different ways and focus on different outcomes. Any attempt to review these results as a whole becomes difficult. To draw firmer conclusions from this vast body of literature, a clearer organising principle is required. Consequently, it is reasonable to suspect that the different dimensions of education decentralisation might have different impacts on education service delivery, and on output depending on how it is measured.

Scholars have written widely on a number of considerations related to education decentralisation, for example, the numerous forms it can take (Rondinelli et al.,2007), reflections on its implementation in practice (Hanson,1997),and effects produced in implementation (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih,Patrinos, Santibáñez, 2009). Edwards Jnr and De Matthews (2014) contend that despite this impressive body of work, gaps remain in the understanding of decentralisation's trajectory or the reforms that have occurred under this label. Empirical literature on the effectiveness of decentralisation is hampered by a combination of major weaknesses on how decentralisation has been measured as well as the inadequate design and implementation of the decentralisation reforms pursued in many studies.

## 2.10 Conclusion

Over the years, scholars and practitioners have produced an enormous amount of research on decentralisation but without clear and consistent results. The dominant issue is the diversity of research in terms of the methods used, the quality and findings of the studies. This is inevitable given the variations in the context and nature of decentralisation efforts globally (Faguet & Channa, 2008).

Overall, the empirical literature focuses on the impact of education decentralisation, in its various forms, on education output in countries around the world but shows that there is no consensus on this effect. Nevertheless, the current literature makes it



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clear that the effect of education decentralisation may be different depending on the country, type of decentralisation reform, and method of measuring education output.

# CHAPTER THREE: Conceptual framework

## 3.0 Introduction

The concepts of school-based management, institutional capacity, community participation and school resources, as they apply to this study, are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also includes the structure in which the factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools can be analysed for the two different cases. The chapter considers the importance of using a conceptual framework and relationship between concepts. The current legal and policy framework for educational decentralisation is further explained in Section 3.3.

Concepts encased within neoliberal educational decentralisation in fig.3.0, are used to illustrate the conceptual framework of this study. Figure 3.0 depicts my conceptualisation of factors influencing the implementation of education decentralisation.

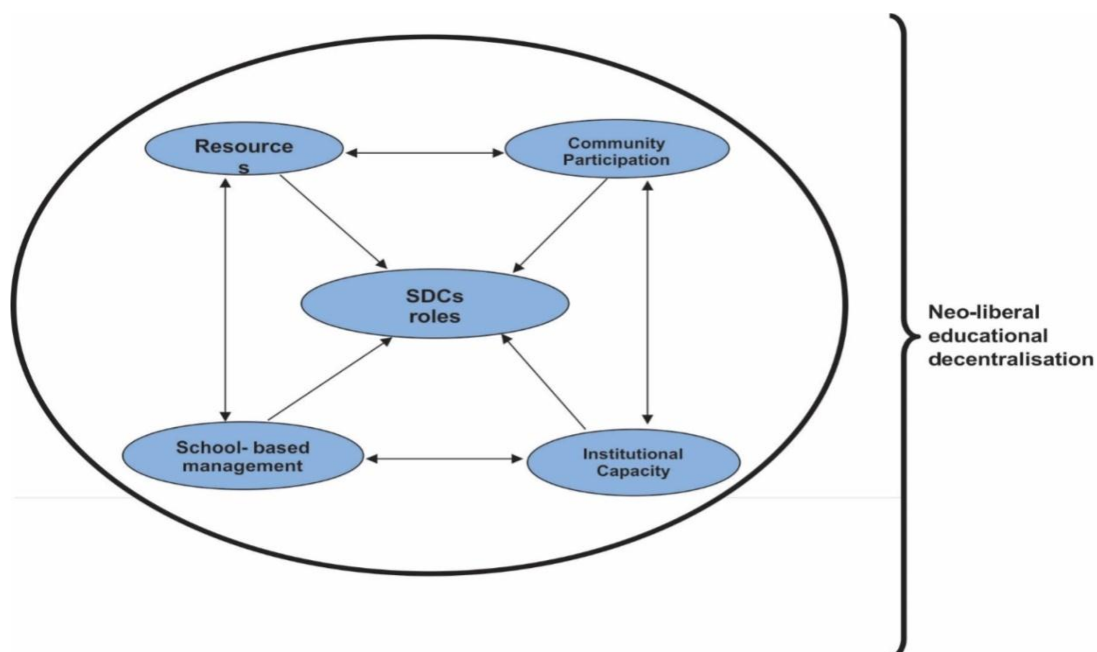


**Fig 3.0: Concepts encased within neoliberal educational decentralisation**

(**Source:** Researcher)



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The concepts of SBM, institutional capacity, community participation, and school resources were not examined in isolation from each other or from the system in which they interacted (the two different cases). As shown in concepts encased within neoliberal educational decentralisation, fig. 3.0, concepts are represented by labeled elliptical shapes and arrows connecting them. The two-way arrows are intended to demonstrate the reciprocal relationships between the concepts.

## 3.1 Using a conceptual framework

A conceptual framework explains the focus of any study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).For this study, I studied beyond the education decentralisation literature for an appropriate conceptual framework in which to interpret structure and present the research findings. The conceptual framework provided the lens through which the empirical data were analysed. I used my own experiences and knowledge coupled with existing research as options for deriving the conceptual framework to guide this study. According to Maxwell (2005), one's experiential knowledge as a potential source is often overlooked as an important conceptual source. In addition, the location of the research also played a part in providing insights into the conceptual framework.

Abd-El-Khalick and Akerson (2007) emphasize that researchers use frameworks consisting of linked ideas, often gleaned from the literature, to provide a frame of reference within which to conduct investigations. In this study I used the term "conceptual framework", which Maxwell (2005:33) defines as the framework of *"concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research".* Using a conceptual framework offers researchers a number of benefits, *"… the main dimensions to be studied – the key factors or variables – and the presumed relationships among them"* (Miles &Huberman, 1994:18).

## 3.2 Relationship between concepts

I used two different schools as case studies in order to provide an in-depth examination of the roles of SDCs during the implementation of education decentralisation.



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### 3.2.1 School based management (SBM) and school resources

SBM as a factor provides the environment under which educational decentralisation is implemented in the two cases. Resources for the two school sites were procured by SDCs under SBM. The concept map (figure 3.0) shows a relationship between SBM and school resources. SBM holds schools more accountable and efficient in resource mobilisation and use. The two concepts in the study compared what participants said from each school and between the different schools and contexts. I looked for similarities, differences, contradictions and discussed them in as far as SBM and school resources are concerned.

However, signs of severe funding limitations in the schools lead to an inability in meeting all capital requirements resulting in inefficient outcomes in the SBM. By bringing government “closer to the people”, decentralisation is expected to establish such democratic governance tools as SBM that enhance the mobilisation and use of school resources by matching the provision of public goods and services with citizens’ preferences. Furthermore, as long as there are pupil-centred methods as espoused by SBM, the evidence tends to support the view that these methods only yield more effective learning in the specially designed environment (rich in space, books and equipment) in which such methods can function properly. The nature and quality of the curriculum offered in a school is closely related to the available resources, and more importantly how well they are used. For the smooth functionality of SBM which yields the optimum outcome, physical resources such as the main school building with its various sections and departments and playgrounds are vital. Similarly, funds are valuable educational resources that enhance the provision of teaching and learning materials under SBM. Schools without enough funding will not meet their obligated teaching-learning materials such as textbooks, reference books, chalk, stationery, chemicals and apparatus which are necessary for the delivery of teaching and learning to students under SBM.

Students without the basic resources in their environments and in schools perform poorly as a result of the learning difficulties they experience within their classrooms. These students inadvertently get lower test scores than those learning in environments with necessary resources and this runs counter to the principles of school-based management.



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### 3.2.2 Institutional capacity and school resources

Institutional capacity and school resources are linked in that, capacity shortcomings suggest the possibility of inefficiencies in resource mobilisation and use. Resources are distributed under different conditions and processed by different institutions. Due to this fact access to resources in the two different schools depends on rules, norms and institutional arrangements that determined the allocation of resources. The two concepts in the study compared what participants said within each school and between the different schools and contexts. I looked for similarities, differences, contradictions and discussed them with regards to institutional capacity and school resources.

Capacity building initiatives for local bodies such as SDCs make little sense if they are crippled by severe lack of resources at local level, due to inadequate financial devolution. The concept map also shows that institutional capacity sustains community participation in school governance; this was more pronounced at Oxford Primary School than at Havana Primary School. There is need to develop local capacities through suitable training programmes and processes aimed at making communities aware of their rights and confident enough to assert themselves. If local governments are empowered this would mean that local communities are also empowered. Community leaders are selected and then given training and control over resources of the community. On the other hand, institutional capacity promotes strong leadership within school-based management and a chair of school governors who can effectively lead and manage (James, Brammer, Connolly, Fertig, James & Jones, 2010). Better quality infrastructure in schools (institutional capacity) improves school-based management. Institutional capacity and community participation are also related in that effective participation is needed for decentralisation to produce popular mechanisms of accountability. A minimum level of literacy and basic capabilities is however required for this to happen. Similarly, institutional capacity helps in building a strong civic society to make local level units, for example, schools more accountable and to help carry out the broader functions of school governance. Similarly, community participation in schools may lead parents to develop skills that enable them to take on leadership roles elsewhere in their communities. There are more direct links between parent participation and leadership development and the development of new types of programmes in schools that benefit communities.



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### 3.2.3 SBM and community participation.

Referring to "concepts encased within neolliberal educational decentralisation", figure 3.0, SBM and community participation are related in that the former allows for the participation of community members in the school's decision-making process.

Community has been acknowledged as a key component in the sustenance of the education sector at all levels. From a pedagogical perspective, community participation was imperative since students spent most of their time both at home and in the surrounding community, therefore school alone could not be held responsible for teaching its students all they needed to learn. The main reasons for the increased advocacy for community participation in education include a desire for sharing the burden of financing education. Also, under SBM, the community has greater autonomy and responsibility for the use of resources to solve problems and for the long term development of the school. Community support will mobilise resources as part of shared responsibility within the SBM framework and will also act as an accountability mechanism. The realisation of education decentralisation through SBM can be achieved by increasing parental and community involvement in schools. The theory behind school committees is that providing a voice for various stakeholders in schools will lead to better decision-making, greater commitment from all groups and improved educational outcomes under SBM. This process will ensure that schools provide the social and economic benefits that best reflect the priorities and values of those local communities. Through SBM, an education system must be always connected with the local community and less controlled from a distance through the decisions of some institutions.

### 3.2.4 Community participation and school resources

Community participation is viewed as a tool for resource mobilisation to achieve cost sharing, especially in areas where there is a scarcity of resources. The provision of education for all without parents and communities sharing the cost would not be affordable given the resources made available for education in developing states. There is the contested assumption that communities can mobilise local resources to meet local needs more efficiently than central government. Historically, communities have played important roles in supporting schools through in-kind contributions for classroom construction and collecting funds for paying teachers' salaries.



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Community support through monetary payments or fees has been instrumental in sustaining the education sector thereby enhancing its institutional capacity. In addition, community participation requires strong local institutions. Policy literature on community involvement continues to emphasize the need for capacity building within the community to enable them to participate in school development efforts or initiatives (Chapman et al., 2002; Bush & Heystek, 2003).

### 3.2.5 Institutional capacity and SBM

Capacity building at the local level is a key theme in the success of SBM. The SDC capacity reinforcement project achieved an unprecedented action by reaching every primary school with SDC training across Zimbabwe in one year.

The reciprocal arrows in fig. 3.0 indicate that school resources improve the institutional capacity of schools and SDCs. In return, it is the institutional capacities of schools and SDCs which ensure the efficient mobilisation and utilisation of school resources. Other reciprocal arrows in fig.3.0 show that community participation contributes to building of the school through the efforts of SDCs and this consequently improves the quality of engagement of the community in school developmental activities. Furthermore, the “back and forth” connection between SBM and community participation shows a reflection of community values in SBM, and in return the community is a partner in the planning and implementation of SBM. The other reciprocal arrows in fig.3.0 show that through SBM there is accountability in the use of resources and it is resources that support and sustain SBM. In addition, the web of arrows in fig.3.0 is also indicative of the multi-dimensional relationships between the concepts. The key shows, for example, red arrows connecting institutional capacity to SBM and this shows that the former promotes strong leadership for SBM. The arrows show that community wants greater responsibility in the use of resources by school personnel and SDC.

SBM within the conceptual framework has been covered as one of the vehicles of education decentralisation. Lindquist and Mauriel (1999) define SBM as a decentralised organisational structure in which the power and decisions-making authority formerly under a central government level are delegated to teachers, principals, parents, and community members of the local school. A very important feature of SBM is the school site council which acts as a mechanism to implement



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education decentralisation. Varying degrees of formal authority and responsibility to make decisions and school policies are transferred by legislation to a representative school site council. The involvement of those affected and interested in the process of decision making enables the participants to claim the ownership of the policies adopted.

It is essential to have processes in place to provide the necessary support and capacity building for stakeholders to effectively manage the increased demands that come with education decentralisation. The success of decentralisation hinges on the institutional capacity of local units to fulfill decentralised responsibilities. Capacity is viewed as a continuous process by which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner. The interconnectedness of, and interplay of these levels should be taken into consideration if decentralisation is to succeed. Decentralised organisational capacity is influenced by internal structures, systems, procedures and the collective capabilities of staff. It is affirmed by Land (2002) that these may constrain or support performance and influence issues of organisational credibility and legitimacy.

The success of education decentralisation depends on the amount of thought and preparation that human and physical resources issues are given. Resources enable a decentralized local level entity like a school to function and meet its objectives. Resources need to be mobilized and managed in order to make education decentralisation activities work better and become more effective. Lack of enough financial resources has been a big challenge which affects school governance under education decentralisation. School committees are empowered when they have access and autonomy over resources. Using two cases meant that the cases can be compared to each other thus broadening the understanding of the interactions taking place between all role players in the decentralisation process and within the two schools' contexts. Thus, two cases facilitated the extensive capture of human experience in all its complexity. By closely examining a relatively small number of cases, comparing and contrasting them, I learnt about significant features of the phenomenon and how it varied under different circumstances. Education decentralisation aims, inter alia, to increase and improve the quality of inputs and the



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operation of the education system, for example, by increasing the efficiency in allocation and utilisation of resources.

Decentralisation increases community participation in school governance through SDCs which results in better decision making about the educational processes that best serve local needs. Educational decentralisation is located within the focus of neo-liberal reform. Through decentralisation, neo-liberalism reduces the role of the state and local communities take over financing of schools. Under neo-liberal decentralisation, education could be provided to more learners if the costs are shifted to the community level.

Community level neoliberal educational decentralisation is based on relations of accountability between the community and schools through SDCs. SDCs have been used to institutionalise the participation of communities in educational decentralisation efforts by providing the voice that lead to better decision making in schools.

## 3.3 Conclusion

Chapter three presented the conceptual framework that informed the study. As shown in “concepts encased within neoliberal educational decentralisation” in fig. 3.0, the related concepts that constitute the conceptual framework are discussed. The illustration provides an interplay of factors to explain the roles performed by SDCs in implementing education decentralisation. This study required a conceptual approach to facilitate understanding through interpretation of the multiple facets of the school governance task. I reviewed the governance and education decentralisation literature and my experiences to develop an appropriate conceptual framework to provide the structure in which to interpret and present the research findings. I used the conceptual framework to illuminate and explain the different facets of the complex integrated social processes of governance under education decentralisation for two different cases. The double case study is intended to provide an in-depth examination of the roles of SDCs during the implementation of education decentralisation. Two cases enabled me to explore differences within and between cases. Thus, two cases facilitated the extensive exploration of human experiences in all complexity. By closely examining a relatively small number of cases, comparing and contrasting them, I understood significant features of the phenomenon and how it varied under different circumstances.



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# CHAPTER FOUR: Research approach and design

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter is about the research design that supported the study. A description of the research procedures followed by data collection methods is presented. The main data collection instruments used with reference to their context, purpose, and the manner in which they were applied, are discussed in this chapter. The processes and techniques used for data analysis to integrate major themes, perspectives, and the knowledge generated from the data into a meaningful and insightful thesis, are discussed in the chapter. Finally, the challenges and issues related to the research process, limitations of this study and ethical considerations of the research process, are elaborated in this chapter.

## 4.1 Applying the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework provided the explanation of how the research problem would be explored .The conceptual framework was made up of components within the context of neoliberal and decentralisation reforms. It was through the framework that the qualitative research approach explained the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied and the direction to the research enquiry. The conceptual framework is linked to the literature review and it is based on the concepts of community participation, school resources, institutional capacity and SBM. The conceptual framework facilitated the shaping of the research design (qualitative) in this chapter and analysis of the findings in Chapter 5. The conceptual framework enabled me to cross check my themes against the concepts during the analysis phase. In addition, the research findings obtained through the use of a variety of methods were made meaningful through the conceptual framework.

## 4.2 Research methodology

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 2009). According to De Vos



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(2002), the qualitative research approach in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experience or perception of their reality. Flick, van Kardorff and Steinke (2004) argue that the qualitative approach describes life-worlds "from the inside out", that is, from the point of view of the people who participate in the research project, thus helping the researcher to concentrate on the qualities of human behaviour (De Vos 1998).Supporting this view point Best and Kahn (1993:185) state:

> *The researcher has direct contact and gets close to the people, situation and phenomenon under study; researcher's personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.*

The qualitative research approach made it possible for me to get closer to the SDC members so that through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with them I understood how they worked to support the development of schools. The method allowed me to formulate, reformulate and modify concepts while the process of data collection goes on.

The choice of a qualitative research approach for this study is based on three main reasons. Firstly, a qualitative approach is determined by the objectives of the research under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In this study, the central aim is to study the factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. This included the perspectives of ordinary people (parents, community members) and educational officials. Therefore, the perceptions, feelings and experiences of those who participated were valued as worthy of studying.  The notion of giving a voice to participants and considering their experiences of the social context under which the phenomenon is studied, is one of the fundamental characteristics of qualitative research (Flick, 1998).

Secondly, a qualitative research approach was chosen because it offers the possibility of a thorough description and richer explanation of complex problems. Data collection methods applicable to qualitative research include interviews which enable the researcher to collect data which is rich in the description of people, places and conversations by the participants and not easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen 2003). The study of the factors influencing the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools, involves diverse participants and data, and as a result has to be studied in



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all its complexity, in the everyday context (Flick, 1998). Therefore, there was need for an appropriate and carefully framed questioning procedure for participants to disclose their perceptions and experiences about the implementation of decentralised functions by SDCs. This can be achieved through the flexibility of a qualitative design (Robson, 2002). The qualitative research approach for this study is open and flexible enough to manage this necessary complexity.

Thirdly, qualitative research is about interpretation of the social world. To understand the governance and management practices of a SDC required an understanding of the perspectives of their members and how they constructed meanings as they engaged with their social world. I chose a qualitative research approach to facilitate access to their roles which are fundamentally a set of cultural and social practices that occur primarily in private settings and are mediated by factors such as context, stakeholders and complex dynamic social interactions. I chose the qualitative approach because it enabled the interaction of participants in real-life settings where they could express their views, perceptions and beliefs. A qualitative research approach explained processes that shape educational decentralization decisions; how these decisions played out at the micro-level, school level. Through this method I was able to discover the views and experiences of the subjects regarding decentralised school management and governance.

### 4.3 Case studies

The findings of this study were obtained from the work of governing SDCs of two large public or government primary schools. The choice of a case study design is informed by Yin's view that case studies are an effective means to examine questions related to the "hows" and "whys" of complex "contemporary phenomena within some real life context" (Yin, 2013:1). Case studies consider effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect. According to Maheshwari (2011), case studies are set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be set around the case. Case studies can be defined by participants' roles and functions in the case. The examination of the data is most often conducted within the context of its use that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. For example, in order to study the strategies the reader uses, the researcher must observe the subject within his/her environment, such as reading in classroom or reading for



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leisure. This would contrast with experiment, for instance, which deliberately isolates a phenomenon from its context, focusing on a limited number of variables.

Another important aspect of a case study is that it is process - oriented (Maheshwari, 2011). Through the case study design, the researcher studies and describes the nature of processes, which occur over time. The detailed qualitative accounts often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environments, but also help to explain the complexities of real-life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research. A case of reading strategies used by an individual subject, for instance, can give access to the reasons for strategy use and how the strategies are used in relation to other strategies. As reading behaviours involve complex cognitive processes, each reading strategy cannot be examined in isolation but rather in relation to other strategies. A case study might be, for example, about the process by which a subject comprehends an authentic text. This approach is appropriate because the study is exploratory, looking at relationships that are largely unexamined in previous studies. The case study is also ideal because the phenomena being examined involve complex interactions among individuals, institutions, and communities that are not easily captured through quantitative analysis (Merriam, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Case study design is epistemologically positioned within an interpretivist constructivist frame, which assumes that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is not found, rather co-constructed between participants and researcher (Merriam, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).An interpretative and naturalistic approach in the form of a case study was employed which allowed for the study of things in their natural settings, attempting to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The two cases provided rich data on all aspects of school governance by SDCs, including social and cultural practices, and offered an opportunity to get inside the “black box” of these SDCs and obtain detailed insights of the participants’ experiences in governing and managing these schools. In these settings the factors and roles were developed or shaped. It would have been difficult to have a true picture of the factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe’s public schools without considering the context within which they occurred.



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### 4.3.1 Selection of cases

Chegutu, through its district structures experienced a decentralisation process with the intention to improve service delivery, for example, in the education sector. By having Chegutu District in the study is a manifestation of the reduced role of central government in local services provision and management. The district is located in the mineral and agriculturally rich natural farming Region Two; and has considerably unlimited access to government services. This region is located in the north west of the Zimbabwe. Region II is 58600 square kilometres in area which is 15 per cent of Zimbabwe (Mugandani, Wuta, Makarau & Chipindu (2012).The region's accessibility and abundance of resources makes it an interesting case. The district's position of relative abundance in comparison to other districts in Zimbabwe means that if one can find evidence of poor implementation of educational decentralisation, then the factors that can work to improve delivery of education services may be identified.

Being a resident in the town where the schools are located for over 50 years makes me quite familiar with the two cases. I live within a 1.5 kilometre radius of the selected schools. Both cases are located in Chegutu town where I reside. The two selected cases represent diverse examples of existing primary schools under a decentralised education system.

In this study, two public primary schools were purposefully selected as the two case studies. The qualitative inquiry was meant to achieve a depth of understanding of factors influencing the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe's public schools. Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

### 4.3.2 Description of cases

The case study is based on the context of the work of SDCs' members and provided extraordinary breadth and depth to the data (Flyvberg, 2006; Yin, 2013). My goal was to deepen my understanding of SDC work and functioning, including the key factors that influence what and how their members work, to develop descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Participants with different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences necessitated the use of a case study design in order to realize context-specific insights and how



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they developed the interactions I sought to study. This approach allowed me to probe deeply and closely analyse people's views and perceptions in the targeted schools (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), and helped in explaining the occurrence of relations (Sturman, 1999).

In essence, what a case study does is to thoroughly investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2013). The SDC is a bounded system, that is, "a single entity around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 2009) and thus suitable for a case study. In this study, the case was bounded by membership of the SDC. The SDC was clearly defined in constitutive documents as the governing body of the school with the ultimate accountability and authority for the school. The work of an SDC is essentially a social and cultural practice. A SDC is a complex social unit comprising of a localised group of unpaid and part-time social actors who stand in a fiduciary relationship with the school, and collectively, hold authority, and are individually and collectively are accountable for their decisions, actions and omissions. A significant proportion of an SDC's work occurs in private social contexts, in confidential council meetings and discussions. Governance of SDCs is influenced by the school's context and the complex dynamic social interactions between its members, between the SDC and its members, and the key stakeholders.

For this particular study, the boundaries were defined as follow; (a) the case study was conducted in Chegutu town, Mashonaland West Province (Zimbabwe); (b) it involved two public primary schools (government-sponsored, Oxford and Havana Primary Schools, which are pseudonyms); (c) it was confined to school governance and management by SDCs. Both cases are established primary schools and have been in existence for more than 40 years (opened in the 1960s). These schools were more likely to have a well-developed and thoughtful approach to governance, with established processes and systems, and deep experience contributed by successive SDCs.

I chose cases with generally positive reputations in the practitioner community. The two cases are very different models of school-based management and parent representation in SDCs. In some cases, SDCs are empowered to make binding decisions and establish policy regarding budget, curriculum, and extracurricular activities, whereas in others their role is advisory and their scope of authority more limited. In choosing the cases I thought about the practicalities of negotiating and



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maintaining access to the schools. I chose the two cases in one urban environment. Limiting the number of cases to two seemed sufficiently manageable considering the research questions, budget and the research time frame without compromising the quality of field inquiry.

To understand the governance practices of SDCs therefore requires an understanding of the perspectives of its members and how they construct meanings as they engage with their social world. A complete analysis of the two cases explained the process and contexts under investigation. Comparisons are made for the two cases in order to increase the understanding of the interactions that take place between all role players or participants in the decentralisation process and within the two schools' contexts. Two cases also studied differences within and between the case studies. Thus, two cases facilitated the extensive understanding of human experience in all its complexity.

Hence, to understand these different aspects I have considered each school as a separate case in this research and identified it as an object of study (Stake, 1995) as well as a procedure of inquiry (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, Stake (2005) differentiates between three types of case study: the intrinsic, the instrumental, and the multiple or collective. My research can best be described as an "instrumental case study" because the intention is not to focus on the individuals involved, but on the insights into the issues they provide. Simply put, it means that when it comes to issues related to school management and governance, the two cases would be "models".

### 4.3.3 Piloting the instruments

Data gathering guides were constructed using the following:

- Identification of questions per area of inquiry that ensured that research questions were aligned to the research's areas of inquiry; and
- Matching research questions against research participants to determine primary and secondary sources of information.

Based on these, the interview and focus group discussion guides were prepared and designed for each individual or group of participants to provide structure to the data gathering process and ensure the collection of critical information. I pilot - tested the instruments with two schools which had similar characteristics as those earmarked



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for the study and the instruments were assessed by an external party. According to Castillo – Montoya (2016), pilot-testing is incorporated as a critical activity in the study's preparatory phase to provide an opportunity to test the research design and procedures in actual conditions. Specifically, this was conducted to: (a) determine the appropriateness of the research methodology and instruments; and to determine the approximate duration of each instrument (b) identify gaps and areas for improvement in the research design; (c) determine potential administrative and logistical issues in the conduct of the main study. The pilot testing resulted in some changes in the research design and procedures. One of the changes was on the research framework whereby I removed and/or re-phrased closed – ended questions in all interview guides. Furthermore, I removed questions from interview and focus group discussion guides which tended to ask the study's research questions and I included questions on the concepts under study. I had to sequentially align the questions. At times there was a tendency to follow interview guide questions in an orderly manner but then I changed the approach to ask questions according to the flow of the discussion or interview.The pilot study confirmed the effectiveness of a qualitative research approach in providing contextual depth to the study. Interviews and focus group discussions were effective in that they allowed me to probe participants' perceptions and understanding about the research topic. During the actual conduct of the data gathering, these methodologies accorded me the opportunity to switch from a structured to a less structured approach that reflected the direction of the interview or the focus groups discussion. In particular, the focus groups allowed for a candid and honest discussion of the research questions and also as a way of observing interaction between participants. The pilot study identified gaps in the data collected. A significant data gap was in demographic information such as population and socio-economic activities, about the locality where the schools are located. As a result, questions to determine the socio-economic situation of the two communities were incorporated in the interview and focus group discussion guides for officials and parents.

A concern was the ambiguity of some of the terms used (e.g. school based management, decentralisation, etc.) and the similarity of responses generated from different questions by the participants. To address these concerns, I either revisited,



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rephrased or removed the questions entirely from the list of questions. In some cases, I prepared alternative questions and added them to the instruments.

The pilot study identified some procedural and logistical concerns including the participants' availability for the data gathering sessions, the availability of pertinent documents that may substantiate claims made by the participants, and the choice of appropriate venues to conduct the interviews and FGD sessions. I sent a formal communication to all study sites outlining the following measures to address the above concerns:

- Interviews and FGDs were to be scheduled at research sites taking into consideration the participants' availabilities within the period of data gathering for the site;

- A list of participants was provided to allow the schools to coordinate with them regarding their willingness to participate and confirm their availability; and

- A detailed discussion of the areas of inquiry and relevant documents was made to allow for sufficient lead time for participants to collect the necessary supporting evidence.

The pilot study provides critical conceptual feedback on the framework and design of the research and practical feedback to improve the conduct of the study (Jacobs & Ferguson, 2012). Piloting was also critical because it helped to minimise factors that had a negative effect on the data collection process, and to reinforce efficacious items. Piloting was meant to test whether the participants interpreted the questions correctly and whether response categories provided were suitable in addressing the research questions.

## 4.4 Data collection methods

The fieldwork phase of data collection covered the following periods: October 2018 to January 2019, and February 2020. Three main data gathering instruments were employed for this research: interviews, focus group discussions and document review.

As I presented the double case study, I was aware that I was presenting other people's realities therefore the knowledge presented is "situational and conditional"



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and is not a source of absolute truth (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As a researcher, I accepted the participants' reality in their narrations and presented it on this basis and without any modifications or changes.

### 4.4.1 Interviews

Interview guides (see Appendices VII, IX, X, XI and XII) were initially devised in accordance with inquiry objectives, however, the actual design developed as data collection proceeded. I started off with a number of questions but these were modified especially when I was probing interviewees for more responses. As interviews progressed there were some questions on the interview guide which I removed and replaced or rephrased to enable me to get the relevant information. Interviews followed the method referred to by Rubin and Rubin (1995) who defined "interviews as guided conversations." This meant that interview guides were used for guidance, but the discussion was allowed to shift according to the interests and knowledge of the particular participant.

I conducted individual in-depth interviews, informal interviews by way of conversations and focus group discussions. Face to face interviews were used to collect information from participants. Interviews were conducted in participants' schools and other work places. I considered this to be the most appropriate approach, as it is exploratory, and captures the experiences of the participants. In addition, the interviewees are free to answer according to their own views. Interviews are essential sources of evidence and fundamental to qualitative research. I used interviews because they allowed for intimate, repeated and prolonged involvement of the researcher and the participant, this enabled me to get to the root of what was being investigated (Mertens, 2009).

Participants interviewed were 55 in total comprising the Schools Inspector, two deputy school heads who stood in place of their school heads (who were away attending a week-long provincial meeting in the provincial capital); two SDC chairpersons, two vice SDC chairpersons, two SDC secretaries, two treasurers, 44 senior teachers with other posts or responsibilities. These participants had experienced their schools' involvement with education decentralisation in various ways over a three year period. Additionally, they had contributed to and, to some degree, continued to maintain involvement in the school's ongoing decentralisation



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drive. The participants were chosen because they were the principal implementers of education decentralisation. Accordingly, the District Education Officer now known as District Schools Inspector, SDC members, school heads, teachers, and parents were selected basing on Seidman (2013) observation that "the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational process is through the experience of the individual people who make up the organisation or carryout the process".

Participants invited had attended many meetings, orientation and training on aspects of education decentralisation at least over a three year period. They had experienced school change and represented different levels of school organisation (junior, middle and senior) with various roles and responsibilities. The other participants were six SDC members (two chairpersons, two vice-chairpersons, two secretaries), and the District Schools Inspector. Participants were purposively selected.

The days for interviews were scheduled with the help of the deputy heads of schools who helped in communicating with the research participants. Before the interviews the research participants were given the brief explanation about the research topic and the aim of the study, thereafter they were requested to give their consent to participate in the study. Participants were also asked if they consented to the use of a digital voice recorder. All agreed to the use of the digital voice recorder. Interviews took place in the deputy schools heads' offices and in the District Schools Inspector's office.

Interview questions were based on the research questions and concepts spelt out in the conceptual framework (figure 3.0). Questions were also formulated on the basis of participants' positions within their organisations or areas of specialisation. A number of follow-up and probing questions were asked in order to obtain clear information from the participants. All questions were open-ended in order to elicit in-depth information from participants.

My study is exploratory in nature and aims to elicit the participants' responses regarding their social and educational knowledge, beliefs, expectations, disappointments, and the nature of their involvement in the school. It is generally argued that semi-structured interviews are useful when the research is exploratory (Hancock, 1998). Each interview guide consisted of two parts. The first part required participants' demographic information. On average an interview session's duration



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was 75 minutes. Interviews took place during teaching-learning times. The two deputy school heads mentioned that this was the only time they could accommodate me bearing in mind that it was also time for end of year examinations. Teachers made impromptu arrangements with fellow teachers to take charge of their classes during my interview sessions.

The second part dealt more specifically with election of SDC members, experience working with SDC members, educational functions shifted to the school level, the nature of participants' involvement in the school and school-community relations. At the end of each interview session, I summarised the main arguments and discussion points. I also asked each participant if there was anything that he or she liked to add to what we had discussed. This strategy helped me to obtain some additional useful information. I used a checklist to guide interviewees during the interview process so that uniformity and consistency could be assured in the data.

I also had several unscheduled, informal interviews which assumed the form of informal conversations or chats, valued for their ability to clarify points and connect with incidents that occurred during the day. Informal conversations were with participants more intimately involved in the research (senior teachers and participants who had signed the interview section of the consent form) provided valuable feedback on unfolding situational events. I used informal conversations as an additional source of data to supplement or enhance data produced by more structured, or formal, methods.They assisted me in building rapport within participants and in gaining their trust as well as their understanding of the topic, situation and setting (Swain & Spire, 2020). Informal conversations put me in the role of participants and thereby helped me to see the situation from their perspective. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), informal conversations "tell it as it is", in an everyday context in a more natural and less artificial way. It is argued that informal conversations reduce the "me" and "you" to "we", thereby creating a greater ease of communication – the line between participants and myself became blurred. Participants were able to express their feelings with ease and flow. By so doing I was able to get closer to the reality of participants' experiences, perceptions, values and beliefs. Informal conversations became generative, and opened up possibilities to meet participants in a more present way, which led to the creation of richer and often more informative data. The status of data generated or gathered from informal



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conversations is as valid as data obtained through more formal interviews, although the latter is often privileged as the exclusive source of knowledge in qualitative research (Pinsky, 2015). In this enquiry, the spontaneity and flexibility with which these interviews occurred provided me with a means to follow-up leads.

I assigned a special code (pseudonym and date) to each recorded interview. I listened to each interview recording in order to note important points or gaps that could be filled in before the next session. I interviewed SDC members and deputy school heads twice each and teachers once each.

At Havana Primary School two teachers requested to answer interview questions in the vernacular language (Shona) on the understanding that they would be able to express themselves fully and clearly without any limitations. Their requests were granted. However, I asked the questions in English and they responded in Shona. I had no problems in translating to English since I am proficient in both languages. After a number of sessions, I realised that the interviewees raised some very pertinent issues which I later incorporated into a modified interview guide. Having had a background in the same field of education (see Oakley, 1991), I was able to establish a rapid rapport with the interviewees and the overall atmosphere was one of trust and openness.

Once the interview session was completed, I played back the audio recording for participants to have an opportunity to check if their points were clearer or to add something. After every one week after the interview sessions, I took transcripts to the participants to give them an opportunity to check the accuracy of the content. Participants were asked to validate the accuracy of the data and provide feedback after collection of data was completed. Participants agreed that transcripts recorded verbatim reflected their views, feelings and experiences.

### 4.4.2 Focus group discussions

Two focus group discussions were held with groups of six and nine parents whose children attend Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively. In both schools I was given a list of parents to participate in focus group discussions by the deputy school heads. The choice of these parents was based on the assumption that they should be familiar with some of the schools' issues. However, it was difficult to get the minimum required number of participants recommended for focus group



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discussions from Oxford Primary School resulting in only six parents taking part. Focus groups need to be large enough to generate rich discussion but not so large that some participants are left out (Bryman, 2008). Participants in each school were from different backgrounds. Before commencing the discussions, participants were informed of how the discussions would be conducted and that they are free to express their opinions. I explained issues of confidentiality to them and that I would record the proceedings using my digital audio recorder. As the discussions got underway there were a few participants who tended to dominate and I, as a moderator, encouraged everyone to take part in the discussion of issues about the development of the school.

Focus group discussion allows for interaction within a group and joint construction of meaning over a defined topic (Stewart, Rook & Shamdasani, 2007). The focus group discussion strategy engenders depth of opinion that might not arise from direct questioning (O'Leary, 2017). The approach was employed in this study as an opportunity for participants to probe each other's reasons for holding certain views (Bryman, 2001; Stewart et al., 2007).Participants discussed each other's comments and the ensuing dialogue produced high quality responses. Within the dynamics of a focus group discussion, individuals argued with each other with the result that they arrived at more realistic accounts of what the participants thought. Focus group discussions produced more data and verified individual participants' perceptions, thus enriching the quality of the information collected. Focus group discussions were a form of quality control as participants tended, "to provide checks and balances on each other" (Patton, 1990).

### 4.4.3 Reviewing official documents

Secondary data sources were employed particularly in supporting the findings from interviews. Documents are an important source of such information. Some researchers find document review useful to establish background data, and to help "the researcher…uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (Merriam, 2009). Documents were selected according to the case study design and to answer the research questions. Government ministries are reliable for keeping both primary and secondary data in



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written form (narrative and statistics) or other recorded materials which may be at the disposal of the researcher (Bryman, 2008).

Documents with information about the phenomenon under study are carefully reviewed (Yin, 2013). I reviewed various reports such as education policies and laws guiding the management of education such as the Zimbabwe Education Act of 1994.I reviewed printed copies of the ESAP and the Zimbabwe Policy Reform for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) in order to get understanding into how these programmes affected decentralisation. An overview of the context under which decentralisation occurred resulted from reviewed documents. The ESAP document was about adjustments that were made to Zimbabwe's fiscal policy with the intention of improving utilisation of resources for such sectors as education. From the reviews, I gained such background information that ESAP resulted in reduced national budgets. Through reviewing the document I learnt that ESAP responded to reduced budgets by seeking greater financial contributions from communities and parents to fund the growing education sector. I accessed the ZIMPREST document (1996 to 2000) in order to gain more understanding about the introduction of decentralisation as a response to the abandoned ESAP. From the review, I learnt that ZIMPREST afforded government agencies involved with decentralisation to carry out the transferred functions. The ZIMPREST document was in response to decentralisation whereby it gave support to districts for the launch of capacity building programmes.

I reviewed Statutory Instruments 87 of 1992 and 70 of 1993 in order to understand the nature, functions and composition of SDCs within the context of education decentralisation. I also reviewed the following key documents: Prime Minister's Directives on Decentralisation and Development of 1984 and 1985; Provincial Councils and Administration Act; 1985, and Decenetralisation and Devolution Policy, 2020. It was through reviewing these two documents that I developed an impression of patterns and key features of decentralisation.

Not all documents needed were available for download from the Internet. I had to officially request a policy-maker or inspector to provide me with some documents or reports. This was the case when I asked for current enrolment figures for the two cases. Some documents from the internet had "restricted access" so I had to travel



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to the National Archives and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Head Offices in Harare, some 120 kilometres away from my research sites.

**4.5 Selection of participants**

Representativeness is less important in qualitative than in quantitative research because its aim is to generate an in-depth analysis, (Bryman, 2008).The appropriate sampling technique used was convenient sampling. According to Bryman (2008), a convenient sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility. *"Convenient sampling does play a critical role in qualitative research. Its strength lies in providing for the selection of 'information rich' cases of interest for in-depth analysis"* (Bryman, 2008: 183). The heads of the two schools were the main contact persons to all other participants except for education officers who were located in the district education offices. SDC members were the key participants since the study was focused on them to address the research questions. The members provided their individual experiences about their responsibilities and roles. In addition, the SDC members were potential participants because they were directly involved in school governance. Teachers were included as the potential participants since they were worked with the SDCs in managing the schools so they were likely to have different views about how effective SDCs were in performing their responsibilities and roles. More information about teachers' relationship with the SDCs was important in order to understand how SDCs were relating with other actors at the school level. Also, some teachers are involved directly in SDCs as members.

Education officials were also potential participants as they provided information about the statutory establishment of SDCs and school reforms in general. To add on, the information concerning SDCs' performance was also obtained from them and different strategies that are in place to build the capacity of SDCs were also extracted from this group. Parents as community members provided information concerning the opportunities that are given for a community to participate in governing and managing schools through SDCs and the performance of the available SDCs. SDCs are supposed to originate from the community so in a sense they remain accountable to the community. Therefore, asking the community members about SDC performance was relevant.



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### 4.6 Gaining access to participants

During the first week of getting into the field I dealt with permission procedures. I took introductory letters to the District Schools Inspector (Chegutu District) requesting permission to conduct the study in the two schools. I was advised to go to the Education Provincial Office in Chinhoyi (90 kilometres from Chegutu) in order to gain access to the participants at the district and school levels. I could not be granted permission at the provincial office because the research was not being conducted by a student from a local university. I was advised to go to the Head Office (Harare) of the Director of Policy, Planning, Research and Development for clearance to conduct the research. I was granted permission (see Appendix II) within a week and I took it back to provincial and district offices of education which subsequently gave me the go-ahead to go to the identified schools to commence the research.

After determining the research sites and obtaining permission from relevant authorities, I visited the two study sites in order to identify the appropriate participants for conducting the double case study. I met school heads and their deputies, teachers, SDC members and on certain occasions, parents. Teachers who took part in interviews were purposively sampled (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004). Purposive sampling means that the participants are selected according to some defining characteristics that made them the holders of the information required for the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004). Participants with teaching experience of above five years were selected since they were deemed to possess sound knowledge of the topic understudy. In addition, Maree (2007:79) asserts that “qualitative researchers select those individuals or objects that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation.”

I first contacted each SDC to be studied in order to gain their cooperation, explain the purpose of the study, and assemble key contact informants. Since data to be collected and examined included school documents, I stated my interest to school heads to request copies of these documents later in the course of my fieldwork. I scheduled individual interviews’ times with prospective participants.

After having identified my participants and their willingness to work with me, I informed them about the purpose of my study, the research ethics, and details of the research activities including demands my study could place on their time. I formally



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invited the teachers to participate in the study (see Appendix V) and obtained their consent. Likewise, I provided a formal recruitment letter to parents and obtained their consent (see Appendix VI).

### 4.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data collected in the field (Creswell, 2014). Data analysis can be defined as consisting of three concurrent flows of action: data reduction, data display, conclusion and verification (Berg, 2007). Data reduction focuses, simplifies, and transforms raw data into a more manageable form. I used qualitative data analysis which is mainly inductive in nature, and which leads to themes *"*grounded in the data, and not given *a priori"* (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). I used this inductive approach to summarise wide and varied text data, and to link with research questions. Data analysis was guided by research questions, multiple readings and interpretation of the raw data.

#### 4.7.1 Conducting a thematic analysis

I read through the entire data looking for ideas in the data. The next step was to create initial codes from the data. I developed a code structure. By coding I was actually converting large masses of data into smaller, more manageable segments. I coded in order to simplify and have structured data and develop ideas about what was going on in the data.

I subjected the data to the process of coding to develop categories and sub-categories. Category becomes a pile of codes of similar meaning. I gave labels according to the sense of or the main ideas coming out of them.

By analyzing and sorting codes into categories I was able to identify consistent and over-arching themes for the data. The bigger categories are the over-arching themes while the sub-categories are support themes. This resulted in final themes that were supposed to reflect the purpose of the research. There were now a range of themes:

- Ordinary themes – the ones I expected.
- Unexpected themes – the ones that surprised me and that I did not expect to find.
- Hard to classify themes – the ones that contain ideas that did not necessarily fit into one theme, or that overlapped with several other themes.



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- Major and sub-themes – these represented major ideas or minor secondary ideas. Sub-themes fit under the major themes in the write-up.

All interview quotes within a theme were collected and new ideas that made up the theme and sub-theme were examined how the ideas interacted with each other. I also noted that some themes did not have enough data to support or data were too diverse. Some themes needed to be broken down into separate themes. I refined selected themes into themes that are specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to capture a set of ideas contained in the numerous text segments. Within the theme one could tell the overall story about the data. I wrote detailed analysis of each individual theme, identifying the story that each theme told while considering how each theme fit into the overall story about the entire data set in relation to the research question.

Finalisation is the last step in which I organised all the themes. The organisation of themes was in accordance with the conceptual framework which represents my thoughts and shows fuller understanding about the phenomenon under study. I described and brought together various themes through a "story line" that gives a holistic view of educational decentralisation based on participants' accounts. According to Birks, Chapman and Francis (2009), themes are identified through the presentation of a story in which themes are described and brought together, the story line is based on the whole data rather than isolated parts of data.

When all the interviews were finished I developed a narrative from the themes, sub-themes and codes. I wrote detailed analysis of each individual theme, identifying the story that each told while considering how each theme fitted into the overall story about the entire data set in relation to the research question or using them to explain the phenomenon under study. In short, this was a description of my themes, quotes from interviews to support my ideas, and a discussion of the inter-relationship between the sub-themes and the themes.

A total of five themes were developed from the categorised codes. The main themes are:

- New and increased responsibilities for school heads and teachers
- SDCs procure resources
- SDCs manage school finances and collect fees



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- SDCs maintain school infrastructure
- SDCs act as a link between school and community

## 4.8 Ensuring trustworthiness

I used several techniques to ensure trustworthiness of this qualitative case study. The emphasis of qualitative research is on gathering an authentic understanding of people's experiences of phenomena, rather than on the reliability of replicable data (Silverman, 2001). Reliability is about how a research study can be confirmed by others. However, to show that using the same method will produce the same results can be problematic, because the nature of qualitative research is context specific. The qualitative researcher, however, can address the dependability issue by reporting the process in detail.

In this study I provided detailed information about the research design, its implementation, how to recruit and have access to participants, and the data collection process. I achieved dependability by systematically recording procedures with accuracy. Qualitative research is a balanced act between what actually happens in the research context (accuracy) and what it is that researcher's record (coverage).

### 4.8.1 Credibility

The credibility of qualitative research involves the question, *"How congruent are the findings with reality*?"(Merriam, 2009). The following was done in order to establish credibility:

#### 4.8.1.1 Using the appropriate methodology for the enquiry

Adopting an appropriate method for the research problem is important (Yin, 2013). The methodologies I used in this study were clearly stated and explained in the research methodology sections (see Chapter 4). I conducted an extensive literature review to ensure that the methods used in this study had also been used in previous comparable studies (see Chapter 2).

#### 4.8.1.2 Prolonged engagement

Another criterion of trustworthiness is prolonged engagement in the field. Prolonged engagement is defined as prolonged stay in the field to conduct research. Prolonged



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engagement is a key component to building trust, learning the culture and context within which the participants operate, and probe for any additional hunches (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). I collected data from the two cases from October 2018 to February 2020. During this time I stayed in contact with the participants and visited them to collect some policy circulars and any other pertinent information.

I established prolonged engagement with the participants to allow for understanding of the culture of the context, develop a relationship with the participants, and to gain their trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). The relationships were developed via emails, telephone conversations, hand-delivered letters and short meetings. I introduced myself first via email. During the recruiting process, I conducted an initial interview to engage in casual conversation and answer the questions of the potential participants before the actual interview took place. I was careful to keep the contact at a professional level as the relationship between the participants and I could have biased my professional judgment (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

#### 4.8.1.3 Triangulation

Triangulation is the process of using multiple methods to collect data from multiple sources, and analysing data from different perspectives (Creswell, 2007) while comparing and contrasting findings from one source with another to identify common patterns. I accomplished the triangulation of data by the use of several data sources, such as interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews. Using a variety of data sources allowed for corroboration of themes between data sets and this decreased the likelihood of reporting an idea that is only present in one data set (Merriam, 2009).

Data from the three collection methods were complementary in that together they provided a holistic view of SDCs and their practices. None of the sources, however, was likely to yield perfect or error-free evidence. Since each had identifiable strengths and weaknesses, I bore in mind two important points when conducting this research. The eclectic range of methodologies not only permitted fairly comprehensive data collection, but also allowed mutually supportive data to emerge.



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#### 4.8.1.4 Authenticity

To obtain the authentic story, I needed to ensure that the participants “are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely” (Shenton, 2004). All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time so that the data collection process involved only the participants who were willing to participate. I also informed the participants that there was no right or wrong answer, and that as a researcher I held an independent and neutral status. Additionally, I encouraged the participants to be honest and tried to reduce their fear of telling stories in the study by ensuring that their responses were confidential and that they would be identified only by pseudonyms. In addition to the above techniques, in order to ensure the authenticity of the data, I used probes and iterative questions to uncover the story (Shenton, 2004).

#### 4.8.1.5 Advisor and peer scrutiny

Another form of academic integrity in this work included peer review and debriefing. Peer review and debriefing is the process where one’s peers review, reflect, and offer input while conducting research (Creswell, 2007). Peers in this study included one professor at University of South Africa (Unisa) who was my classmate when I was studying for a Master’s degree and one fellow doctoral student. I had ongoing contact and discussion with my supervisor, who provided feedback and assisted me to recognize the flaws of the study (Shenton, 2004). Similarly, my colleagues and peers (professionals and academics) provided feedback, which brought different perspectives to the study and helped me to develop a better study. Having external sources review analytic procedures and claims made is conducive to obtaining additional perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1995) and thereby increasing trustworthiness and rigor in the study.

### 4.9.0 Transferability

Qualitative researchers investigate the phenomenon within a specific context, thus, it is impossible to generalise (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Similarly, in qualitative studies, generalisations aim to provide a rich understanding of a particular



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case. Generalisation aims at better explanation for concepts of a particular context of interest (Polit & Beck, 2010; Tsang & Williams, 2012). Case studies can be used to provide generalisations in qualitative studies (Flyvberg, 2006). Transferability is related to a generalisation of cases where the findings from one case can be used in a different enquiry or a different social setting (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Generalisation of research results has been a major concern in qualitative studies (Tsang & Williams, 2012). Generalisation is the reasoning that draws inference from a particular observation or setting (Polit & Beck, 2010). As opposed to quantitative research that aims to generalise findings, the aim of qualitative research is not to lead to generalisations, but to record multiple interpretations of events (Cohen et al., 2007). This is precisely why I designed an exploratory qualitative study that looks in-depth at a smaller sample, with the aim of gaining illuminating insights. Because of the specific social, political, economic and cultural experiences supporting each study, the findings cannot be generalised. In my research, I provided a localised account of the factors that influenced the implementation of a contemporary phenomenon in education by a SDC. Methodologically, Bassey (1993) argues that 'studies of singularities', i.e. research focusing on single events, and could be much more relatable to others than a study that can be easily replicated.

Even though the results of this study cannot be proved transferable, this does not imply that the study is untrustworthy. Instead, it "*simply reflects multiple realities*" (Shenton, 2004:71).

#### 4.9.1. Dependability

To gain dependability, which is reliability in quantitative research, the researcher must show that "if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained" (Shenton, 2004:71). For qualitative research, to show that using the same method will produce the same results can be problematic, because the nature of qualitative research is context specific. The qualitative researcher, however, can address the dependability issue by reporting the process in detail, "thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (Shenton, 2004:71).



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In this study I provided detailed information about the research design, its implementation, participant recruitment and access, and the data collection process. In addition, my supervisor assisted me in examining the methodologies to ensure the dependability of the methods used in this study.

#### 4.9.2. Confirmability

The concept of confirmability can be associated with the concept of objectivity in a quantitative study in which a quantitative researcher uses instruments, such as tests or questionnaires, to ensure that the instruments "are not dependent on human skill and perception" (Shenton, 2004) and are free from researchers' biases (Shenton, 2004). I tested research instruments (interview and focus group guides) before being administered to participants. Pre-testing helped me to identify ambiguities, misunderstandings, or other inadequacies. In addition, I addressed these issues by recording interviews and being consistent in my judgement (Boyatzis, 1998) both during the interviewing process and after. In addition, by using an interview guide, the structure allowed for a level of consistency.

Since a researcher is a key instrument in qualitative research, the concept of confirmability differs from the concept of objectivity in quantitative research. Although it is impossible for a qualitative researcher to prove that the findings do not depend on a researcher's skills or perception, a qualitative researcher must ensure the confirmability of the findings by showing that the findings emerge from the participants of the study rather than from the researcher's preferences (Shenton, 2004). To address this issue, triangulation plays a role in ensuring the confirmability of the study, in addition to ensuring its credibility (Shenton, 2004). In this study, I used a triangulation of data sources, collecting data from multiple participants (Shenton, 2004).

Additionally, any decisions I made and any methods I adopted are made explicit in the report; the strength and weakness of the approach used are explained; and the preliminary assumptions that did not emerge from the participants are discussed. This process of detailed methodological description that enables the reader to trace how the data eventually leads to the finding is called an audit trail (Merriam, 2009). I utilized the audit trail approach by collecting the important data as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985). The six categories of information collected to inform the audit



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process were: raw data, data reduction and analysis notes, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials related to intentions and dispositions, and preliminary development information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### 4.10 Ethical considerations

Different research authors, for example, Creswell (2014), and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), emphasise the need for researchers to consider ethical issues when undertaking their studies. Many research studies depend on people for their accomplishment therefore it remains the responsibility of the researcher to be ethical through maintaining confidentiality of participants' information. This is done to ensure safety of the participants as well as developing trust which helps in getting relevant information. Lincoln (1995) notes researchers should demonstrate concern for human dignity and respect of participants first and foremost.

My study involved human subjects, it was therefore essential to submit an ethical review application and have it approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. Since the study involved minimal risk, it qualified for an expedited review. The methodology for this research project was assessed through the ethical review process at the University of Pretoria.

Prior to the fieldwork, I submitted my ethics proposal to the University Ethics Committee to verify whether the research under consideration conformed to moral standards, including issues related to professional, legal and social accountability (Bryman, 2008). The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria approved of the research's Ethics Proposal which was accompanied by copies of interview schedules, focus group discussion, letters seeking permission to conduct research and letters of consent. The ethics of respect and responsibilities associated with this has informed the entire research process.

I requested permission to conduct the study in October 2018 in Zimbabwe from the Director of Policy, Planning, Research and Development, Provincial Education Office (Mashonaland West), Chegutu District Education Office, school heads and members of the SDC of each school.



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Consequently, the main ethical issue was related to participants' identities. I addressed this explicitly in the introductory letter given to participants (See Appendices I and V). In addition, before the face-to-face interviews began, I reassured the participants that their personal details would not be disclosed in order to protect their identity. Therefore, their opinions have been noted through the use of pseudonyms. Anonymity and pseudonyms were also used in the study for the two study sites.

All research participants were asked to participate voluntarily and the purpose of the research was clearly communicated to them. After being granted permission, I proceeded with the data collection process, sampling in accordance with the principles underlined in the ethical review protocol. Through a written application, I obtained administrative consent from competent authorities of the schools and invited the participants to participate in this study. I provided the necessary information to each participant about my study, its purpose, style, potential risks of participation, and the demands the study would place on their time. I also provided the contact information of my thesis supervisor and informed every participant of his or her right to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason. According to Sim and Waterfield (2019), consent is normally regarded as revocable, such that an individual can withdraw from the study at any point after initially consenting to participate. But withdrawing from a focus group discussion is a potentially disruptive act that an individual may find hard to do. Revoking consent to participate is less straightforward in a focus group discussion (Warr, 2005). I obtained the consent from every participant on a written form that I provided (see Appendix VI).

However, focus group methodology raises distinct ethical challenges (Lowton, 2018) because it is one method in which participants have a particular vulnerability. What takes place during focus group discussions depends in part upon other participants who may, spontaneously raise issues not necessarily intended or predicted by the moderator. Focus group discussion participants may not be able to divert the discussion away from a topic that they find uncomfortable, thus reliance on the disclosure element of consent is thereby weakened (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The participants were told that the information they provided would form the basis of primary data that might inform future research. It was made clear that participants'



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discussions would be confidential and interviews would be conducted in an isolated location that would be the most convenient for them. I also consciously remained respectful of each school's internal culture and values, harmonising my research activities with the school's timetable and the participant's work schedule. I also tried to make my presence less visible in the schools and classrooms in order to avoid any kind of inconvenience for anybody. I strictly avoided giving any information to anyone, especially school personnel and head teachers about my participants' perspectives and practices. Furthermore, I undertook to use any data collected only for the purpose of this research. I at all costs maintained a relationship between participants and myself as that of a reciprocal alliance where both parties would be in a "comparable social position" (Dowling, 2012).

All the interviewees were given an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendices V and VI) to be signed off at the beginning of the interview. In line with the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee's requirements, school heads signed two consent forms corresponding to the two interviews. During the interviewing process I provided participants with an opportunity to decline or avoid answering certain questions or discussing particular topics if they so wished**.** I would only proceed if I received their oral consent.

The interviewees agreed to me recording the interviews. None of the interviewees withdrew their statements throughout the research process. Lastly, the collected data was stored in a locked drawer in my home and was accessed by myself only.

In my research report I have acknowledged sources of information I have used. I have included text that is firmly supported by existing literature. Through the inclusion of references, my arguments are well placed in the proper knowledge context. I have used citations which link the study to other studies thereby creating knowledge that carries meaning and allows other researchers to identify the work as relevant. By citing sources, I have legitimised ideas and established claims as facts. Referencing creates transparency and originality by allowing other researchers to retrace my steps.

There are situations where I have used one source but this is in situations whereby that source complements other sources or complements aan argument made earlier on. I am aware that information must be cross-checked by using other sources.



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Dated sources supported the primary data I collected. It is from dated sources that the investigation to learn what is already known about a topic starts. Dated sources contain data that already exists which can be utilized in addressing the research questions.

### 4.11 Limitations of the research

I conducted field visits during the busiest period of the school calendar (October to February) and missed out on some of the appointments. It was envisaged that key participants and data required would be considered reachable within this space of time allotted for fieldwork.

During my fieldwork, I conducted five or six interviews per day to accommodate as many participants as were easily available. Therefore, it was very challenging to tape-record, transcribe, and listen to all of the interviews. Some participants asked to be interviewed in Shona, the vernacular language. Translating from Shona into English took time, labour, resilience, and patience.

Despite the fact that the study was successfully completed, the challenges were also unavoidable. One among the challenges was inability to access official documents from the schools and district offices and this meant I had to travel 220 kilometres to and from the capital city, Harare, where the National Archives are located. These documents are necessary in order to support some responses provided by interviewees. At one point I requested enrolment figures for urban primary schools within the district and had to wait for the person in charge to manually calculate and gave them to me in hand written form. So this was an information technology (IT) system-related problem.

Another challenge was that some participants could not show up for the interviews on time forcing me to wait for extended periods of time and sometimes forcing me to reschedule. Interruptions were also a challenge especially when I was interviewing education officials and teachers. On some occasions the interviewing process had to be stopped for a while, and this disturbed the flow of information.

My study was conducted at a time Zimbabwe was experiencing an economic meltdown which to a great extent has affected many socio-economic sectors such as



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education. There were power blackouts, of about 16 hours, for the entire period of my fieldwork at my place of residence where I was operating from, impeding the use of my laptop after conducting field visits. The rolling power outages also affected my preparation and reviewing of interview recordings although I had to use some batteries as back up. Again, I conducted my fieldwork during the rainy season in Zimbabwe and this at times inconvenienced my access to the schools. Due to shortages and unreliable fuel supplies, I had to pay exorbitant costs to travel from my home to research sites to fulfill some of my interview appointments. Despite the limitations, effort was made to minimize their effects on my research study.

### 4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided detailed information on the research design used in this study. I discussed the rationale for using a qualitative inquiry for this study. In addition, the study was guided by the interpretivist perspective and the use of the case study approach to conduct an in-depth study. I discussed various aspects of the research design from securing access, methods and techniques used in collecting qualitative data. I particularly discussed the interview, focus group discussion and document review as instruments for data collection and triangulation for this study. I discussed how the data collected were analysed. I discussed the transcription of data, coding, categorization and theme identification. I discussed the steps that needed to be taken to ensure trustworthiness of the research and the ethical issues that informed this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### 5.0 Introduction

The sections which follow focus on the findings of 55 interviewed participants and 15 participants who took part in two separate focus group discussions. The selected participants, the majority of whom were on the frontline (teachers, deputy school heads and SDC members) were interviewed on their views and perceptions. The demographic profile of study participants is discussed in section 5.1. Reviewed documents were about the historical background on which the formulation of the educational decentralisation policy in Zimbabwe is based, key policies, and legislation. These were presented simultaneously with findings from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.



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## 5.1 Biographical data

Interview and focus group discussion data was collected from a total of 70 participants. Data were collected from five different types of participants[2]: deputy school heads(2) participated in interviews in lieu of school heads because the latter were involved in provincial meetings of school heads for a week; schools inspector (1), teachers (44), SDC members (8) and parents (15).

### Table 5.0: Characteristics of the selected public schools

| Characteristics | Oxford Primary School | Havana Primary School |
|---|---|---|
| **Medium of instruction** | English | English |
| **Number of learners** | 1194 | 2463 |
| **Number of teachers** | 25 | 40 |
| **Number of classrooms** | 24 | 30 |
| **Teacher-pupil ratio** | 1:48 | 1:62 |
| **Staff room** | Yes | Yes |
| **School head's office** | Yes | Yes |
| **Deputy head's office** | Yes | Yes |
| **SDC office** | Yes | No |
| **Admin staff** | Yes | Yes |
| **Telephone** | Yes | Yes |
| **Electricity** | Yes | Yes |
| **Water** | Yes | Yes |
| **Photocopier** | Yes | Yes |
| **Library** | Yes | Yes |
| **Computers** | Yes | Yes |
| **Tuck-shop** | Yes | No |
| **Security** | Fence | Wall |
| **School transport** | Yes | No |
| **Fund-raising projects** | Yes | Yes |
| **Sports grounds** | Yes | Yes |
| **Area of location** | Low population density | High population density |

**Source**: District Education Office, December 2018

[2] The participants in the study experienced education **decentralisation** either as District School Inspector (Mr. Conrad), or deputy school heads (Burombo and Bob James), or teachers at Havana Primary School (Kamba, Sanyas, Mbizi, Shumba, Zhou, Chibode, Sawe, Sangurura, Saungweme, Mahlayeya, Hanzu ,Chikukwa, Mulemena, Tirivavi, Chipanera, Manjoko, Nxusa, Sutumani, Joina, Gundumura, Chimurenga and Torapito), or teachers at Oxford Primary School (Collins, Raffety, Hacknell, Nash, Young, Mandaza, Gabriel, Makaruse, Mukondiwa, Tauzeni, Frampton,Tivakudze, Chitiyo,Chikomo,Crossover,Dhaimana, Mubango, Magamanya, Mamuka, Wishbourne,Toriro and Tozarira) or as SDC members at Havana Primary School (Humba-Chairperson, Chimbwasungata - Vice Chairperson, Shetushetu - Secretary, Major-Treasurer, MacDonald-Committee Member), or as SDC members at Oxford Primary School (Chamangwiza - Chairperson, Tambawoga - Vice Chairperson, Tom - Secretary, Brown - Treasurer, and Sting - Committee Member). I present the voices of these actors who are actively experiencing the process of implementing education **decentralisation** at two primary schools in Zimbabwe. All are pseudonyms.



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Information in Table 5.0 shows relatively high enrolment figures for both schools (Oxford Primary School has 1194 and Havana Primary School has 2463 pupils) which indicate easy access to education for primary school-aged children in the schools' catchment areas. Havana Primary School is located in a high population density suburb and therefore enrols a large number of pupils resulting in a higher teacher-pupil ratio. Oxford Primary School enrols the majority of its pupils from modestly affluent families. Havana Primary School enrols its pupils from relatively low income parents.

In both cases, large enrolments are attributed to the fact that the government of Zimbabwe made primary education a fundamental human right (Zvogbo, 2000), and in fulfillment of one of the Millennium Development Goals of achieving "Education For All by 2015", which was about the universalisation of access to primary education. It is mentioned under the Education Act, No.5 of 1987; Act No.9 of 1993 that school fees at primary school should not prevent parents from sending their children to school.

According to interview data from Mr. Burombo (deputy head), Havana Primary School had an enrolment of 2463 pupils to 40 teachers and this is a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:62. He further mentioned that the number of pupils per teacher affects teaching effectiveness and this is worsened by fewer classrooms resulting in over - crowding. He lamented the high enrolments at the school because they were inadequately supported by a proportional appointment of quality teachers, low pupil-textbook ratios and good school infrastructure. The findings are supported by Leer (2015) who contends that lack of resources has a negative effect on teacher effort especially in schools with weak school committees. These two findings demonstrate the limits of educational decentralisation in resource - constrained settings. Oxford Primary School has adequate classrooms, libraries, computer laboratories, playgrounds and sports equipment, which support school governance through SBM.

These two cases show contrasting academic and physical facilities. Oxford Primary School is better equipped than Havana Primary School. In addition, Oxford is located in a relatively affluent suburb whereas Havana is in a high population density area. This provides clarity on how different contexts will affect decentralisation.



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**Table 5.1: Oxford Primary School's profile of parent component of SDC**

| **Gender** | M | M | F | M | M |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 35-39 | 40-44 | 40-44 | 34-39 | 40-44 |
| **Level of education** | Master's degree | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree | Bachelor's degree |
| **Employment status** | Rural District Administrator | Middle Management | High School Teacher | Bank Accountant | Accountant |
| **Position held** | Chairperson | Vice chairperson | Secretary | Treasurer | Committee member |
| **Years on SDC** | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

**Source:** Researcher, November 2018

**Table 5.2: Havana Primary School's profile of parent component of SDC**

| **Gender** | M | M | M | M | M |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 35-39 | 50-54 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 35-39 |
| **Level of education** | Secondary school | Master's degree | Secondary school | Secondary school | Secondary school |
| **Employment status** | Unemployed | College lecturer | Politician | Businessman | Vegetable vendor |
| **Position held** | Chairperson | Vice chairperson | Secretary | Treasurer | Committee member |
| **Years on SDC** | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

**Source:** Researcher, November 2018

Both deputy school heads had experience of over ten years in their positions of responsibility. In my opinion, more than ten years can be termed "experienced". School heads' experience has implications regarding their knowledge and skills of financial management and accountability, which are essential ingredients in educational decentralisation. The two deputy heads mentioned that they have on many occasions acted in the capacities of school heads. As a result they have learnt and experienced much in those positions in their respective schools. Again, the duties and responsibilities of the school and deputy seem to overlap or related. They mentioned that whatever they do, it is in close consultation with the school head. Years of experience improved instructional leadership skills for the school head. Similarly, many years of experience are needed bearing in mind the increased



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administration burden on school heads which accompany greater school autonomy. This is supported by Faguet (2014) who posits that implementing educational decentralisation will not have the desired impact unless lower-level managers also have the human capability to do the work. Many years of experience would improve the professional development of school heads and would have greater school autonomy over areas such as assessment and pedagogy. Considerable years of experience are required of school heads since they serve as members of SDCs and play a dominant role in meetings and decision-making. Many years of experience are also required to enable deputy school heads to execute the major role of managing school resources and the implementation of budgetary decisions.

Also notable was that both deputy school heads were at schools with enrolment numbers of over 1000 puplis (see Table 5.0) which are particularly high enrolment figures and denote relatively big schools. Findings from interviews with Messrs Sawe, Hanzu, Sanyas and Mulemena of Havana Primary School cited some of the problems experienced in their school as indiscipline and lack of interest This is supported by Gershenson (2015) who affirms that larger schools have high rates of pupil absenteeism and disorder that may prevent the cognitive and social development of pupils.This was further reinforced by the following response from the deputy head of Havana Primary School, Mr Burombo, to the question, "What are the drawbacks of these high enrolment figures?"

*"Higher absenteeism, higher rates of vandalism and lower teacher satisfaction were the results of high enrolments."* (November, 14 2018)

It is argued that overcrowded conditions affect students' academic performance. This is supported by Khan et al., (2014) who argue that decentralisation may worsen outcomes if local level institutions have inadequate capacity.

The distribution of teacher interviewees from Oxford Primary School by gender is as follows: 59.09% were females and 40.9% were males. In addition, the distribution of teacher interviewees from Havana Primary School by gender is as follows: 50% were females and 50% were males. What should be understood from these figures is that interviews took place during normal teaching - learning sessions. Therefore interviewees were chosen by their deputy school heads and in most cases these were senior teachers who shared classes with assistant teachers. This would mean



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one teacher would avail himself/herself for the interview while the assistant teacher remained in charge of the class. Thus, the distribution of teacher interviewees by gender had nothing to do with more females than males at Oxford Primary School or equal number of males and females at Havana Primary School.

**Table 5.3 Distribution of teacher interviewees by years of teaching experience**

**Oxford Primary School**

| Teachers' names (pseudonyms) | Years of teaching experience | Teachers' names (pseudonyms) | Years of teaching experience |
|---|---|---|---|
| Collins | 9 | Tozarira | 5 |
| Raffety | 4 | Tivakudze | 11 |
| Hacknell | 11 | Chitiyo | 9 |
| Nash | 11 | Chikomo | 9 |
| Young | 4 | Crossover | 5 |
| Mandaza | 13 | Dhaimana | 12 |
| Gabriel | 20 | Mubango | 4 |
| Makaruse | 5 | Magamanya | 7 |
| Mukondiwa | 21 | Mamuka | 8 |
| Tauzeni | 6 | Wishbourne | 11 |
| Frampton | 19 | Toriro | 9 |
| **Aggregate number of years** | **213** | | |

**Source**: Researcher



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**Table 5.4: Distribution of teacher interviewees by years of experience**

**Havana Primary School**

| **Teachers' names(pseudonyms)** | **Years of teaching experience** | **Teachers' names(pseudonyms)** | **Years of teaching experience** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kamba | 8 | Mulemena | 10 |
| Sanyas | 10 | Tirivavi | 4 |
| Mbizi | 20 | Chipanera | 7 |
| Shumba | 14 | Manjoko | 11 |
| Zhou | 27 | Nxusa | 13 |
| Chibode | 16 | Sutumani | 8 |
| Sawe | 20 | Joina | 5 |
| Sangurura | 15 | Gundumura | 7 |
| Saungweme | 5 | Chimurenga | 7 |
| Mahlayeya | 17 | Torapito | 10 |
| Hanzu | 14 | Chikukwa | 5 |
| **Aggregate number of years** | **243 years** | | |

**Source:** Researcher

A code "years of teaching" encompasses all the number of years in which teacher interviewees for both schools have been teaching. The combined number of years for each school type makes a code category, "teaching experience" expressed as an aggregate number of years of teaching.

An analysis of demographic data reveals that teacher interviewees have an aggregate of 213 years and 243 years of teaching experience for Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively. The interviewees have many years of experience in the teaching and learning of pupils, they are examples of "information-rich" cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this study. This is in line with Seidman (2013:10) observation that "the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational process is through the experience of the individual people who make up the organisation or carryout the process".



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The two schools employ highly qualified and experienced teachers, which is an important requirement of SBM, a strategy for education decentralisation. Havana and Oxford Primary schools' 455 aggregate years of teaching experience shows that there is adequate institutional capacity between them. The long term development of both schools under SBM was a result of the availability of an experienced cadre of teachers, who are able to carry out teaching activities effectively. In addition, experience of teachers would also imply that both schools have the capacity to plan resource allocation. On another dimension, this means that authority and responsibility have been transferred to teachers who have much experience with issues of SBM. This is in line with Gamage (2006a) who viewed SBM as a system designed to improve education by increasing the authority of actors at the school site. It is clear that implementing an education decentralisation policy would do little if those vested with making decisions about their school have little idea of what to do.

**Table 5.5: Teacher interviewee profiles: Oxford Primary School**

| Names & interview date | Responsibilities in addition to teaching | Names & interview dates | Responsibilities in addition to teaching | Names & interview dates | Responsibilities in addition to teaching |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Collins 19/11/2018** | Deputy sports director,fund raising, prefecture | **Young 19/11/2018** | Fund raising; school tuck-shop. | **Mukondiwa 20/11/2018** | Senior teacher; netball,athletics and music |
| **Raffety 19/11/2018** | Environmental conservation; athletics | **Mandaza 19/11/2018** | Educational tours; swimming and cricket coach. | **Tauzeni 20/11/2018** | Athletics, handball & traditional dance; Senior teacher |
| **Hacknell 19/11/2018** | Guidance & counseling; netball; volleyball; BEAM beneficiaries. | **Gabriel 20/11/2018** | Chess, netball & rugby; school bus; fund raising; tuck-shop and garden. | **Frampton 20/11/2018** | Senior teacher; guidance & counselling ; netball |
| **Nash 19/11/2018** | Sports organiser; sports budgeting; procuring sports equipment. | **Makaruse 20/11/2018** | Senior teacher; sports; garden | **Tozarira 20/11/2018** | Senior teacher; soccer, athletics & music |
| **Tivakudze 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher; finance, extra lessons. | **Dhaimana 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher; extra lessons. | **Wishbourne 05/02/2020** | Senior teacher; fund raising. |
| **Chitiyo 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher ;guidance & counselling; public liaison officer | **Mubango 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher; field trips | **Toriro 05/02/2020** | Senior teacher; school projects; procurement |
| **Chikomo 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher, discipline. | **Magamanya 05/02/2020** | Senior teacher, athletics. | | |
| **Crossover 04/02/2020** | Senior teacher ;school projects | **Mamuka 05/02/2020** | Senior teacher ; entertainment | | |

**Source:** Researcher



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### Table 5.6: Teacher interviewee profiles: Havana Primary School

| **Names & interview date** | **Responsibilities in addition to teaching** | **Names & interview date** | **Responsibilities in addition to teaching** | **Names & interview date** | **Responsibilities in addition to teaching** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kamba 14/11/2018** | Senior teacher; athletics, soccer; sports director; feeding scheme, gardening, maintenance; budgeting for sports. | **Zhou 14/11/2018** | Senior teacher; guidance and counseling. | **Saungweme 15/11/2018** | Senior teacher; athletics,drum majorettes & percussion band |
| **Sanyas 14/11/2018** | Senior teacher; Sports organizer. Head of Department (Agriculture) | **Chibode 14/11/2018** | School feeding scheme Senior teacher;sports trainer;sports budgeting | **Mahlayeya 15/11/2018** | Physical education and traditional dance; feeding programme |
| **Mbizi 14/11/2018** | Guidance &counseling;selecting BEAM beneficiaries; scouting for sports talent | **Sawe 14/11/2018** | Disciplinary committee meetings; Scripture Union. | **Hanzu 15/11/2018** | Senior teacher, music, netball and athletics |
| **Shumba 14/11/2018** | Senior teache; disciplinary committee meetings; feeding scheme | **Sangurura 15/11/2018** | Volleyball & percussion band; Senior teacher | **Sutumani 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher & soccer coach |
| **Chikukwa 15/11/2018** | Senior teacher; hockey, physical education & handball | **Chipanera 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher & school infrastructure focal teacher | **Joina 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher; school projects; athletics. |
| **Mulemena 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher; disciplinary committee; procurement. | **Manjoko 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher & cricket coach | **Gundumura 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher, disciplinary committee |
| **Tirivavi 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher ;soccer coach & school feeding scheme | **Nxusa 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher; finance sub-committee; organise school trips | **Chimurenga 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher; selection of BEAM beneficiaries. |
| **Chimurenga 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher ;selction of BEAM beneficiaries | **Torapito 07/02/2020** | Senior teacher;sports organizer;feeding scheme | | |

**Source**: Researcher

Further analysis of biographical data (see Tables 5.3 and 5.3.1) shows that teacher participants in both schools held a variety of posts of responsibility such as sports directors/organisers, guidance and counseling of pupils, discipline, sports/athletics coaching, and fund raising. The involvement of teachers in a variety of responsibilities implies that management in both schools is provided with a voice which will lead to better decision-making and a greater commitment from many sectors. By assuming a variety of responsibilities, teachers help to build collegial relationships within their schools. When teachers are in charge of a variety of responsibilities in addition to their core function (teaching), it shows that they are versatile and can contribute much towards the achievement of school-based management.Teachers share what they are interested in and become committed



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when they feel they can achieve something. The foregoing is supported by Bandur and Gamage (2009) who affirm that the idea of teachers assuming various posts of responsibility within their schools implies that under SBM, the excessive bureaucratic administrative control of schools has been limited.

The findings in this chapter are discussed under five main themes which were a result of transcriptions of the recorded interviews and focus group discussions. Thus, this part of the chapter is structured into five distinct sections according to the main themes or functions namely: (a) new and increased responsibilities for school heads (b) procurement of school resources (c) management of school finances and collection of fees (d) maintenance of school infrastructure, and (e) promotion of school - community relations. SBM, institutional capacity, school resources and community participation constitute the conceptual framework in which the functions performed by SDCs were discussed and analysed within and across the two cases.

## 5.2 Theme One: New and increased responsibilities for school heads

In this section findings are presented, interpreted and analysed on what school heads perceived as their new and increased responsibilities within decentralised school governance and management. It is important to initially understand the theme in the governance and management of two different schools before I discuss the functions performed by SDCs in the succeeding sections. In addition, school heads are coordinators of all the other functions performed by SDCs at their schools, so they play a crucial role within a decentralised school system.

### 5.2.1 School heads' and SDCs' responsibilities under SBM

School heads' responsibilities changed greatly and there was a variety of them as a result of educational decentralisation. As key individuals responsible for fostering a relationship of shared governance within the school, school heads had to adapt to the educational decentralisation process.

It is imperative to mention that the history of school heads in Zimbabwe has been characterised by their control of schools with little or no participation from parents or teachers for the most part. This has been a major influence on school heads' conceptualisation of their responsibilities and those of SDCs. During interviews Messrs. Bob James and Burombo (deputy school heads of Oxford and Havana



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Primary School, respectively), mentioned that parents through the SDC, should support school development efforts and that they should not intrude in "professional and academic" issues. This shows that both deputy school heads were "protective" of school heads' professional domain.

Mrs. Chikukwa (Havana) and Mrs.Tozarira (Oxford), indicated during interviews that the professional history of both school heads has not introduced them to the kind of school management that considers community participation. The foregoing finding is against that of Crook and Manor (2011) which contends that when the voices of parents and local community members are included in school management, the schools' responsiveness to the local priorities improves, thus strengthening teacher accountability. The interviewees further mentioned that traditionally, the school heads perceived this as interference. However, it has been noted by Messrs. Burombo and Bob James that school heads have now accepted the new trends under education decentralisation. This is what Mr. Bob James said:

> *There is an array of new administrative functions. School heads are answerable on many fronts…all competing for their attention…they have children to educate, teachers to develop, a curriculum to deliver…things have changed for the worse (*November 16,2018).

Education decentralisation meant an increase in the number of role players in school affairs. A variety of new school heads' responsibilities were introduced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education following the implementation of educational decentralisation.

It should be noted that the contexts vary substantially between the two schools. Oxford and Havana Primary Schools are at different stages, in terms of history, culture, skills, knowledge and available resources. This variation may influence not only decentralised governance relationships but also the levels and nature of participation, and definitions of the responsibilities of school heads and SDCs. In addition, the involvement of parents in SDC and school activities differs greatly in both schools (this will be shown in later Section 5.6.1). Oxford Primary School is a former Group "A" school. This background or history still has had an impact on how school heads and SDCs of Oxford Primary School have defined or perceived their



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new responsibilities. An excerpt from an interview with Mr. Chamangwiza, chairperson of Oxford Primary School bears testimony to the foregoing finding:

> *This is a former Group "A" school which was meant for a certain class of society…not meant for every person. But because it became open, we now have a lot of pupils some of them who can't afford the standard of the school. Some parents who can afford paying fees for their children asked why can't you close the school and make it our school. Ask people who can't afford to pay to leave… Given a choice there are people who want the school to be an elite school who do not want to pay $120 per term but more* (January 9, 2019).

There is a strong sentiment among parents that Oxford Primary School should not be open to pupils from poor backgrounds or suburbs, instead it should be elitist or operate like a private school. According to data obtained from interviews with Mrs Raffety and Mr.Dhaimana, Oxford Primary School's SDC tries to prevent poor pupils from getting enrolled in the school. The SDC adopted one of the basic neoliberal principles that if someone is not successful, it is their fault. Someone's problems are not societal or community problems. Individualistic tendencies are promoted by Oxford Primary School's SDC. Such perceptions lay the foundation for segregation by class within public urban schools and this influences how SDC and school heads define their roles.

Mr. Humba (chairperson of SDC Havana Primary School) had this to say:

> *I consider the SDC to be an elected government whose duty is to serve the school and the community. Being an elected government implies that the SDC cannot just do what they want, they have to seek guidance from people who placed them in office (*November 13, 2018).

The foregoing is in line with Statutory Instrument 87 of Act No.5 of 1992 that guides the manner in which SDCs' define their role and responsibilities. However, from the aforementioned quotation, what determines the final definition is the SDCs' engagement with the school head.

Mr. Chamangwiza (chairperson of SDC Oxford Primary School) mentioned during an interview that the purpose of the SDC is to promote the best interests of the school and to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all pupils. This finding is in line with the Education Act, No.5 of 1992, which aims to promote efficiency within the education system. Through Statutory Instrument 87 of



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the Education Act, No.5 of 1992, SDCs were to develop schools and improve the welfare of pupils and teachers.

Deputy heads representing their school heads were asked to describe the responsibilities of school heads. Mr. Burombo of Havana Primary School mentioned that shifting power and authority to the school unit implied changes in school governance and management arrangements resulting in increased responsibilities for school heads. Teacher interviewee, Mr. Mbizi of Havana Primary School, supported Mr. Burombo:

> *There have been changes in what school heads do. School heads were used to professionally guide staff and acting as spokespersons for the school in educational matters but now they have assumed functions of CEOs such as allocating and coordinating functions within the school. School heads are like managers pre-occupied with matters such as budgeting, entrepreneurship and marketing (*November 14, 2018).

There was the emergence of new responsibilities for school heads both outside and inside the school. Teacher participants, Messrs. Hanzu, Sutumani, Shumba and Mrs.Chibode (Havana Primary School) remarked that school heads are involved in connecting the school with external stakeholders especially the community.

A careful consideration of data obtained from interviews with teachers and deputy school heads shows that one common feature runs across both schools: despite the increased workload, the decentralised system of education opened up opportunities where school heads could explore and exploit their potential.

Mrs. Chibode, one of the interviewees had this to say:

> *It's not only the new curriculum that has increased our workload. Outside the normal teaching, we still have to initiate fund raising activities and attend meetings in the various committees in the school and attend to school fees' deafaulting parents to arrange payment plans with them (*February 10, 2020).

An increase in responsibilities implied that teachers could "test" their competencies in new areas. These responsibilities were under the central education authority before. Deputy school heads, on behalf of their school heads, stated that they still performed their role of being professionals whereby they provided professional guidance to their staff and acted as spokespersons for the school in educational matters.



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The two deputy heads, Messrs Burombo and Bob James, argued that their school heads had a history of controlling schools with no participation from parents and teachers or any organisation working on their behalf. Mr. Bob James had this to say:

> *With the old system, everything was left in the hands of the school head, even issues of governance that the parents should have had to deal. As a person representing the Minister, they had to see to it that everything being done, decisions being made were according to the policies of the government. They also had to curb people from over-stepping the boundaries (*November 16, 2018).

Both deputy school heads shared the same sentiments but Mr. Burombo further mentioned that the key participants in governance remain the in-school actors, such as the SDC which still must confirm decisions reached within the school. Messrs. Burombo and Bob James noted that although both their school heads emphasised consensus and working together, in practice they retained control of decision-making power. It is the kind of participation that has to go through or decided by the school head, suggesting controlled or directed participation as it concerns power relations and how they work. This is supported by Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2007) who posit that those who have power determine who participates in school decision-making, implying that the interests of certain groups of the school community are not sought or represented.

During interviews conducted, Mrs. Joina gave an example of a situation that happens at Havana Primary School each time the SDC convenes a general meeting.

> *There is very little in terms of contributions in SDC meetings that comes from other members. The meetings appear to be more like military communiques, they are one-sided because it's the school head who takes centre stage (*February 10, 2020).

Judging from the interview with Mr. Burombo and Mrs Joina, it is clear that although education decentralisation brought in participation of stakeholders in school governance and management, in essence, the kind of participation is informally structured through the actions of school heads. They narrated that when the school head wants to draw up the agenda for the next meeting, he wields excessive control and that parents have very limited power. Interviewees from Havana Primary School, (Kamba, Chikukwa and Tirivavi) mentioned that it is the chairperson who is expected to preside over meetings and should be responsible for drawing up the agenda for



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SDC meetings. Surprisingly, it is the school head who consults with the SDC chairperson in drawing up the agenda and he comes up with the bulk of the proposals for the agenda. It was noted during interviews that very few parents or even the SDC chairperson actually contributes to the agenda of the meeting as it is the school head's agenda that dominates.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mrs. Mandaza of Oxford Primary School on the same issue of meetings:

> *Our meetings are very cordial and issues raised are a result of much consultation and researches because before meetings we are all given time to suggest what issues need to make up the agenda. There are no surprises in the meetings and there is much dialogue that goes on (*February 7, 2020).

The interview data reveal that Oxford Primary School SDC chairperson and school head have mutual control of all proceedings of the meetings and get input from all relevant role players.

The interviewees further mentioned that the SDC chairperson and the school head formulate their agenda after broad consultation in which they make use of the various sub-committees in the school to provide information prior to meetings.

Mr. Bob James, Oxford Primary School's deputy head, proffered that:

*"The position of the SDC, with its various committees, has been elevated. The committees have made school management efficient."(*February 7, 2020).

In line with the foregoing quotation, the professional expertise and socio-economic status of parents Oxford Primary School has a significant impact on curtailing any autocratic tendencies by their school head. The interview data reveal that Oxford Primary School is moving away from completely autocratic decision-making, embracing information sharing and more participative forms of decision-making.

A brief consideration of interview data from both schools shows that apart from their primary teaching duties, teachers were involved in various stages of school improvement planning. It was noted that teachers were appointed to various school cross-functional committees. Teachers were also appointed to leadership positions in school projects. Increased teacher involvement in key areas of SBM (such as management of school projects) was noted at both school sites. Both Messrs. Bob James and Burombo stated that this involvement of teachers in key areas of SBM



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improved their competence in non-teaching functions and helped create a sense of shared responsibility in the school. Interview data findings from teachers and deputy heads of both schools show that providing more opportunities for teacher-led decisions is one of the conditions that make SBM work better at the school level. However, while teacher participation in various areas of school management opened opportunities for skills enhancement, according to teacher interviewees, Mrs. Chikukwa and Mr. Sawe, this affected their ability to perform their primary teaching and learning function.

### 5.2.2 Unclear boundary roles between school heads and SDCs

SDC members have been elected and entrusted with enormous tasks and responsibilities in the schools under their jurisdiction. Some of their roles as stipulated by SI 87 of Act No.5 of 1992 include supporting the school heads in the performance of their duties. This is what Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School said:

> *When new members are chosen into the SDC, the school head and deputy give them some induction on their new roles and what is expected of them. The local education authorities also take them through the legal and policy issues but we still observe that they are not aware of their responsibilities* (November 13, 2018).

It was surprising to learn from Mr. Burombo, during an interview, that most parent members of Havana Primary School's SDC, including the chairperson, are uncertain about their roles. However, data obtained from interviewed SDC parent members at Oxford Primary School, such as Messrs. Chimbwasungata and Major (Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer respectively), indicated that it is often left to school heads to decide or prescribe the roles for SDC members. The Zimbabwe Education Act, No.24 of 1994 is clear in giving parents a role in school governance however, different stakeholders interpret the SDC's role in different ways.

Mr. Conrad, the schools inspector, mentioned that they hold induction workshops annually for SDC members so that they understand their responsibilities in order for them not to overstep their roles.



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> *Immediately after the appointment, the school head calls for the first meeting…to choose their chairperson and some committees. Then we address the procedure of giving them their roles and their powers, so from the first time they can know their responsibilities* (January 7, 2019).

It was part of the interviews to find out how well informed SDC members were of their responsibilities and the extent to which they practised their responsibilities. Some of the Havana Primary School SDC members (Messrs. Shetushetu and Major) mentioned that at their first meetings they were given copies of their job descriptions so that they could use them as points of reference whenever they conducted their duties. This is what Mr. Tambawoga said:

> *It is true we are told what we must do but at times we have problems in understanding so many papers they give us describing our duties and how we should perform them. They can explain what we must do but it becomes different on the ground (*November 13, 2018).

It is quite commendable to provide SDC members with training but why do they still face challenges in performing or understanding their roles after receiving training? Is it because the training provided is not in sync with SDC responsibilities, or is it above their level of understanding?

According to Messrs. Sanyas, Kamba, Gundumura and Mbizi of Havana Primary School, the role of the SDC is to promote the interests of the school and giving parents a role in all aspects of school life. The Education Act, No.5 of 1992, transferred powers previously vested in the higher tiers of the education system to individual and clusters of schools through SDCs which were managed and governed by parents or communities. This role definition affirms that the broader interpretation of the role goes beyond official policy definition or beyond the stipulations of the Zimbabwe Education Act, No.24 of 1994. Laws assist in delineating the roles of SDC members but that is not enough. What determines the role to be performed by the SDC at times could be the context. On the other hand, Messrs. Chamangwiza and Brown (Oxford Primary School) defined their SDC's role as technocratic, as that of ensuring the efficient functioning of the school. This implies that their role is based on their specialised knowledge rather than just being representative. However, I find it rather difficult to understand because once a role is based on expertise it challenges the participatory model of decentralized school governance and management that is supposed to be in place. It would mean that all decisions made



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are based on the opinions and viewpoints of a group of experts, while marginalizing the opinions and viewpoints of the majority members and community.

A comparison of data collected from interviewees from both schools shows that Oxford Primary School SDC's members had a better understanding of their roles compared to those of Havana Primary School. In the case of the latter, the difference could be attributed to their relatively low educational background and level of commitment to the school where they were often accused by teachers of only coming to the school for the sitting allowance. Overall, the individual needs and dynamics of each school should be considered.

When I interviewed Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School, he mentioned that there is a tendency among teachers to view SDC members as being at odds with the school head over such issues as enforcing the collection of fees from parents and funding school sports. This is what teacher interviewee, Mr Tirivavi said:

> *It becomes a problem when an SDC member behaves like he is the school head or one of the teachers. They seem not to know what they are supposed to do. Some of them even want to discipline pupils and always want to accompany the pupils when they are going on sports trips (*February 10, 2020).

There is a general perception among teacher interviewees that the incapacity and inadequacy of SDC members at Havana Primary School has led to their failure to perform the expected role. The foregoing is supported by Khan et al., (2014) who affirm that the success of any decentralisation implementation effort is dependent upon continually building adequate levels of staff and enabling institutional structures. Similarly, implementing an education decentralisation policy does little if SDC members responsible for making decisions about their school have little idea of what to do.

Mr. Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School's SDC confided in me that there is a problem of role ambiguity when many expectations are directed simultaneously to SDC members from different stakeholders. This was supported by his colleague, Mr.Mbizi with the following quotation:



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*The main problem is that terms of reference have not been spelt out to those in the SDC...I don't think everybody is aware of the expectations and limitations…you find SDC clashing with school heads and certain people trying to assume roles that are not theirs and even administrators assigning roles to the SDC that are not theirs* (November 14, 2018*).*

The quotation refers to lack of information regarding expectations associated with a role. Information is unclear regarding which potential role expectation should be performed by the SDC.

Using data from interviewees on role understanding between the two schools suggests that Oxford Primary School SDC's role is clearly defined. In addition, the SDC members have ample information on the roles they are supposed to perform. On the other hand, evidence with regards to Havana Primary School SDC shows that there is lack of understanding of its role. The implication that might arise from this could be that the SDC at Havana Primary School is at odds with its members and with the school head. School heads have their own expectations of SDCs in their roles, but how they project their expectation depends on how the position of SDC members has been specified and upon the job description.

### 5.2.3 School heads' managerial role

Mr. Bob James (deputy head of Oxford Primary School) revealed the following in line with new and increased responsibilities for school heads;

*The role of the school head is…to market their school, understanding its target market, understanding the needs of "customer", in this case parents. The school head has to use marketing to differentiate the school from other schools. The school head has to understand that the school has a business side (*November 16, 2018).

School heads began the move from being administrators or instructional leaders to assuming a more executive role:

*We're now moving from administration to management and finally to leadership. Heads…are in charge of administering and managing budgets. …the head needs to be…a Manager… he has to know how to plan his activities; to have business knowledge, to think about efficiency, … work within the allocated budget…(Mr. Conrad, District Schools' Inspector,* January 7, 2019).



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Mr. Bob James had a similar viewpoint asserting that as managers, school heads have to allocate time to the instructional process and to the managerial side of the job. He went on to affirm that school heads were becoming responsible for school management much more than before. The context of the preceding quotation and data is very similar to that of Khan et al., (2014) who posited that, for example, educational services and teachers needed to be managed. Khan et al concluded that managing a school requires many skills, some of which are purely technical and apply to any organisation (e.g. planning, budgeting, time management and personnel relations). Managerialism was more evident at Oxford Primary School than at Havana Primary School. Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector affirmed that at school level, teachers experience managerialism principally in the form of target setting and performance review. He further mentioned that it is through managerialism that the idea of published ranking of schools was introduced, resulting in polarisation of schools (primarily on the basis of social class). In addition, he proffered that this has been adopted by the MoPSE countrywide whereby schools like Oxford and Havana are ranked annually together with all primary schools after the release of results of their Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE).

Managing multiple roles would not afford the school head to give all activities the thoroughness or efficiency they would require. There is a danger that some activities would be given less attention than others or sacrificed completely. Data obtained from interviews with Mrs. Zhou, Chibode, Chikukwa, Nxusa and Mr. Shumba (Havana Primary School), indicated that the performance appraisal system was not given much attention at all. The same views about the performance appraisal system were shared by Mrs. Young, Collins, Hacknell, Mubango and Mr. Frampton (Oxford Primary School).

Mrs. Mukondiwa, Wishbourne, Nash and Mr. Makaruse (Oxford Primary School), Mr.Hanzu, Mrs. Chibode and Mrs.Chipanera (Havana Primary School), shared the same views that their learners had been exposed to entrepreneurial ideas. One of the interviewees, Mr. Makaruse commented:



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> *At our school, pupils are in charge of the school tuck-shop and take turns to sell and account for the cash they receive. Classes rotate on a monthly basis in managing the tuck-shop and invest profits into other activities such as poultry. So we see at the school many different projects. It's almost like education with production* (November 16, 2018).

The new school autonomy of neoliberal education decentralisation positioned schools to operate more like businesses.

### 5.2.4 School heads' multiple accountabilities

School heads' became accountable to the state for implementing the policy of educational decentralisation. This is what Mr. Conrad, the schools inspector had to say during an interview session:

> *The school head needs to interact with local/district, provincial and central authorities (national). By so doing he creates a new level of accountability to each of them. Another spectrum of his accountabilities is parents, the community and the SDC. At the micro-level, the school head maintains overall power and control, distributes his authority to his deputy, heads of departments, senior teachers, subject teachers and school support staff, who in turn become accountable to him (*January 7, 2019).

The school heads' new multiple roles and responsibilities also meant that the number of role players they needed to relate to had increased. The implementation of educational decentralisation had an impact on school heads' professional activities and accountability frameworks. Mr. Conrad confirmed that school heads are now responsible for more things than before, many of them new, both internally and externally and have to comply with multiple accountability systems. This finding supports the argument of World Bank (2004) and Ranson (2003) which proffers that school committees can foster accountability by building relationships among clients and hold decision makers accountable.

#### 5.2.4.1 Accountability to the District Schools Inspectorate (DSI)

School heads are accountable to the DSI with regards to instructional and professional matters and a small portion of finances (for pupil awards). Local government education through the DSI contributes in the implementation of education policies, so they do not only share information among themselves but also with school heads. The DSI is an important body when it comes to implementation of education policies. According to an interview session with Mr. Conrad, the DSI



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receives the responsibilities from the Ministry of Education and implements them with the help of school heads. He mentioned that it translates policies and sends directives to school heads to guide them when implementing decentralisation.

This is what Mr. Conrad (Schools Inspector) said during an interview:

> *School heads are entrusted with public resources to manage the schools; they are required to give account of their stewardship to the relevant stakeholders, in this case, the DSI. The DSI has the responsibility to ensure that duties or functions as delegated to the school heads have been performed as intended* (January 7, 2019).

Since the school heads have been entrusted with delegated authority, they have the obligation to give account. Numerous studies (e.g. Elmore, 2006; Moller et al., 2007; Falch and Fischer, 2002; Patrinos and Fasih, 2009), affirm that parents have more power within the school especially within the school committees and that school principals are responsible to the local community and to higher levels of the educational system.

Data from interviews conducted with Messrs. Burombo and Bob James indicated that their school heads have shown their accountability to the DSI when they meet with the school inspector to deliberate on the day-to-day school work. They reported that the communication between the school heads and the schools inspector is meant to enhance the educational process. Mr. Bob James went on to mention that:

> *Accountability serves to ensure that school heads are complying with legislative obligations. The DSI is responsible for the ongoing operation and performance of schools. The school head has to give account of his performance. School heads have to account how they are creating, implementing and managing the school development plan (*November 16, 2018).

For educational matters, both deputy heads interviewed mentioned that their "bosses" were subordinated to the DSI first and foremost as the local offices of the MoPSE:

> *We are in a relation of subordination to the District School Inspectorate for instructional issues and school curriculum. We're subordinated to the District School Inspectorate for… national examinations…everybody has their own role in the new maze and I think that collaboration between all these bodies is welcome…being accountable to no one and having no one's support would mean everyone does whatever they please and that would mean disaster…(*Mr.Burombo, November 13, 2018).



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DSIs are the link between the macro and micro-levels of Zimbabwe's education system. This connectedness is supported by Agrawal and Ribot (2004) and World Bank (2004) when they reported that through downward accountability, executing agents or decision makers are liable to be called to account by their beneficiaries

Messrs. Burombo and Bob James were of the same opinion during interviews that their first point of accountability is to the DSI. While there is no direct relationship between school heads and the Ministry of Education, heads receive central directives through the DSI.

There is a perception amongst many parents, teachers and school heads that the school head is the chief accounting officer of the school and that he/she is thus accountable to the Ministry of Education for the school's finances. Statutory Instrument 87 of Act No.5 of 1992 mandates the school head to be the chief accounting officer of the school responsible for the control and use of funds.The requirement that school heads should have advanced knowledge of financial matters so that they can advise the SDC appropriately, qualifies them to being chief accounting officers.

There is a constituency which maintains that the SDC finance sub-committee is accountable and responsible for the management of the school's finances. This apparent role conflict or problem has been more pronounced at Havana Primary School where it has been observed that there is little or no difference between the school head's and the finance subcommittee's authority on financial matters.

#### 5.2.4.2 Accountability to SDCs

Since the introduction of education decentralisation, school heads have to consult with SDCs because issues such as procurement, educational trips, schools' maintenance costs and buildings are covered by the school budget raised through school fees, levies and donations. A problem that may arise could be that the school head and the SDC do not work collaboratively with each other in managing the school's finances. The result might be one party operating unilaterally without engaging the other fully in discussions.



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This is what Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School said:

> *This idea of "subordination" to the SDC is quite daunting in my opinion; I find it perfectly normal for a school head to be checked and audited by someone else, but that person should not be from the local community, but from the District School Inspectorate. It is a completely different thing to be "subordinated" to an institution such as the SDC that does not know exactly what it is that I am doing in my school.* (November 13, 2018).

Mr. Bob James, deputy head, mentioned that school heads now see the SDC as a body to which they are (to some extent) subordinated, although this relationship is generally labelled as "collaboration":

> *It's not necessarily that the SDC has ultimate authority, but there are new bonds being created. We collaborate on financial matters because it is their budget that supports the school…There are certain things that are dependent upon the local community, which is represented by the SDC…when I say local community; it's the SDC because this is the institution that manages the funds for the school. I've never seen this as subordination, but more like collaboration. (*November 16, 2018).

The SDC's lack of expertise in education is one reason why some school heads are reluctant to have them involved in schools' management. Messrs. Kamba, Shumba, Sawe, Tirivavi, and Mbizi (Havana Primary School) had reservations about the role of their SDC in school affairs. The interviewees mentioned that there are tensions between teachers and the SDC. When probed further, Mr. Mbizi mentioned that:

> *There are certain areas where the SDC should not take part, such as management matters…these are for the school head. Even teachers generally feel uncomfortable with the SDC's involvement in professional matters (*November 14, 2018).

On the other hand, Mrs. Tauzeni of Oxford Primary School held different opinions from those held by Havana Primary School's teacher interviewees;

*"As teachers, we welcome and acknowledge the presence of the SDC. We greatly appreciate parents' involvement in school governance through the SDC."* (February 7, 2020).

Mr. Bob James supported the foregoing excerpt by revealing through an interview that their school head has already adapted to the new circumstances and understood that a good relationship with the SDC is essential to obtain their general support and for the development of the school. In the case of Havana Primary



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School, it is difficult to realise any collaborative work between the teachers and SDC members. The following excerpt from Mr. Kamba, Havana Primary School, confirmed the foregoing:

> *Teachers' conceptualisation of the role of the SDC is in conflict with that of parent members of the SDC. This will definitely have a negative impact on the effective functioning of the school as an institution. This could also be an indication that the SDC has a covert role* (November 14, 2018).

Teachers are not responsible for defining the roles of SDCs and hence are not expected to influence them in the direction of greater conformity with their expectations.

#### 5.2.4.3 Accountability to pupils, parents and staff

In addition to their accountability to SDC and the DSI, the school heads are accountable to pupils and their parents. This is what Mr. Burombo, deputy school head of Havana Primary School said:

> *First and foremost, I am accountable to pupils and parents, because we are all working for them. Teachers and heads are working for the local community. We are accountable to all the actors in education because it is our responsibility to do this for the proper functioning of the school* (November 13, 2018).

From the foregoing quotation, accountability to pupils, parents and staff, is a moral duty that does not necessarily require formal regulation. School heads also see themselves morally responsible for the well-being of their staff which works to their advantage because they seem to be aware of and accountable for everything that happens in their school. This is an excerpt of an interview with Mr. Bob James, deputy school head of Oxford Primary School:

> *When you are in a leadership position, you realise that other people are dependent upon you. Often you have little time for your own problems. I need to be able to pick up the phone at 10 p.m. if a colleague calls me … or see a parent at 7 a.m. I need to be able to juggle all these. Heads see their schools as their big extended family. As with any other family, everybody's concerns and well-being need to be taken into account (*November 16, 2018).

Overall, deputy school heads expressed their appreciation at the rapidity with which school problems are being attended to due to the decentralisation of school



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governance. Mr. Raffety, Mrs Collins, Nash, Young and Frampton, teacher interviewees from Oxford Primary School, acknowledged that the participation of local community and parents in education has benefitted their school. The finding seems to fit well with studies by Chikoko (2009), Gershberg and Shatkin (2007) which reported that community participation in education provides substantial benefits to children's learning.

It has been noted by Mrs. Collins, Raffety and Messrs Gabriel and Magamanya (Oxford Primary School) that the accountability of their school head goes beyond the traditional one. They mentioned that their school head's accountability extends to many other constituencies such as local and national businesses, who provide financial support to school activities and programmes. The findings are in line with studies by Elmore (2006) which reported that school heads are accountable to the mandate and function of the school and responsible towards the local community of which the school is part and have a duty to adhere to the standards of the profession. They asserted that those who donate funds to the school and make up school's network need to be accounted to. The interviewees also indicated that those who sponsor different sporting disciplines need to be accounted to as well, for example, private companies and commercial banks. They gave examples of philanthropic organisations and churches which provide scholarships and financial assistance to some of their vulnerable children.

Mrs Collins had this to say:

> *Despite the tough economic situation prevailing, we have not sat on our laurels as teachers. It is true that user fees paid by pupils cannot sustain all school activities. We have taken advantaged of some of the parents who are prominent and given them the task to market our school. This has worked well and we receive donations from many sources including our aluminis (*November 16, 2018).

For purposes of comparison, Havana Primary School's accountability base is narrower than that of Oxford Primary School as it is accountable mainly to the DSI, SDC and parents and the community. However, despite the differences in the number and levels of accountability between the two schools, Ranson (2003) maintains that school principals may no longer be able to take decisions unilaterally; they have to give account of and be answerable to all the education activities.



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An accountability system enables stakeholder concerns to be heard and valued by those they account to and this ensures transparency for those providing services. For example, it is through accountability that the public knows that school resources are being used responsibly. In order to ensure a good quality implementation of education decentralisation, there is need for an effective accountability system. The foregoing is supported by Agrawal and Ribot (2000) by contending that under downward accountability, decision makers are liable to be called to account by their beneficiaries or consumers. An accountability system becomes an external means of monitoring schools and their heads.

### 5.2.5 Summary of theme findings

It was discussed in the foregong section that in increasingly decentralised and accountability - driven environments, school heads in both schools assumed more tasks of responsibility than before. Teachers were appointed to various cross-functional committees, and given leadership positions in projects in both schools. Findings suggest that providing more opportunities for teacher - led decisions is one of the conditions that make SBM work better at the school level.

Findings suggest that the professional expertise and socio-economic status of parents and SDC members at Oxford Primary School have a significant impact on curtailing any autocratic tendencies by the school head opening the way for more participative forms of decision-making. Even though parental participation at Havana Primary School is limited by their socio-economic status, poor parents also want to be involved in their children's education - it is inequality that affects their participation.

For both schools, the expansion of a neoliberal market orientation into the school sector created school heads who were entrepreneurial managers, school headship became managerialist with an emphasis on cost reduction.

Findings suggest that there is a strong thinking among parents of Oxford Primary School that the school should not be open to learners from poor backgrounds or suburbs. Neoliberalism continually institutionalises educational inequality and widens disparities.



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### 5.3 Theme Two: Managing school finances and collection of fees

The purpose of this section is to examine the involvement of the different actors and their relationships in the decision-making processes related to managing school finances and collection of school fees. I compare what participants say within each school and between the two different schools and contexts. For purposes of facilitating discussion and analysis, this theme is divided into four sub-headings.

#### 5.3.1 School-based management of finances and collection of fees

Under school based management (SBM), school finances are managed within the school. Section 35:624 of Zimbabwe Education Act, No.24 of 1994 stipulates that, "a School Development Committee, if approved by the Minister, shall be vested with control of the financial affairs of the school for which it has been established." SDCs have a legal responsibility of creating their own budgets and managing their own finances since 1991 when educational administration was decentralised to the individual school level. School heads and members of SDCs play a major role in the management of all school financial activities. Under fiscal decentralisation principles the government has also given a mandate to schools to raise their own revenue to be used at the school level. This is supported by the Education Act, No.84 of 1996 which stipulated that the head of a Government school shall establish for that school a general purpose fund for the welfare of the pupils in attendance. Thus, besides managing school finances, SDCs control another important aspect of the public schools, the collection of fees and sourcing of funding. School fees are usually the largest source of funds for recurrent expenditure. It is within this context that the management of finances and collection of fees by SDCs will be examined in this section.

Participants' views on management of school finances and collection of fees were sought through interview sessions and focus group discussions. During a focus group discussion at Havana Primary School, parents were of the opinion that children who do not pay fees must be excluded from attending school. Similarly, the parents had corroborated concerns with the current position of the government on school fees which stated that those who cannot pay must not be expelled from school.



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One parent, Mama Jomo, of Havana Primary School, mentioned this during a focus group discussion:

> *Defaulting parents should be seen making an effort to raise funds for their school. Those struggling to pay school fees should undertake fund raising activities and start a "School Fees Distress Fund" in which they would pay any amount of money, no matter how little (*December 22, 2018).

Failure to pay school fees and levies by a majority of parents at Havana Primary School led to many problems such as shortages of instructional materials and poor infrastructure. This situation was compounded by government's withdrawal of education (tuition) grants.

I further asked about the state of finances and collection of fees in the two schools. Mr Hondo, a parent at Havana Primary school proffered this during a focus group discussion:

*"The delayed and non-payment of fees and levies by parents has reduced the ability of the SDC to meet the day-to-day expenses of the school."*(December 22, 2018).

Focus group discussion data especially from Havana Primary School, indicated that the amount of funds accumulated by the schools through their SDCs is insufficient in meeting all of the school's expenses.

The foregoing findings from focus group discussions are in line with Chipika et al., (2000); Moyo et al., (2015), and Samkange (2013), who posit that parents were given the responsibility of managing and governing schools without any financial support from central government. Furthermore, government withdrew subsidies and introduced user fees in the education sector. This was further supported by Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector who affirmed that the abrogation by government of its responsibility to provide education grants (tuition) and subsidies to schools has put Havana Primary School in a dire financial situation. Mr. Major (Havana Primary School), affirmed that his school had failed to execute its mandate of collecting school fees and levies from most parents of the nearly 2500 pupils**.**



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This is what Mr. Major said:

> *It is unfair for such a school with more than 2000 pupils to have only a tenth paying school fees. Where does the money to buy learning materials come from? Parents seem not to care at all about paying school fees (*November 13, 2018).

Data from an interview with Mr. Burombo (deputy head) supporting what Mr. Major said, indicated that the school depended entirely on donations and fund raising activities which do not contribute much to solving the school's financial problems or to placing the school on a sound development path. Havana Primary School's local revenue stream is very small.

Interviewees from Oxford Primary School had a different collective viewpoint, and this is what Mr. Brown had this to say:

> *Our SDC works round the clock and they have the development of the school at heart. The SDC is well connected and have been able to fund raise substantial amounts of money and donations in kind. During Prize-Giving Days parents engage in all sorts of fund raising activities, for example, braai, selling alcoholic beverages, jumble sale* (November 16, 2018).

This is what was obtained from Mrs Koshen (parent) during a focus group discussion by parents at Oxford Primary School:

> *Despite the generally weak economy, the school has many sources of finance due to its strong network of stakeholders, for example, businessmen, commercial farmers, industrialists, philanthropists, and mining establishments (*December 16, 2018).

The foregoing quotation supports previous research by Samkange (2013) which maintained that educational decentralisation was meant to receive greater financial contribution from communities and parents. However, under neoliberal education decentralisation, parents and the wider local community are explicitly regarded as having primary responsibility for the education of their own children rather than the state. Adequate funds at the school level are essential for decentralisation efforts to succeed.

The following are juxtaposed school fees schedules obtained from Messrs. Knox and Spears, bursars for Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively.



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**Table 5.7: School fees structure per term**

| Year | Oxford Primary School | Havana Primary School |
|---|---|---|
| 2018 | Z$145 | Z$45 |
| 2019 | Z$320 | Z$60 |
| 2020 | Z$500 | Z$400 |

**Source**: Compiled from Schools' Inspector office (February 4, 2020).

The fees differ because Oxford Primary School has both day and boarding pupils while Havana Primary School only has day pupils. Data from the table, supported with interviews from Mrs. Zhou, Manjoko and Mahlayeya revealed that the amount paid as fees at Havana Primary School is minimal compared to the needs. The amount of school fees charged has affected the running of school activities since the fees structure provided does not match school needs.

This is what Mrs. Manjoko said:

*"Although the amount paid towards school fees is relatively small, there are some parents who still could not afford to pay because of their high poverty levels"* (February 10, 2020).

Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector said this in agreement with the foregoing:

> *A large number of parents of schools in high population density areas struggle to pay school fees and this has been going on for many years. They mention that the economy is not performing well and that industries were closed. Under such conditions they view schooling as a luxury when they cannot afford basic necessities* (January 7, 2019).

However, school fees amounts are determined by central government through Ministry of Education, so there are no way schools can charge more than what is determined by central government. This means that despite education decentralisation being accepted in school governance, there are still some centralist tendencies in the way school fees are determined.



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Mr. Burombo, Mrs. Joina and Mrs. Chibode (Havana Primary School) indicated that in order to alleviate the school fees problem on disadvantaged pupils, the government introduced in 2001, a "safety-net" known as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). It is meant to benefit orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) towards payment of their school fees.

In an interview, Messrs. Sawe and Mulemena of Havana Primary School lamented that children whose statuses were dubious were selected to benefit from BEAM due to political connections. Such a "safety-net" was originally established to reduce educational exclusion by easing the financial strain on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) or economically vulnerable families. Without the "safety-net" there would be interruptions in learning or complete withdrawal from school, creating gaps in the children's education that would be hard to fill in the future. The "safety-net" aims to create a more inclusive education landscape.

Parents of Havana Primary School bemoaned during a focus group discussion the fact that BEAM funds had decreased due to the adverse economic situation. This is Mama Popo's contribution during the focus group discussion:

> *This is going to worsen the plight of the already overburdened community. A lot of elderly people were left in custody of orphans with no other source of income to raise school fees. The government should quickly find some alternative assistance for these vulnerable people (*December 22, 2018*).*

However, Mr. Major, SDC treasurer for Havana Primary School mentioned that problems in schools were unending because of the state's bankruptcy and the weak Zimbabwean economy which made it difficult to buy the necessary school supplies. The foregoing is supported by Colclough et al., (2009), contending that the rapidly increasing inflation had a devastating effect on all government services. Mr.Major bemoaned the fact that school levies paid by parents in monetary terms have been rendered worthless due to the prevailing inflationary environment.

> *…we don't get any funds from government…so it's difficult to run the school...It is survival of the fittest. It means we have to introduce through-the-ceiling-fees. Otherwise we will be forced to operate like a private school or we will open the school to private investors* (November 16, 2018).

Schools are accessing finances from different sources such as school projects and community contributions. However, the funds are insufficient for the development of



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the schools. One of the reasons given for lack of funds in the two cases is a serious decrease in government's budget allocations to the education sector that commenced two decades ago. According to the Zimbabwe Human Development Report (2003), the education sector had been reduced to significant levels of an average of 14% of the budget allocation.

Mr. Makaruse had this to say about Oxford Primary School's response to the economic situation:

> *When I came here, I took charge of all fund raising activities. The school bus was always parked and I thought of hiring it out. Again, the school hall was being under-utilized and I hired it out as well. I took charge of the school garden, orchard and tuck-shop. All these ventures were run by pupils under my charge (*November 16, 2018).

Interview data noted that teachers work together with SDC members in establishing income generating projects in order to raise revenue. During my field work I observed most of these development projects such as rearing rabbits, poultry, gardening, and fish farming at Oxford Primary School.

*Mr. Shumba, Havana Primary School, had this to say:*

> *We have been struggling financially. Whatever projects we started with the pupils, they were limited in scope because we didn't have much money to start and maintain them* (November 14, 2018).

When I visited Oxford Primary School I observed that their projects were bigger, more stable, diversified and lucrative than those at Havana Primary School. For example they had tuck-shops, hired out the school bus and the school hall. During interviews, Mrs. Torapito reiterated that the small projects at Havana Primary School were due to the school's poor finances.

A comparative analysis of data from focus group discussions, interviews and quotations from the foregoing, shows that the financial situation at Havana Primary School is direr than that of Oxford Primary School. The financial situation at Havana Primary School negates the aims of education decentralisation of improving access to education for disadvantaged children. Havana Primary School is an example where the decentralisation of financial responsibility to schools through local communities and households leaves much to be desired. Mr. Burombo postulated that the support provided by parents and their community is insufficient to provide



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schooling which is adequately resourced. Oxford Primary School has been able to protect itself against the effects of the deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe. Mr. Brown, the treasurer, highlighted the state of finances at Oxford Primary School:

> *…we use a very wide range of methods to fund-raise for capital expenditure…we host ceremonies attended by local politicians and businesses, at which projects are launched…and money is donated…We formed Oxford Old Students' Association which has on its ranks prominent businessmen, professionals and civil servants. Some embassies…donate cash, books, sports equipment, and small grants for construction (*November 16, 2018).

One dynamic that emerged as perceived by participants is that there are inequitable levels of affordability between parents of the two schools. Oxford Primary School, located in an affluent suburb, and Havana Primary School, in a high density area, with the former being able to pay more fees which support a high level of resources per child. Another dynamic is that top-up fees are paid by upper income parents. Thus, Oxford Primary School, with high top-up fees is better resourced than Havana Primary School. This situation institutionalises the privileged access of the richer groups to good quality education. Differences between the two schools are rooted in socio-economic status, which perpetuates the cycle of advantage associated with high social and cultural capital. This is similar to an assertion by Chaka and Dieltiens (2006) that identified unemployment as giving rise to the parents' low socio-economic status and which, in turn, does not permit parents to provide books and other relevant learning materials. Mr. Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School's SDC, made an insightful assertion during an interview session that financial reports available on government website of per capita grants for government schools shows that Oxford Primary School received similar grants as lower income schools. He went on to proffer that all schools received the same amount of per capita grants, irrespective of whether they were already well-resourced from higher fees charged, and afforded, by the parents. Mr. Humba contended that the government subsidy seemed unnecessary for Oxford Primary School because it was already in a position of strength or advantage, financially, than Havana Primary School. He went to contend that the former could attract the best teachers, procure resources in abundance and has relatively less pupils, yet they received the highest education grants (tuition) from the state.



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Mr. Major mentioned that his school has some fund raising sources despite the fact that they have not been contributing much because of government's stringent policy on donors.

> *We receive grants from overseas churches and charitable organisations… some of the projects funded from such sources have been short-lived because some unruly community members broke down the concrete wall and stole a large number of chickens. Some donations, mostly stationery, have trickled in from local businesses (*November 14, 2018).

Mr.Major also stated during the interview that government was suspicious of donations from international non-governmental organisations. The thinking is that nono-governmental organisations influence recipients of donations against government policies.

On the other hand, basing on interview data from Mrs. Collins, Raffety, Chitiyo and Mukondiwa, teachers at Oxford Primary School were creative enough in terms of their concerted efforts to fund-raise for the benefit of the school.

One of the interviewees, Mrs. Mukondiwa had this to say:

> *We organised such competitions as sponsored walks, whereby children collected, for example, 50 cents a kilometre. We also organised funded or sponsored spelling competitions between schools, which also has the added benefit of boosting children's learning (*February 7, 2020).

Interview data show that progressive SDCs and school heads are engaged in active entrepreneurial activities to raise additional funds through sponsorships and donations from the broader communities, and corporate business. Mr. Brown stated that some parents even suggested levying exorbitant fees to make up for the government grants which are no longer forthcoming.

However, Mr Major of Havana Primary School had this to say:

> *Our community has not been contributing finances, many parents are in school fees arrears dating back to the time they first enrolled their child at the school. They do not want to take part in school development activities (*November 13, 2018).

Messrs.Sawe, Sanyas, Chimurenga and Mrs. Saungweme of Havana Primary School supported the foregoing excerpt by noting that there was a general lack of parental and community support for fund-raising initiatives at their school. The interviewees reported that parents considered fund-raising to be the sole



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responsibility of teachers. The same interviewees were not pleased with the practice of a large number of parents who only pay for their children's fees when enrolling them in Grade One, and thereafter do not pay. At Oxford Primary School it was reported that parents were always prompt and up-to-date with payments of school fees and levies and that this enabled their SDC to procure resources and where possible even employ extra teachers. On the contrary, it was reported during interviews with Mr. Major (Havana Primary School's SDC treasurer), that user fees and funds raised were not substantial.

It should be noted that the collection or failure to collect school fees affected many aspects of school operations. Collection of school fees is a pervasive issue that transcends across many other functions or themes in this study such as procurement of resources, maintenance of school infrastructure and promotion of school-community relations.

**5.3.2 School's finance policy**

The key issue in this section is to examine participants' perspectives on school finance policy.

Deputy heads of Oxford and Havana Primary Schools (Messrs. Bob James and Burombo respectively), were asked whether they had a finance policy or any document that specifies how finances are to be used in the school. This is what Mr. Burombo said:

> *We have something that was crafted by the parent Ministry… long back. We never had any up-to-date document on school finances since authority was transferred to schools. Instead we have used financial plans on an "ad hoc" basis… (*November 14, 2018).

Schools should have finance policies to specify the guidelines and actions to be taken to address all finance-related issues. Such a policy must be constantly adhered to and updated. Again, it is the finance policy that sets goals and objectives, controls and integrates diverse financial activities carried out in the school.

Mr. Bob James's response to the aforementioned question was different from his counterpart at Havana Primary School.



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> *It is an essential document…We can't handle public funds…without prescribed parameters in place. It provides direction and guidelines to relevant staff…in the discharge of this crucial function* (November 16, 2018).

As a monitoring tool, a finance policy ensures a smooth, transparent and reliable management of finances in the school.

Mr. Burombo stated that the finance policy for Havana Primary School was formulated by central government. He went on to mention that the school and its local stakeholders did not have any contribution into the formulation of the policy, which had everything determined from the centre. Interview data indicated that Havana Primary School's finance policy did not reflect its needs or those of its stakeholders. As a result, not having a finance policy specific to Havana Primary School could lead to irregularities in the management of its finances by the SDC. On the other hand, Mr. Bob James, deputy head, mentioned that Oxford Primary School has a history of being a former Group "A" government school controlled from central government.

Mr. Bob James had this to say;

*"Our school quickly elected to be self-managing in contrast to many schools in the high density suburbs which still depended on the district education offices.*"(November 16, 2018).

Mr Bob James further mentioned that, soon after independence the school was in charge of formulating its own development policies and plans.

Mr. Brown, the school treasurer, in support of what Mr. Bob James, stated during an interview session that by developing and making use of its own finance policy, Oxford Primary School manages its finances well. He stated that the school recruits SDC members with good education and financial skills for preparing and managing school budgets. When Mr. Frampton (Oxford Primary School) was interviewed, he shared the same views as those of Mr. Brown:

> *Our SDC developed and implemented a well-formulated finance policy. As a result they managed the school fees and fund raising activities effectively and efficiently*. (November 16, 2018).



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Whereas, Messrs. Sawe, Hanzu, Gundumura and Mbizi of Havana Primary School affirmed that there was a general lack of parental and community support for the school's financial obligations.

Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector was asked, "Which irregularities have been reported by the SDC to your office during the past three years related to school finance policy?"

Mr. Conrad mentioned during one of the interviews that there had been cases of irregularities on financial management reported to the DSI. He indicated that it happened at Havana Primary School, during the tenure of the previous school head. Mr. Conrad indicated that the case of the former head of Havana Primary School was a case of financial misconduct whereby he was spending school funds for his personal benefit. This could have happened as the then school head was taking advantage of the absence of a school finance policy. Without a finance policy or when it is poorly designed or ineffectively implemented, the possibility of fraud and misuse of school funds may be increased. Mr. Conrad went on to state that:

> *Z$60,000 was spent without authorisation by the SDC chairperson. The school head in question paid for the goods and services without three quotations and did not involve the finance committee for adjudication. These goods and services were purportedly bought on the understanding that they were meant for the school (*January 7, 2019).

The foregoing actions in the quotation were in violation of SI 87 of Act,No.5 of 1992 which is against unauthorized expenditure when spending school funds.The achievement of a school's educational goals depends largely on how finances are used and most importantly, whether they are used for the sole purpose of advancing the interests of the school.

### 5.3.3 Accountability for school finances

The inclusion of the school head in the SDC's finance sub-committee is supported by the Zimbabwe Education Act, No.24 of 1994, which prescribes that the responsibility of the school head is to assist SDCs in the management of finances. Because of the crucial role they play within the SDC and the school, school heads must therefore have advanced knowledge on financial matters so that they can advise the SDC appropriately.



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During an interview session, Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, affirmed that SI 87 Act, No.5 of 1992 mandates the school head to be a chief accounting officer of the school responsible to the SDC for the control and use of funds. I further asked both deputy school heads, "What skills are required of school heads in order to fulfil the responsibilities of finance accounting officers?"

Mr. Burombo had this to say:

> *The school head is responsible for monitoring the budget. Monitoring the budget is about checking expenditure against the budget allocations, checking that the resources are mobilised effectively, evaluating, and re-organizing if and where necessary(*November 13, 2018).

Mr. Burombo stated that decentralised school governance requires SDC members, especially the school head, to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and capacity to deal with complex financial issues and tasks. The finding is in line with Faguet (2014) who contended that educational decentralisation is so administratively intense that lower level managers must have the technical and managerial skills.

Mr. Bob James mentioned that the school head at Oxford Primary School implements control measures with respect to budgeting expenditure, receipts, petty cash, bank reconciliation, investments, school funds, creditors, suppliers and movable and fixed property.

Messrs. Burombo and Bob James mentioned that the school head must at least be knowledgeable about the procedures for regular reporting and consistent balancing of books, timely maintenance of all records, documentation, books and regular stocktaking and prescribed audit inspection.

Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School, was asked what problems they have encountered when implementing the budget.

His reply was:

> *The school has not experienced any problems at all because they follow whatever is budgeted for by the finance sub-committee. The school's finance sub-committee is a group of experts in finance management. When the budget was crafted there was wide consultation with many stakeholders. (*November 16, 2018).

A comparison of the two cases on budgetary issues, according to Mr. Brown (treasurer), shows that Oxford Primary School follows a process of decentralising the



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budget whereby they request heads of department, subject teachers, sports directors and different cost centres within the school to submit their resource needs to the school head well in advance. Messrs. Hanzu, Sanyas, Mulemena and Mrs. Mahlayeya, Mrs. Chikukwa of Havana Primary School when interviewed about their involvement with budgeting mentioned that they sent a list of items they would want the school to buy.

Mr Mulemena had this to say:

> *We sent a list to the school head but many of the items we request are not bought by the SDC and the reason cited for this has been lack of finance and unavailability of ordered goods (*February 10, 2020).

The aforementioned teacher interviewees indicated that they were always disappointed each time their requests were not met in the budget. This affected their work because there will be no resources to use for teaching and learning.

It is important that all stakeholders must participate in the budgeting process. Mr. Chamangwiza (chairperson of Oxford Primary School SDC) had this to say about budgeting:

> *... I deliberate on the budget and get approval of the budget. I am the key signatory to school accounts…I see to it that payments are done in accordance with the approved budget…I am responsible, together with the finance committee, for evaluating and re-organising the budget so that there are no surpluses and deficits (*January 9,2019).

The monitoring process demands an informed check on the progress between the planned budget and the actual execution of the budget. The case of Oxford Primary School is a clear testimony that finances are well managed. However, this is not done on an "ad hoc" basis like at Havana Primary School.

**5.3.4 SDC's finance sub-committee**

The school finance committee derives its mandate from the SDC - delegated responsibilities. Statutory Instrument 87 of Act, No.5 of 1992 stipulates that, "*Every school development committee shall appoint a finance sub-committee … responsible for administering the school fund…"*

Mr. Brown, treasurer at Oxford Primary School was asked, "How does the finance sub-committee operate?"



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> *It keeps proper records of accounts. It operates a current account for the school. It only withdraws monies from the account by means of a cheque signed by the school head or deputy head of the school and one other member of the finance sub-committee authorised thereto by the SDC* (November 16, 2018).

The responsibilities of the finance sub-committee are mainly those of the treasurer, but performed on an operational level, which the treasurer cannot always perform since it is the school bursar's area of responsibility. Some of the crucial actors in the decentralised management of school finances, Messrs. Brown and Major, were interviewed in their capacities as SDC treasurers at Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively.

This is what Mr. Brown affirmed during an interview session:

> *My key responsibilities involve keeping proper accounts and records in respect of all monies for which the SDC is responsible. The functionality of the finance sub-committee rests on the effectiveness of the SDC treasurer as the chairperson of such a committee (*November 16, 2018).

In response to the same question above, Mr. Major of Havana Primary School mentioned that as treasurer he chairs the finance sub-committee and delegates duties related to overseeing the financial matters of the school. He mentioned that the finance sub-committee relieves the whole SDC of having to struggle with the complexities of the school's finances. Mr. Major stated that the finance sub-committee handles school finances on a day-to-day basis and is made up of school head, deputy school head, SDC chairperson, treasurer, and committee member. The total finance sub-committee membership was five. However, in schools with high pupil enrolment rates like Havana Primary School, the number of individuals making up the finance sub-committee could be more. Exclusion of parents from the finance sub-committee would be against the requirements of SI 87 of Act, No.5 of1992.

Mr. Major had this to say:

> *As financiers of the education of their children, parents are chosen into the school's finance sub-committee and this gives them a voice in setting school levies. As per Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, the SDC as a parent body is mandated to collect and utilise levies for the development of the school (*November 13, 2018).



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The tasks performed by Oxford Primary School's SDC finance sub - committee was found to include numerous activities. The main role mentioned was that of ensuring that funds were properly managed and controlled. Activities performed included ensuring transparency in the management and use of school funds, checking of records and verification to ensure correlations with purchases and expenditure, thus ensuring monitoring and controlled spending against the budget.

Mr. Burombo of Havana Primary School stated that:

> *Our finance subcommittee comprises the school head, treasurer, chairperson and deputy head…Their task basically…is to go through records and verify everything and…when they report to parents, they are able to answer all questions (*November 14, 2018).

Decentralisation was meant to be a partnership in which the schools, families and local communities play almost equal roles in pupils' education. This could be the reason why there are fewer heads and teachers, more of parents and probably one local authority representative within the SDC finance sub-committee. However, for Havana Primary School, with a pupil enrolment of about 2500, to have a small finance sub-committee similar to that of Oxford Primary School with about 1200 would be inappropriate. The size of the finance sub-committee should be based on the pupil population of a particular school. More people in a committee might increase the possibility for more information being contributed. Since teachers are in the minority, this situation is similar to taking decision-making on school finances from the school and giving it to the local community and parents. In such circumstances, the Government should not ask for increased accountability from heads and teachers if they are not able to take financial decisions because they are in the minority in the finance sub-committee. One might argue that probably the issue should not be on numbers of people but the size of their budgets, volume of reporting on income and expenditure for each financial year to stakeholders, and audited reports (deliverables).

Individual schools have autonomy over budgetary matters. Decentralised finance systems require well-designed fiscal relations and adequate coordination across different levels of the school system. Once SDCs are created and legislated, they become decision making institutions whose capacity levels should be built and



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sustained adequately. This is supported by Gravingholt et al., (2006), who posit that if decentralisation is to achieve beneficial impact, it requires effective capacity to fulfill the numerous functions transferred from central government. All groups of participants, that is, teachers, deputy school heads, SDC members and the schools' inspector interviewed, indicated that SDC members should be provided with training. This view was shared in an interview with Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector. When he was asked, "Do you provide any training to SDC members?" he had this to say:

> *I hold induction workshops with SDCs in my circuit so that they know their roles. When I organise induction workshops I receive fewer complaints from schools… training has produced positive results…audit reports have not been adverse on… schools (*January 7, 2019).

Induction is part of preparing SDC members for new responsibilities within decentralised school finance management. The induction programmes also promote networking and peer support which assist members when they get back to their schools. Through induction, members develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values essential for carrying out the role of managing finances as effectively as possible and creating conditions which enable SDC members to internalise the new role. Induction does not provide detail into financial management processes, it is orientation of new SDC members when they assume office.

It is important to note that most functions performed by SDCs, for example, financial management, are specialist and complex, requiring specialist skills to execute them. Mr. Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson for Oxford Primary School was asked "Does the school have adequate and qualified staff to administer school finances?"

> *…The treasurer was appointed on the basis of his experience as a bank manager of one financial institution in town. I have a Master's in Corporate Governance, my deputy is a middle manager with one of the big mines…, the secretary is an "A" level teacher in accounting … (*January 9, 2019).

It is evident that the composition of Oxford Primary School's SDC shows that there is abundant organisational capability for managing the financial affairs of the school. Capacity would also refer to the totality of inputs required by the SDC and school to fulfill their purposes. It is imperative to note that implementing an education decentralisation policy becomes useless if SDC members vested with making financial decisions about their school are unknowledgeable.



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Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School shared some of the foregoing responses by affirming that qualifications and skills are an important asset for any aspiring SDC member. This is in line with Klugman (1994)'s affirmation that the level of leadership and professional capacity at the local level should be sufficient to sustain neoliberal educational decentralisation efforts.

> *Finance sub-committee comprises people who have worked with finances in different capacities…it relieves the whole SDC of having to contend with the complexities of…school's finances. The treasurer and bursar, oversee school finances from a position of knowledge (*November 16, 2018).

The SDC's finance sub-committee members should be appointed on the basis of their expertise. Any tasks being delegated to the finance sub-committee should be accompanied by corresponding and adequate financial management capacity. However, financial management remains a problem at Havana Primary School because they lack the necessary financial knowledge and skills thus leading to mismanagement of school funds. This was confirmed by Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School:

> *On election day normally one who is vocal and is able to articulate his/her ideas during discussions is chosen as a member…only the vice chairperson is qualified in some profession not necessarily in finance management. The others were chosen on the basis of being citizens…with some being politicians (*November 14, 2018).

From the preceding quotation, it is clear that the SDC members of Havana Primary School do not possess the adequate institutional capacity to lead and implement fiscal decentralisation. SDC members must have administrative and technical capacity to fulfill the role of managing school finances. This is supported by USAID (2006)'s report that administratively and technically strong local level entities are needed that would enhance efficiency and local innovation.

A comparative analysis based on data obtained from interviews of teachers and deputy school heads, found that the level of expertise in financial management between Havana and Oxford Primary Schools' finance sub-committees shows that the former has less qualified and experienced members than the latter. The capacity to manage school finances within Havana Primary School's finance sub-committee was inadequate. The majority of the members interviewed from Havana Primary



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School, who included Messrs. Kamba, Sutumani, Sanyas and Mbizi, indicated that there were capacity problems within their SDC. Biographical data (see Table 5.2) to support this show that the finance sub-committee in question is made up of secondary school qualification holders whose occupations range from vegetable vendors to community leaders. This is in contrast to Oxford Primary School's finance sub-committee whose members have post-graduate qualifications (see Table 5.1) and work in high ranking positions of authority as bank managers, accounts personnel and district administrators. One dynamic emerging from discussions is that fiscal decentralisation raises capacity challenges, especially in schools which may have limited staff and expertise to support them in managing funds strategically.

Mr. Brown, the SDC treasurer for Oxford Primary School was asked, "What internal accountability mechanisms does the school have for its funds?" The following was his response:

> *…the school policy document spells out procedures and actions to be taken by the school to protect funds against misuse and fraud…monies to be spent have to be approved, authorised and verified by the finance sub-committee…financial control activities are part of new employees' orientation and training…(*November 16,2018).

The mechanisms through which school funding is governed, distributed and monitored play a key role in ensuring that financial and other resources are directed where they can make the most difference. It is also essential to ensure a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities, and to develop well-defined lines of accountability. The foregoing excerpt was supported by Mr. Chamangwiza, the SDC chairperson for Oxford Primary School when he mentioned that accountability mechanisms such as the finance sub-committee are created with an oversight role that ensures that spending reflects the school's priorities. He went on to affirm that another way of ensuring accountability in school finances is to keep proper accounts and records in respect of all monies for which the committee is responsible. Mr. Chamangwiza also noted the need to strictly stick to the budget as the guiding principle of accountability of finances. He proffered that the other accountability mechanism is the presentation of the annual budget to a general meeting of parents for consideration and approval through voting. He argued that the whole purpose is



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to make things simple, above board and unambiguous when dealing with finances and to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

On the other hand, interview data from Mr. Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School show that the school uses a "hands-on" or practical approach to accountability of finances as shown by the following excerpt:

> *…show of receipts and surprise visits to the bursar's office. Receipts are proof or records of funds disbursed or of financial transactions. The chairperson wants to see, and witness…how finances are used by accompanying learners and teachers on school trips* (November 14, 2018).

Mr. Major, treasurer of Havana Primary School mentioned during an interview session that their finance sub-committee opened a current account with Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe where all income into the school fund is deposited as soon as it is received. This statement however conflicted with what the bursar, Mrs. Spears said earlier. She had said that the school operates strictly on a cash budget because of the inflationary environment prevailing in Zimbabwe whereby monies are used as and when they are paid. In addition, Mr. Major proffered that the school's banking accounts are only transacted with two signatories. He further narrated that the school has the services of an external government auditor who inspects books of accounts. Mr. Major mentioned that their school conforms to Statutory Instrument 70 Act No.9 of 1993 which states that as the SDC treasurer he has to maintain proper books of accounts, present financial statements to the executive committee as and when they are required.

A careful comparison of the two schools shows that the methods of financial accountability used are appropriate for their respective contexts. Havana Primary School uses rather basic methods of accountability that make it easier for stakeholders, mostly poor parents to understand. Again, Havana Primary School has a very small budget which would not require complicated and expensive accountability mechanisms. Fiscal decentralisation has been successful because of greater citizen participation, and more accountability. For example, both schools have finance sub-committees which means that authority and responsibility are being shared by many people instead of being done by the school head on his own.



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Accountability is one of the conditions necessary for the success of SBM under educational decentralisation. SBM is about self-managing schools so that they become accountable to parents. The body that delegates has the responsibility to ensure that duties or functions have been performed properly as delegated. Well-defined financial accountability structures within SDCs and schools serve as the foundation for establishing effective financial procedures.

This is what, Sisi Mishie, one of the parents said during a focus group discussion at Havana Primary School:

*"There is no corruption in the manner in which the money is used. If desks are bought they call us and we see them. They show us the papers…There is transparency." (*December 22, 2018*).*

This was with regards to proper accounting of funds. The first issue was that they were satisfied with how funds are being used.

The other parent, Brother Jero, corroborated what was said previously:

> *Taking children for sports activities/trips is proof that funds are being used as directed or budgeted. There is accountability as evidenced by meetings convened by the school head where budget was discussed (*December 22, 2018).

There is need for division of duties to reduce the risk of error or intentional manipulation through checks built into the financial management processes and ensuring that there is transparency and accountability as elements of internal control.

During an interview session, Mr.Chamangwiza (chairperson of SDC Oxford Primary School) mentioned that their finance sub-committee delegated in writing, responsibility for money matters to a treasurer who will be available on a day-to-day basis to do the job and school bursar who is available all the time in school administration office. He mentioned that the school bursar records all financial transactions, and keeps the school head, the treasurer, and the finance sub-committee fully informed about financial matters. The foregoing arrangement is similar to the one that operates at Havana Primary School.

Schools have to be scrupulous and keep accurate records all the time. This is because financial record-keeping is a legal requirement as prescribed in the SI 87 of Act No.5 of 1992.



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### 5.3.5 Summary of theme findings

Findings suggest that accountability through the use of finance sub-committees in both schools is a viable mechanism to improve the quality of finance management under a decentralised school governance system. Havana Primary School was still using a finance policy from central government. Oxford Primary School formulated its own finance policy and subsequently manages its finances well. As a result, Oxford Primary School was able to prescribe the parameters under which it managed its funds without any irregularities.

Findings indicate that SDC members at Havana Primary School had limited literacy, specifically in finance management knowledge, skills and experience, and this limited their ability to participate fully in finance-related issues. Findings suggest that Oxford Primary School recruited SDC members with good education and financial skills for preparing and managing its budgets.

A comparison of the two cases on budgetary issues shows that there is broader participation and ownership of the budgeting process at Oxford Primary School than at Havana Primary School where few stakeholders participate. Findings suggest that Havana Primary School runs on a cash budget due to its very scarce finances attributable to the hyperinflationary environment which makes it spend the money as soon as it is receipted. Oxford Primary School operates a well-planned budget which checks expenditure against the budget allocations, checks that the resources are mobilised effectively, evaluates, and re-organises it , if and where necessary.

The abrogation by the government of its responsibility to provide per capita grants and subsidies put Havana Primary School in a dire financial situation. This was government's response to neoliberalism which construed expenditure in education as being costly to the state. A "safety-net", BEAM, was introduced by government to alleviate the school fees burden of vulnerable pupils.

Findings indicate that Oxford Primary School's relative autonomy from the government has been enhanced by an effective system of fundraising, which makes it self-reliant in meeting its expenses.



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## 5.4 Theme Three: Procurement of school resources

In this section findings are discussed and analysed on the procurement of school resources. Procurement of resources is one function transferred to the school level from the central government. Consideration is given on how resources have been procured by discussing policies, practices, competencies and the interaction of various actors in the two different schools. The findings have been presented and discussed through the voices of those who actively experienced the process of procurement of resources under a decentralised school system.

### 5.4.1 Resource procurement under SBM

I compare what participants say within each school and between the different schools and contexts. I look for similarities, differences, contradictions and discuss them.

Data from interviews with Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, on how decentralised procurement works revealed that there is a transfer of authority to schools over procuring textbooks, and other educational materials. He further mentioned that school heads, teachers and SDC members are delegated authority to procure resources for the school. He also affirmed that SDCs arrange for the supply of goods, services, facilities, equipment and materials that are required for the operation of the school.

SDC members, deputy school heads and teachers were asked about the sources of teaching and learning resources for their schools. Deputy school heads and teachers reported that their schools got resources from school fees and levies. When Mr. Chamangwiza, chairperson of Oxford Primary School was asked during an interview session, "What is your main source of funding?" he had this to say:

> *…funds that parents pay…; we have a bus levy into which parents pay towards the buying of a school bus, a building fund. A sports levy … some donations from well-wishers, from parents, from other organisations and parents who donate tractors to do our grounds* (January 9 2019).

School systems have limited resources with which to achieve their objectives so there is need to use these resources efficiently. In decentralised school funding systems, there is need to have adequate revenue to fulfil funding responsibilities.



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In response to the foregoing question, Mr. Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School mentioned that they rely solely on school fees from parents and this has been disappointing. He mentioned that the school also gets funding from a few local churches and one prominent philanthropist who pays fees for disadvantaged children.

Mr. Gabriel from Oxford Primary School had this to say when asked, "Does the school have adequate resources?

> *Resources are partially adequate… due to financial constraints; standards have gone down…because of…new curriculum which demands new textbooks and new syllabi… Finances are needed but the recommended school fees of $50 is little so we made it $300 but due to inflation this may also be little (*February 4, 2020).

However, Mrs. Saungweme of Havana Primary School had a different response to the foregoing question:

> *…not enough textbooks in English Comprehension so we write the story on chalkboard. This is a new curriculum so there is no syllabus or even one textbook in Visual and Performing Arts…they don't have enough funds. School projects…do not generate enough funds (*February 7, 2020).

A careful consideration of the two previous quotations shows that both schools experience a shortage of resources but at Havana Primary School it is worse than at Oxford Primary School. The main reason proffered is that parents with children at Havana Primary School are so poor that they cannot afford to pay their children fees and levies. As a result the school does not have enough funds to procure resources. According to an interview with Mr.Conrad, the Schools Inspector, it was found that the support provided by the government together with what parents could afford was insufficient to provide schooling which is adequately resourced. This is supported by Moyo et al., (2015)'s contention that the government was the major funding source for all schools, but it imposed a tight budget control over public education and withdrawal of subsidies.

There are inequitably levels of affordability between parents of Oxford and Havana Primary Schools, with the former being able to pay fees and levies which support a high level of resources per child over and above those provided by government. Again, Mr.Conrad, relying on data obtained from a government website, noted that the manner in which schools received state funding or education grants was skewed



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in favour of schools like Oxford which were already well-endowed. This additional subsidy from government seemed unnecessary because such a school like Oxford Primary School enrols children of richer families. However, Mr. Bob James (deputy school head of Oxford Primary School reiterated that because of the poorly performing Zimbabwe economy and hyperinflationary environment, the government subsidy is needed. The system of financing schools had very unfortunate consequences for equity because it institutionalises the privileged access of the richer groups to good quality education. It was further contended during interviews with Mr. Burombo that the primary education system had experienced phenomenal expansion in enrolments which simply could not be matched with adequate resources. This is supported by Zvobgo (2000) and Bonal (2013) who posit that the government's intention of meeting "Education For All" goals led to the introduction of free and compulsory primary education which resulted in an expanded education system. It was further noted that another factor linked to a shortage of resources in schools had to do with the neo-liberal ESAP which recommended withdrawal of grants from schools. This austerity measure seriously affected Havana Primary School's community where parents are so poor that it affects the quality of education available to their children.

A number of teacher interviewees at Havana Primary School including Mrs. Chibode were asked, "What resource-related problems have you encountered in the school?"

> *We don't have textbooks…teacher is…privileged of being in possession of a textbook... I cannot give written work to classes of 67 pupils and mark… before giving them new work…large class sizes stifle learners' creativity…(*February 07, 2020).

Teachers cannot effectively attend to the needs of all the pupils as some pupils need one-on-one interaction with the teacher in order to grasp difficult concepts. Messrs. Kamba, Shumba, Chimurenga and Sanyas (Havana Primary School), complained during interview sessions that the new curriculum had increased their workload as it brought new learning areas with a lot of content and to make matters worse with no teaching materials that often include learning media or aids.

A key dynamic emerging is that at Havana Primary School textbooks and quality of facilities are at a lower level than Oxford Primary School. During interview sessions,



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Mr. Frampton, Mrs. Wishbourne and Mrs. Young revealed that in spite of the tough economic situation prevailing in the country, Oxford Primary School had managed to secure learning resources. However, they mentioned that the class sizes were rather big, with some at 50 and others at 55. They attributed these figures to the opening up of the school to every child and this has also meant an increase in the number of children from high population density areas.

Data from interview with Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, confirmed that high population density areas were not catchment areas for Oxford Primary School under the previous school zoning system but with the new decentralised system, schools must enrol from any geographical location. This view was shared by Messrs. Frampton and Tivakudze who mentioned that it was per government directive that the school should enrol every child irrespective of his/her locality and socio-economic status. Mrs. Young indicated during an interview session that Oxford Primary School's class sizes used to average 36 pupils. However, the situation was untenable at Havana Primary School which is generally under-resourced. Mrs. Chibode lamented during an interview the grim resource situation at Havana Primary School.

> *It's better now because Grade Sevens…finished writing Primary School Leaving Exams that's why…many pupils are overcrowded in classrooms. The normal…is that all classes are conducted…under… trees… it's very sad when it rains, during cold winter months and dusty windy days. Learners may not concentrate on their learning under such poor…conditions.* (November 14, 2018).

Quality education depends on the teaching and learning process such as the availability of materials.

Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School was asked during an interview session, "What causes this state of resource scarcity in your school?" and he responded thus:

> *Education grants…to schools started to dwindle as the Zimbabwe dollar could no longer buy the needed…resources. School levies paid by parents in monetary terms were rendered worthless and hence most schools could not buy the resources (*November 14, 2018).



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The growing financial problems experienced by Zimbabwe led to difficult policy choices like spreading available resources thinly and by cutting expenditures on textbooks. The foregoing is supported by Nherera (2000) confirming that the education budget was drastically reduced leading to the discontinuation of education grants to schools .The situation throughout the 1990s worsened due to inflation and following the adoption of ESAP with an average reduction of the budget to 14% of the budget allocation (Zimbabwe Human Development Report, 2003).

However, interview data from both schools attribute the dearth in resources, especially textbooks to the introduction of the new curriculum. Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School proffered that once a new curriculum is introduced, a large number of textbooks and other material which was being used is rendered irrelevant. Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School also shared the foregoing sentiment by expressing disappointment with failure by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to consult widely before introducing the new curriculum. He mentioned that if they had been consulted and told well in advance that a new curriculum was being introduced, they could have made appropriate budgetary plans.

In order to get much information from interviewees on the effect of the new curriculum on resource availability, I engaged the teachers who are directly involved in the teaching-learning situation.

This is what Mr. Sanyas said:

> *The new curriculum was very demanding and out of touch with reality. The content is too abstract and requires teachers and pupils to be very resourceful and abreast of current developments in science and technology (*February 10, 2020).

The foregoing interviewee responses were shared by Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Mandaza and Messrs. Gabriel and Tivakudze of Oxford Primary School. They mentioned that the new curriculum has added new subjects such as Visual and Performing Arts, Agriculture and Computer Literacy. Interviewees lamented the situation whereby they give pupils too much homework only for them to come back the following morning with nothing done. Interviewees also sympathised with pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is important to note that the textbook is a vital ingredient of the teaching-learning process especially in poor schools like Havana



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Primary where lessons start and end with a textbook. Shortage of textbooks therefore puts pressure on teachers and affects the amount of daily written class and homework they assign to pupils. Shortage of textbooks may often result in pupils sharing textbooks.

During an interview session, Mr. Chamangwiza explained how as chairperson he has put in place some resource management initiatives for the benefit of Oxford Primary School. He applauded the manner in which parents paid fees and levies. Mr. Gabriel of Oxford Primary School supported what their chairperson, Mr.Chamangwiza said by positing that when it comes to provision of material resources and funds, their SDC had really worked hard despite the economic problems affecting the country. He lauded the SDC for mobilising resources from the community for many projects in the school. In addition, Mr. Gabriel affirmed during interviews that their SDC has established partnerships with the business community and this had helped to improve the school's resource base.

This is supported by what parents said during a focus group discussion. Mrs. Shortie had this to say:

> *Our SDC has complete authority to make effective use of the school's resources, and decide the proportion of resources that should be devoted to staffing and meeting the pupils' needs* (December 16, 2018).

There was general agreement among parents that there was flexibility and reduced bureaucracy over resources as the voice of the SDC increased at Oxford Primary School.

However, the situation was different at Havana Primary School as noted by one parent, Papa Jose:

> *"We have serious problems where the school collected only about 10% of the total amount in fees that parents are expected to pay."(*December 22, 2018).

There were corroborated concerns among parents during the focus group discussion that the resource base of the school was being undermined, with the available funds expected to accommodate the needs of nine-tenths of as many pupils. This meant that many families were unable to pay tuition and other fees.



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In an interview session, Mr Burombo mentioned that with the escalating cost of living in Zimbabwe, the grants that were awarded did not meet the cost of basic school materials. Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School shared the same view with Mr. Burombo and went on to affirm that in an attempt to close the funding gap, both schools adopted different forms of fund raising ventures to raise supplementary funding. It was noted during interviews with Mr. Mbizi (Havana), Mrs. Collins (Oxford),Mr. Major (SDC treasurer-Havana) and Mrs. Tom (SDC secretary-Oxford), that there were two modes of resource mobilisation: direct and indirect. The direct mode is whereby pupils are directly involved and the school directly receives funds while the indirect mode involves donations and contributions from non-school participants and do not necessarily imply cash. Mr. Major stated that support or donations from NGOs is usually unsolicited and was based on their assessments of the schools' needs, whereas support from entities like Ngezi Platinum is unsolicited. From the foregoing interviews it was evident that fundraising was an almost futile exercise at Havana Primary School as it was surrounded by poor communities which could barely afford the minimal amounts involved.

### 5.4.2 Procurement committee

In the subsequent section, there is need to understand how efficient and effective SDCs have been in performing this decentralised function. Similarly, it should be noted that the success of SDCs in performing this function would be determined among others, by internal policies and procedures. During an interview session, Mr. Chamangwiza, chairperson of Oxford Primary School was asked, "Do you have a procurement policy or plan in place?"

> *We have a procurement policy developed by our vice-chairperson and selected school staff. It is quite functional…it includes activities performed by the committee, procurement procedures, and methods for identifying goods/services, responsibilities, conducting market and supplier analyses (*January 9, 2019).

All SDC members and teachers of Oxford Primary School interviewed indicated that they had a procurement policy in place. However, the following was the response from Mrs. Makaruse supporting what Mr. Chamangwiza, the chairperson had said earlier.



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> *...We have… a procurement committee …the school head is automatically the supervisor but does not chair the meetings. They have…identified quality…goods and services needed by the school (*February 4, 2020).

Mr. Bob James, Oxford Primary School's deputy head mentioned that the procurement committee worked closely with school management and has greatly influenced all school activities.

This is what Mr. Bob James said in an interview:

> *The committee had at all times procured goods and services in a timely and cost efficient manner. Again, they have been able to discuss with teachers and approve purchase orders on time. When this is done, the school is able to develop public confidence in its procurement system (*November 16, 2018).

According to data obtained from an interview with Mr. Bob James, the procurement committee at Oxford Primary School is the central support resource for providing guidance to the school on any procurement related issues. Interview data from Messrs. Gabriel, Hacknell and Mrs. Tauzeni and Mrs. Chitiyo of Oxford Primary School and Mrs. Chikukwa, Mr. Mbizi and Mrs. Zhou of Havana Primary School indicated that both schools have procurement committees in place. This implies that it is not the duty of individuals but shared responsibilities which augurs well for the success of SBM, a promoter of educational decentralisation. Mr. Bob James noted that committees bring together people of relevant expertise from different parts of the organisation to share ideas and coordinate actions. They have the advantage of widening viewpoints and sharing responsibilities.

Mrs. Tozarira and Mrs. Crossover (Oxford) and Mrs. Saungweme and Mr. Gundumura (Havana) were of the same opinion when they were asked about the benefits of using a procurement committee in a school system. This is what Mr. Gundumura said during an interview:

> *There are no chances for corruption or favoritism in the purchase of school supplies. In addition, chances for overspending are non-existent. There is less bureaucracy because there will be shorter time frames and fewer forms to be completed (*February 10, 2020).

Both groups of interviewees noted that fewer mistakes are made when buying goods through a procurement committee. They agreed that this will be possible since it is the duty of the committee to establish the business need and specify what is to be purchased; undertake market research to estimate cost, and identify suppliers.



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### 5.4.3 Accountability mechanisms in resource procurement at schools

The need for accountability in the procurement of school resources is discussed in the subsequent section.

Mr. Tambawoga, the vice-chairperson of Oxford Primary School was asked whether or not the SDC had mechanisms to ensure accountability in procurement and use of school resources.

This is what he said:

> *The school has a policy and plans in place as the starting point for ensuring accountability. The procurement committee developed a procurement policy manual for the school and this has helped in protecting the integrity of the school's procurement system against corruption, fraud and abuse (*February 7, 2020).

More interview data from Mr. Tambawoga stated that before any purchase is made, the procurement committee obtains and verifies supplier price quotes. In addition, he mentioned that the procurement process is always monitored and supervised by the SDC chairman and school head. He ended by affirming that the school has complied with all legal requirements that concern procurement.

In reply to whether the two schools had any means of accountability for the goods they procured, Mr. Conrad, Schools Inspector said this:

> *Schools, like any other agency of state, when contracting for goods or services must do so in accordance with a system which is transparent. Procurement should occur on the basis of a minimum of three quotations and which must be validated for authenticity (*January 7, 2019).

The procurement committee has the responsibility of ensuring that different suppliers are used and that no one supplier is unduly selected. This process is done to counteract the threat of corruption or collusion in procurement.

When comparing the two schools against what Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, said, it was found that both schools apply accountability measures when procuring resources. For example, this is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. Burombo, deputy head for Havana Primary School:

> *Everything starts with a requisition form that must be completed before an order is placed with a particular supplier. Before approving a requisition, the availability of funds in terms of the school budget must be considered. The procurement committee does not requisition anything that has not been budgeted for (*November 13, 2018).



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This is an excerpt of what Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School said:

> *Our procurement committee is very strict with the "call for quotations". Once the requisition is submitted to the finance sub-committee and, if approved, the school then requests quotations from at least three suppliers. These quotations should all be requested at the same time and closing times and dates should be clearly indicated on the request (*November 16, 2018).

A key dynamic emerging from interview data with the two deputy heads indicated that there is strict adherence to accountability issues within the two schools.

During interview sessions, Mrs. Chikukwa, Mrs. Zhou and Messrs. Hanzu and Sutumani (Havana Primary School) mentioned that most teachers at the school complained that the procurement committee does not buy what they wanted or what children needed. The interviewees mentioned that they failed to buy because of high costs. In response to the foregoing, Mr. Burombo, deputy school head for Havana Primary School identified this as an issue of lack of correct information. Mr. Burombo explained the importance of information in procurement. He noted that prior to approaching the market, the procurement committee should gather information in order to become fully informed about the options in the market. He further mentioned that the committee should avail itself to historical spend data, which provides an indication of the goods and services previously purchased, prices paid and suppliers used. There is connection between the foregoing finding and OECD (2017)'s contention that one of the specific problems of education decentralisation is that while key decisions are typically transferred to local authorities, most of the information and knowledge management capacities are retained by the institutions of the national administration.

How information is communicated within SDCs influences how they procure resources for their schools. The bottom line is that timely and free flow of information encourages resource procurement. There is need for adequate and correct information to facilitate procurement of resources.



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### 5.4.4 Institutional capacity and procurement of resources

The need for institutional capacity in the procurement of resources is discussed in the following section because a lack of such capacity suggests the possibility of inefficiencies.

Mr. Bob James, deputy school head of Oxford Primary School, indicated that he received training from the District Schools Inspectorate and that he recruited knowledgeable and honest people into the procurement committee. It was noted during interviews that school heads of Oxford and Havana Primary Schools had prior resource procurement training in addition to formal managerial and leadership training. This finding is supported by World Bank (2010) affirming that the success of decentralisation depends on providing training for national and local officials in decentralised administration.

Although procurement committees from both schools do not have specialist personnel, Messrs. Raffety, Mrs. Nash and Mrs. Mandaza (Oxford Primary School) indicated that committee members attended short courses during school holidays. They further mentioned that some of the short courses were in negotiation, market engagement, contract implementation, opportunities analysis, supplier relationship management, accountability and reporting. As a result, procurement committees of both schools exhibited diverse skills which are needed when making buying decisions under conditions of scarcity in Zimbabwe.

It has been noted from interviews conducted that in most cases the key people taking part in the procurement process are the school head/deputy school head, and on some occasions, other school staff such as heads of department, sports organizers and senior teachers. It was interesting to see that Oxford Primary School had what it called a 'Procurement Responsibility Matrix' that documents the names and roles of staff involved in the procurement process to ensure that the right capability was being used for the procurement process. Havana Primary School did not have such an instrument in place but only a schedule showing when staff would forward their lists for procurement of items.

However, this is what Mr. Bob James, Oxford Primary School said during an interview session:



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*"Our SDC has adequate levels of staff for the effective procurement of resources. These are selected on the basis of their knowledge specialisation" (*November 16, 2018).

However, the situation was different at Havana Primary School as shown by data from an interview with Mr. Kamba:

> *We have a procurement committee but its members operate on an "ad hoc" basis. They didn't receive much training except induction which was so rudimentary that it had very little impact on the discharge of their duties. In addition, procurement committee members serve at the discretion of the school head (*November 14, 2018).

Where internal approvals are required, the school needs to make sure that the appropriate people are involved in the procurement activity. This is in line with Klugman (1994)'s affirmation that the organisational capacity of the local units of administration to which power is devolved or management assigned, determines the extent of responsiveness, including the ability to plan resource allocation.

During an interview session, a question was asked on the use of Information Technology (IT) in the procurement of resources for the school. In reply, Mr. Burombo (Havana Primary School) lamented:

> *Our school does not even have specialised or trained procurement personnel let alone the technologies aligned with it. The speed with which the procurement committee receives and processes information is very slow and this affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the school's resource procurement.* (November 13, 2018).

IT makes an important contribution to successfully carrying out the procurement function. The foregoing finding is similar to USAID (2006)'s assertion that there is need to have administratively and technically strong local level entities that would enhance efficiency and local innovation. Data from an interview with Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, noted that schools need to embrace IT solutions that link up suppliers to the procurement system, offering faster process flows, efficient distribution of information, and increased transparency.

During an interview session, Mr.Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson and member of the school procurement committee of Oxford Primary School, mentioned that they use computers in procurement and that they have relevant information about



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procurement procedures. In addition, he mentioned that they produce invoices electronically and at times order electronically. Although IT could facilitate procurement of goods and services, SDC members from Havana Primary School felt that IT would complicate the process especially for their traditional suppliers. Mr. Chimbwasungata, vice-chairperson, SDC Havana Primary School had this to say:

> *Our long time suppliers will be frustrated by the means through which they have to sell to schools…it would be a complex process…it discriminates against small suppliers who…sell goods and services direct to us…at affordable prices. Suppliers will have difficulties in using IT (*February 7 2020).

The issue of using IT in procurement has attracted a lot of criticism. There were concerns from those interviewed that at times IT complicates instead of simplifying things. The interviewees, for example Messrs. Mbizi, Sanyas, Mrs.Chikukwa and Mrs. Zhou, of Havana Primary School, which had less or no IT staff, narrated their problems. They complained that the technology, in most cases, is incompatible with most of the procurement tasks. There were complaints that the few staff members in the office spent more time trying to learn and get used to the technology thus taking up time for other core functions. Their concerns were supported by Mrs. Spears, bursar for Havana Primary School, who had this to say:

> *There is a complication on passwords…you must be able to memorize them…software or tools aren't working as promised by back-up technicians and this would not make work easier. Our only disaster recovery plan would be to go back to manual, writing everything in an exercise book to circumvent any potential data loss (*February 7, 2020).

During focus group discussions, one parent, Comrade Hondo, from Havana Primary School, had this to say:

*"The problem is that our school office is manned by older employees who always express concerns about the complexity of the new technology." (*February 10, 2020)

In support of the foregoing excerpt, Mrs. Spears, bursar for Havana Primary School mused that even though there are a variety of options for learning (ranging from classroom and on-line to vendor-provided courses), employees still must make the time and effort to learn the functionality of new software.

According to Mr.Chamangwiza, the chairperson of Oxford Primary School, the school has been able to get funding from international and local donors to



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computerise their resource procurement operations. He indicated that all staff dealing with procurement and finance is able to search across a wide variety of computer applications and databases. Mr.Chamangwiza mentioned that members of the procurement committee use computer technology to analyse trends and patterns in procurement of goods and services for the school. He said the use of computers in accessing procurement information has led to an increased choice in goods available for purchase. Mr.Chamangwiza further mentioned that the availability of competing electronic catalogues on the Internet has made it easier for the school's procurement committee to compare prices without the need for any intermediary agency.

From interviews with teachers and deputy school heads, I found that the latter took the larger share of procurement responsibilities. Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School, felt that he would like to leave most procurement responsibilities in the hands of the procurement committee. However, he had some reservations because members of the procurement committee were not specialists and had rudimentary training in procurement.

> *I would want to focus on educational outcomes and the progress of students. Ordering routine such as textbooks and stationery is a cumbersome process. It takes time to select items and place an order. It takes all the time for other administrative work (*November 14, 2018).

It has been noted from interviews with Messrs. Bob James and Burombo, in their capacities as deputy school heads of Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively, that people who perform the procurement function in their schools also have other core responsibilities. If a teacher is a member of the procurement committee, he/she has to perform his/her instructional role and at the same time the subsidiary role within the procurement committee, and this might result in role conflict and more work to be done.

### 5.4.5 Community participation and procurement of resources

This section discusses the influence of community participation on the procurement of resources by SDCs.

Mr. Burombo mentioned that the community initiates and supervises some of the school projects on resource mobilisation. Mr Burombo went further to mention that



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schools are considered an integral part of the community, therefore it is essential that the community should participate in the procurement of resources for the schools. This is in line with UNESCO (2013) report that participation of parents and community is argued to have substantial benefits in improving education. However, Pellini (2010) argues that the effect is questionable or unclear because most of the studies use quantitative, production function models that do not consider other intervening variables.

Mr. Burombo cautioned during an interview session not to ignore the low-income parents especially those of Havana Primary School. Mr. Burombo mentioned that the state of impoverishment of the parents at Havana Primary School was a result of the neo-liberal and IMF /World Bank - induced ESAP whereby risk was transferred from the state to individuals, households and communities. This is supported by what parents said during a focus group discussion at the school. One parent who identified himself as Comrade Chinos had this to say:

> *Our earnings as workers became less after we were retrenched because of ESAP. As a result, less money was available for the upkeep of our families let alone paying for school fees and buying learning materials for our children (*December 22, 2018).

Mr. Burombo, deputy head, Havana Primary School, gave an example of some parents, who, despite their state of joblessness and abject poverty come to school with their wares to sell in order to raise funds for their children's school fees. Such parents supplement the little State funding available for the education of their children.

In support of the good relations between Oxford Primary School and the community, Mr. Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson of Oxford Primary School affirmed that:

> *We draw labour from within the community for small civil works at the school, for example, construction of water drains, sinking of boreholes, and building classrooms. The school purchases construction materials such as cement, steel, stone aggregate, sand in bulk from immediate local suppliers within the community (*January 9, 2019).

The foregoing quotation expresses the practicalities of community participation in the procurement of resources for the school.



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### 5.4.6 Finance and procurement of resources

The presentation of the findings and discussion on the influence of finance on the procurement of other resources for use in the schools is discussed in the following section.

There are differences in access to resources by the two schools, for instance, the operating budgets of the two schools differ dramatically. For example, Havana Primary School, with a much lower budget and a higher teacher - pupil ratio, has the fewest and lowest quality physical resources. Mr. Chamangwiza, the chairperson of Oxford Primary School SDC stressed the link between the availability of resources and the size of the budget:

> *We have the money…Resources…have an impact on governance. If the school is well resourced it will function more efficiently and effectively. We segregate duties…no individual controls multiple steps of a particular transaction, for example, approve, pay for, and receive goods* (January 9, 2019).

The school's financial system should ensure proper documentation that supports each step of the procurement process, including authorised requisitions, itemized invoices, and receiving documents.

Mr.Humba, chairperson of SDC Havana Primary School, had this to say about the school's situation:

> *We have a limited budget…for procuring resources…In some primary schools each teacher or team of teachers has a budget for…support materials. In our case, the procurement committee is only able to spend the money that they have, and our small or limited budget really derails any plan (*November 14 2018*).*

At times reductions in budget are often done to prevent reckless spending and to stop wastefulness. There may be good intentions behind the reduction, but it can have negative effects if it is too much. However, according to Mr. Burombo, in the case of Havana Primary School it is not about a budget being deliberately reduced, but about a budget that has shrunk due to lack of funds in the school coffers.

Mr. Major, treasurer at Havana Primary School, mentioned that their school structure is a rather traditional one, whereby procurement and finance, being two separate functions, have been combined.



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This is what he said:

> *… it is not the most efficient and effective way to handle operations. We had to combine because the school has little in terms of finance and procurement activities taking place. Again, we want to cut costs of employing fully-fledged personnel for separate finance and procurement sections (*November 13, 2018).

The other reason Mr Major put forward was that when the two functions synchronise their operations, there would be no duplication of duties and this would result in efficiency. Integrating the physical supply chain (procurement) with the financial supply chain would mean that any weakness in either finance or procurement can easily threaten both chains.

In contrast, this is what Mr. Brown, treasurer of Oxford Primary School had to say:

> *We have operated finance and procurement as two separate units with segregated tasks in order to prevent a situation whereby one person is involved in many activities. Separating finance from procurement would reduce the risk of error or intentional manipulation by the one person in charge.* We *segregated receipting cash, banking, ordering of goods/services and authorisation of expenditure (*November 16, 2018*).*

Finance on one hand sets spending limits for procurement, and procurement on the other hand aims to save money when and where possible through both cost savings and cost avoidance measures. Mr. Brown recounted that at Oxford Primary School they are able to pay for everything that is procured.

It is imperative to mention that the procurement of school resources has been done under tough economic conditions that have prevailed in Zimbabwe since the early 2000's. This has resulted in schools increasingly competing for scarce resources. If an institution cannot procure adequate resources, it means that it cannot fulfill its mission, and it is up to the school leadership to make resources available. Investment in education has been low; as a result parents and communities contribute money, labour and materials to schools.

### 5.4.7 Summary of theme findings

Under neo-liberal educational decentralisation, the school is the market that plays a central role in the procurement and allocation of resources. As a result of the neo-liberal policies, Oxford and Havana Primary Schools, as markets, compete for scarce resources under conditions of stringency in Zimbabwe.



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The neo-liberal induced ESAP advised the Zimbabwean government to cut on the education budget and to pass on the costs to the communities and households, which exacerbated the shortage of teaching - learning materials in both schools. Havana Primary School, the poorer of the two schools, bore much of the brunt. The schools are funded through a combination of fees paid by pupils, levies, donations, and at one time, government education grants. Government support for the schools has dwindled and even stopped, which has led to stagnation in terms of development especially for Havana Primary School located in a high population density area. Furthermore, there were marked variations between the two schools in their respective capacities to raise resources from non-government sources and this exhibited itself in the stock of educational resources available to children.

Findings suggest that Oxford Primary School embraced the use of IT in the procurement of resources, which is in line with the neo-liberal thinking of creating a "knowledge - based economy". Havana Primary School had reservations about the use of IT in procurement on the grounds that it complicates the procurement process for their traditional suppliers.

The identification of Oxford Primary School as being endowed with more resources than Havana Primary School will help to understand the factors that influence the implementation of education decentralisation. Oxford Primary School procured more resources and functioned efficiently and effectively than Havana Primary School.

Findings indicate that Oxford Primary School, for the purpose of accountability, segregated the functions of procurement and finance in order to prevent the possibility of intentional manipulation if one person is in charge of both. At Havana Primary School, procurement and finance were combined in order to avoid possible duplication of duties and to cut on costs of employing fully-fledged personnel for two separate sections.

Neoliberal policies have cast off poor children into the under-resourced Havana Primary School where their chances of academic success are minimised. Parents from such poor high-density communities are of a lower socio – economic status. Cultural capital at Oxford Primary School is a centrally family - based endowment which parents from high population density areas lack.



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Clearly, with resource inputs per pupil which at the extremes differ by a factor of 50, the educational experience of children in the two schools is very different. The heavy dependence upon individuals, families and communities for the provision of facilities, equipment and materials, through fees and voluntary contributions, has led to a highly differentiated structure of schooling. The support, especially at Havana Primary School, which the parents can afford to give, is insufficient to provide schooling which is adequately resourced.

### 5.5 Theme four: Maintenance of school infrastructure

This section provides an understanding of the maintenance of school infrastructure as one of the themes or key functions performed by SDCs during the implementation of education decentralisation. The purpose of the section is to examine the work of the various actors and their relationships in the decision-making processes related to the maintenance of school infrastructure.

#### 5.5.1 Maintenance of infrastructure under SBM

Maintenance of facilities or infrastructure and school development in general were some of the functions transferred from central government to schools.

Mr. Humba, SDC chairperson of Havana Primary School, mentioned during an interview session that the SDC has been involved in the maintenance of school infrastructure and facilities. He indicated that the SDC is involved through grounds men, cleaning staff and caretakers who do not have specialist knowledge and skills in facilities maintenance.

When probed further, this is what Mr. Humba explained:

*"The SDC outsources jobs that are beyond the realm of the available grounds men. We don't need specialist services all the time because of our small budget.*"(November 13, 2018).

Mr.Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson of Oxford Primary School, had this to say:

> *The SDC maintains and constructs new structures in the school. We do not have skilled artisans to do the maintenance but rely on dedicated grounds men who have been doing it for many years* (January 9, 2019).

Data from interviews indicated that the development and maintenance of school infrastructure by government had stopped long ago.



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SDC chairpersons were asked as to how they worked with school heads regarding school development. Messrs. Humba and Chamangwiza mentioned that they co-operated well with school heads. They mentioned that they discussed issues with school heads and formulated strategies together. Mr.Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson for Oxford Primary School had this to say during an interview session:

> *When the school was to be fenced to protect the properties of the school, we were up and down with the school head to district education offices in town, advertising for tenders - looking for contractors and labour (*January 9, 2019).

When I was given access to school documents, I examined minutes of the parents' meeting of Oxford Primary School dated 27-07-2018. From the minutes, evidence emerged that a resolution had been taken that the SDC chairperson should supervise people who were making renovations to school buildings. This indicates that Oxford Primary School's SDC chairperson was directly involved in the development of the school. According to Mr. Burombo, deputy head at Havana Primary School, either the SDC chairman or the vice-chairman come to the school twice a week to oversee the school projects and get first-hand knowledge of any problems the school administration might be encountering. This is evidence that the SDC members and the school head worked collaboratively which is what SBM is all about.

During interview sessions, some teachers namely Messrs. Mbizi, Chimurenga, Sanyas and Sawe (Havana Primary School) were of the opinion that the maintenance of school buildings was within the ambit of the Ministry of Construction and Public Works. However, this was refuted by their deputy head who reported that school maintenance was the sole responsibility of the schools and parents through their SDCs. The literature maintains that the support provided by the government is insufficient and that the government stopped infrastructural development and maintenance in the public sector because of a poorly performing economy. In support of this,  the Education Act, No.5 of 1992 had transferred powers previously vested in the higher tiers of the education system to schools through SDCs. School development functions were decentralised from the central government to local authorities as per Statutory Instrument 87 of Act,No.5 1992 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1992) in an effort to reduce central government expenditure.



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The Zimbabwean government, especially in the 1990s, took the responsibility for maintaining school buildings but later on abrogated due to a poorly performing economy in which the budget deficit exceeded targets. Mr. Burombo, deputy head Havana Primary School, mentioned during an interview session that the heavy dependence upon individuals, families and poor communities for maintenance of buildings through collected fees and levies has led to a strain on the maintenance of school infrastructure.

Participants were asked during an interview session what had caused school maintenance problems.

Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School, explained:

> *The rapid increases in enrolments resulted in congestion on school facilities that were built in the1960's. In addition, maintenance of school facilities has been poorly done over the years exacerbating the rate of dilapidation. Rural-to-urban migration was also contributed to congestion on the already fully enrolled school (*November 13, 2018).

Mr. Burombo lastly attributed the school's poor maintenance to inefficient government planning and failure to construct more schools in the district.

With regards to Oxford Primary School, Mr. Bob James, the deputy head, had this to say:

> *When school buildings were taken over by the SDC authority from the government, practically no attention had been paid to them. Again, there hasn't been any maintenance funding in place* (November 16, 2018).

School buildings need to undergo some form of modernisation because of the many changes that have taken place in the educational system. The educational system has undergone tremendous changes in the form of its philosophy, broadened goals and objectives, new approaches to service delivery and architectural design. Mr Burombo affirmed that educational systems have undergone quantum increases in school enrolments, multiplicity of curricula programmes and extra-curricular activities. As a result, some of these facilities are architecturally obsolete and therefore cannot cope with new developments and demands.

Mrs. Sangurura of Havana Primary School understood quality school infrastructure as buildings that optimise productivity in the teaching and learning process. She



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further mentioned that the infrastructure should be concerned with safe conditions for facility users and creating a physical setting appropriate and adequate for learning.

During interview sessions participants were asked, “Do you have a policy on school maintenance? “In reply, Mr. Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson at Oxford Primary School had this to say:

> *…maintenance was done by Ministry of Construction and Public Works…policy matters were also taken care of…responsibilities were shifted to schools, maintenance work by government did not stop abruptly,…Ministry of Construction and Public Works personnel…carry out major maintenance work such as sewer unblocking .We did not have a policy…now we have a schedule…for …construction and maintenance work* (January 9, 2019).

A maintenance policy informs employees about what is expected in terms of behavior and performance standards. It supports optimum usage of maintenance equipment and personnel. It stipulates rules and guidelines for decision-making by various actors in maintenance of school infrastructure.

On the other hand, Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School in reply to the same question had this to say:

> *We do not have a policy. We invite teachers…with the caretaker to identify areas where repairs are needed. If…repairs are simple the grounds men will take care of them. If…complicated we invite…specialised attention from outside... do not have any in-house technicians…it is expensive to maintain their wage bills…we do not have serious maintenance* (November 14, 2018).

Although there was some semblance of a maintenance policy at Oxford Primary School, it was evident that the two schools did not have functional policies on facilities maintenance. In fact, participants (teachers) mostly referred to other policies such as School Development Policy as a way of compensating for having no specific facilities maintenance policies. At Havana all interviewees were forthright and stated categorically that they did not have a maintenance policy.

The status quo in the schools confirms that infrastructural maintenance is not accorded a priority status, which could also imply that facilities maintenance does not form part of the whole-school development planning. This is confirmed by Xaba (2012) that maintenance work at schools is “unsystematic, uncoordinated and not holistic”. In addition, Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, affirmed that there is no



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maintenance culture in schools, which he describes as the ability to constantly and consistently carry out repairs of physical structure of value and making it a collective responsibility of the group to maintain and preserve the structure.

According to Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, the duties of the maintenance sub-committee among others, include receiving complaints on damaged school facilities, and organising direct labour for the repairs of school facilities. He further mentioned that maintenance requires skills, tools and spare parts to guide the process. The quality and durability of a building are affected by how it is looked after, the ways in which servicing and repairs are carried out, and the rate at which needs and requirements change.

Interview data from Mrs.Chibode, Mr. Gundumura and Mrs. Saungweme indicated that, generally, Havana Primary School had only custodial or cleaning staff and no staff expressly assigned to infrastructure or facilities maintenance. The interviewees said that it is understandable since there is as yet no policy regarding school facilities' maintenance and consequently, maintenance staffing.

Mrs.Young, Mrs.Mukondiwa and Mrs.Tauzeni, mentioned that the maintenance of service systems at Oxford Primary School was done by general workers under the guidance of a caretaker and a focal teacher. This is cause for concern for both schools since these functions require specialised expertise to execute, especially electrical, plumbing, waste management and disposal.

This is what Mr.Humba (Havana Primary School) said during an interview session:

> *There is one grounds man responsible for "maintaining" electrical systems at the school. On waste management and disposal, the school relies on grounds men and cleaners. They multi-task and it has been helpful bearing in mind the tight economic situation. Where would the school get money to outsource such services which require skilled technicians? (*November 14, 2018).

It was, however, clear that involving grounds men and general workers in the maintenance of service systems was a risky undertaking. For that reason, Oxford Primary School outsourced this function at a cost to the school because it has a bigger budget than Havana Primary School. However, Mr.Burombo, deputy school head of Havana Primary School, emphasised that although the grounds men did the maintenance of service systems, in the event of major maintenance works that



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required specialised knowledge and skills, they outsourced such jobs to experts. This he mentioned happens "once in a while".

Inspections are part of the organisation of maintenance of school facilities. Interviewees, Messrs. Gabriel and Hanzu (Oxford and Havana Primary Schools respectively), mentioned that their schools do not have proper inspection systems. Mr. Hanzu mentioned that the reason for not conducting regular or systematic inspections at Havana Primary School was due to poor finances.

It can be argued that maintenance of infrastructure or facilities is dependent on the prevailing context at the school. What might be condemned as rudimentary approaches to maintenance could be serving a particular school very well. Havana Primary School did not procure state-of-the-art equipment or services because it operated on a very small budget. Mr. Hanzu, when probed during an interview session went on to narrate that their inspections are directed at those areas that attract much attention or human traffic such as entrances, foyers, doors, sidewalks, parking lots, lighting, floor spaces, and windows. He went on to mention that they conduct directed inspections aimed at reducing risks of fires and other losses, thus protecting pupils, parents, staff and visitors from injuries.

The following is an excerpt of an interview with Mr. Humba, chairperson of SDC

Havana Primary School in support of the foregoing:

> *We are sitting on a time bomb. Maintenance is routine…replacing electric bulbs, window panes, repairing broken doors, mending gutters and repainting classrooms…Our main worry is the sewerage system and old underground water pipes... They leak…and the ground gets soaked up such that one day the ground will give in (*November 14, 2018).

If done correctly and on a regular schedule, preventive measures can reduce the risk of costly repairs later. The task of maintaining school facilities is an enormous one and therefore requires the concerted effort of stakeholders for success to be achieved.

During interview sessions, teachers were asked, "Does the infrastructure facilitate the learning of pupils?" Mr.Sanyas of Havana Primary School had this to say:



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> *When a school building looks ugly, dirty … with broken glass and falling plaster, pupils learn the diminished value that their institutions place on them and their future. This scenario is worsened when other schools not far away look much better (*November 14, 2018).

There is need to establish the school as an attractive presence in the community. The effects of an attractive school facility have an ever-lasting impression.

Mrs. Collins of Oxford Primary School said this in reply to the same question:

> *Yes it does to some extent…there is maintenance…done to existing school buildings and these have been fit for purpose most of the time…Lockers are kept in good repair and classroom furniture is well looked after. The school procured diesel powered generators as back up to inadequate electrical power caused by uncontrolled load shedding thus facilitating evening studies (*November 16, 2018).

Schools and classrooms can be more than a place to inhabit; they can also acquire an emotional significance. Mr Bob James, Oxford Primary School affirmed during an interview session that children's environments have an effect on their cognitive and behavioral development and on childhood vulnerability. This was supported by Mr. Burombo of Havana Primary School when he mentioned that pupils without the basic resources in their environments and in schools, perform poorly. As evident from the literature (Barankay and Lockwood, 2007; Galiani and Schargrodsky, 2001), schools in resource-constrained environments are limited in their efforts to improve educational outcomes.

Mrs. Manuela, a parent at Havana Primary School, lamented during a focus group discussion:

> *The poor air in the classrooms makes children sick, increases their absenteeism and affects their academic performance. Classrooms do not have air conditioners such that there is always a strong smell, hot and stuffy making children experience breathing problems* (December 22, 2018).

In the same narrative, the foregoing sentiments were corroborated by another parent, Mr. Jemba - Jemba who affirmed that:

*“Classrooms are poorly lit and they are continous blackouts for the whole school day due to load shedding.”(*December 22, 2018).



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Thus, many building-related factors influence the well-being of its occupants. It is necessary that maintaining school facilities be accorded a priority as part of school programmes aimed at promoting teaching and learning goals and effectiveness.

Mr. Sawe of Havana Primary School expressed concerns about the effects of noise on teaching and learning:

> *We are in the middle of the ghetto; our classrooms are some 100 metres from a beer hall and 10 metres from a busy dusty road. Children and teachers…breathe dust and dirt coming from outside. There is too much external noise. This outside noise causes increased student dissatisfaction with their classrooms, and that excessive noise causes stress in students (*February 7, 2020).

External noise causes more discomfort and lowered efficiency for teachers and pupils. There was a general concern by 100% of Havana Primary School teachers interviewed that their classrooms and hallways are so noisy that it affects their ability to teach.

Mr. Shumba had the same views as those previously expressed by Mr. Sawe. He mentioned that there have been shortages of classrooms. He noted that this has resulted in large classes which in turn has given teachers many problems such as low participation, fights breaking out during lessons, and scramble for limited resources. He lamented that chairs, benches, tables and chairs are broken and therefore inadequate. Mr. Shumba mentioned that it is very normal to find pupils learning while seated on timber, bricks or on the floor. Interviewees, Mr. Hanzu, Mrs. Nxusa and Mrs. Sangurura were of the same opinion that lack of floor space due to overcrowded classrooms is a serious problem at Havana Primary School. They mentioned that this affects good prospects of group work.

There were concerns from the interviewees that teaching and learning had been affected by large class sizes. There was too much classroom congestion at Havana Primary School which adversely affected the teaching and learning process. The visited classrooms at Havana Primary School were not only congested but pupils also sat on the floor while a few tables were kept at the back. Mrs. Mahlayeya, who was in charge of the class, explained that they did not have chairs. Other classes were being conducted outside under trees where pupils sat on bricks, stones and concrete benches. When it rains the pupils from two classes are accommodated in



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one classroom. Mrs. Mahlayeya went on to mention that overcrowding had created more problems for teachers as they could not provide pupils with wider opportunities for learning and development.

In addition, schools need to have adequate and appropriate water and sanitation facilities for boys, girls and teachers (including facilities for menstrual hygiene management) and hygiene promotion. There is evidence to suggest that lack of such facilities affects participation, performance and increases absenteeism, especially in the case of girls at puberty.

The infrastructure at Havana Primary School is supposed to be built on a self-help basis by the community where it is located. Havana Primary School receives no support from government leaving parents to support the school themselves. The foregoing is supported by Samkange (2013) who contends that parents were given the responsibility of managing and governing schools without any financial support from central government. Interview data reveal severe funding limitations at Havana Primary School which has even led to the inability of the school to procure adequate sanitation (water and toilets).

When probed further, “How do toilets affect learning?” Mrs. Mahlayeya of Havana Primary School had this to say:

> *…toilets are not enough. Sewage disposal pipes are blocked because toilets don’t flush...Learning and toilets are related in that at times it disturbs learners when toilets are few, especially when they don’t have enough water and they are dirty. Other learners get sick and they don’t come to school for fear of contracting diseases. (*February 10, 2020).

The foregoing quotation suggests that toilet systems are continuously damaged and are used even when they are inoperative. Mr. Shumba (Havana Primary School) supported Mrs. Mahlayeya’s excerpt by mentioning that the major problem that requires daily maintenance are toilet blockages.

Mr Shumba lamented the situation:

> *… this has been caused by the school’s large enrolment. The numbers do not correspond with the ablution and sanitary facilities available.it has become a health hazard for pupils to use the few available toilets. As if that is not enough, the toilets do not have the necessary chemicals, and are in a deplorable state (*November 14, 2020).



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There were concerns from both Mrs. Mahlayeya and Mr.Shumba that many pupils are afraid to come to school because of the toilets. The latter reiterated that the stench, no doors, dirty walls, muddy floors and maggots all over, negatively affect pupils.

Mr. MacDonald, committee member of SDC Havana Primary School expressed dissatisfaction with the school's sewage disposal.

*"The school has had a malfunctioning sewage disposal system for many years and it has never received urgent attention." (*February 10, 2020).

A malfunction can be so serious that, if an immediate remedy is not available the consequences may warrant the temporary closure of the school, often at a most inconvenient time.

Oxford Primary School had a similar sewerage problem although it was not of major proportion like that of Havana Primary School. Mr. Sting, a committee member of SDC Oxford Primary School, noted during an interview session that the state of toilets and plumbing is often a matter of concern for the school management. He mentioned that there have been wide consultations and networking resulting in many stakeholders fund raising and sourcing materials in order to carry out major servicing and upgrading of the whole school's sewage system.

It is imperative to note that the consequential effects of poor building structures on pupils and pedagogy cannot be over - emphasised. When the environment is stimulating, teaching and learning are effective and thus motivating. However, the reverse is also true; pupils' interests and emotions are adversely affected by dirty and dilapidated environments.

### 5.5.2 Financial resources and maintenance of school infrastructure

A question asked during the interview session was, "What is the level of investment in school infrastructure?" Mr. Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School SDC mentioned that very little has been invested in school infrastructure because the community where the school is located is poor. He lamented the state of finances within the community and family households. Neoliberal decentralisation, which argues that the state should play a marginal role in public education, has had negative consequences for the poor community of Havana Primary School. This is



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connected to arguments by Rustin (2016) and Rizvi (2016) whereby they advocate minimal government spending in education. They contend that the market should play the central role in the provision of educational services.

Mr. Major, the treasurer, reiterated that adequate funding for maintenance of infrastructure has always been a problem for Havana Primary School's SDC. He proffered that the SDC has to look for alternative means of sourcing for funds besides school fees and levies within the community. Both participants noted that there were consultations to use proceeds from hiring out classrooms to religious organisations during weekends for maintenance of school facilities. Neoliberal educational decentralisation is mostly understood as a means of encouraging local communities to incur more of the cost of local schools but the situation becomes untenable when such communities are poor.

According to Mr. Bob James, the leadership of Oxford Primary School's SDC had undertaken fundraising activities in which parents have pledged monthly financial contributions. In addition, there have been private donations from individuals and companies. Mr. Brown, the treasurer (Oxford Primary School), mentioned during interviews that the school has fund-raised substantially which has been used to procure cleaning chemicals for toilets. Mr. Brown went on to highlight that some parents and community have contributed materials and pledged to pay for labour. As a result, working on what both treasurers said, it is clear that there are wide disparities in funding for the maintenance of infrastructure in the two schools. Havana Primary School has done little in terms of fund raising for maintenance of school facilities. Mr. Burombo, the school's deputy head, mentioned that parents continue to be responsible for levies to maintain buildings, school facilities and pay for sports. He noted that these levies are beyond the reach of a majority of parents. Mr. Humba, the chairperson, was of the same opinion as that of Mr. Burombo that many workers, who are parents of children attending at Havana Primary School, got laid off as companies tried to remain viable under the deteriorating economic environment. He further mentioned that inflation began to rise and incomes lost value, schools were badly affected by reduced funding and increased costs of supplies.



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### 5.5.3 Institutional capacity and maintenance of school infrastructure

In this section, I discuss the influence of institutional capacity in the maintenance of school infrastructure or facilities by seeking views from different participants.

Numerous studies, for example, Xaba (2012), contend that school facilities maintenance as a decentralised function is specialist and complex. Therefore, it requires specialist skills in such areas as access control, fire control, electrical, plumbing, sanitation, waste disposal, signal and communications, safety and security. As a result this creates numerous problems for SDCs in performing this school governance function.

A question asked during the interview session, "Was there any training in maintenance of school infrastructure for the relevant personnel in the past?" Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School narrated that there was one training session that was conducted by the Ministry of Construction and Public Works when maintenance of infrastructure was handed over to schools. He further mentioned that thereafter, there were some in - house one - day workshop briefings done by one SDC committee member. Mr. Bob James affirmed that the training was for grounds men and caretakers. In reply to the aforementioned question, Mr.Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School had this to say:

> *Our caretaker took part in the training. The content of the training was on major maintenance aspects of the school. It focused on the practical use of the Maintenance Plan, use of checklists and repair request form (*November14, 2018).

It is important to have capacity building activities every one or two years to capacitate caretakers and grounds men in case there are no properly qualified or skilled personnel.

Mr.Burombo mentioned during an interview session that there were one day training sessions for caretakers but said that their school did not send their caretaker. The reason he gave was that the training sessions were taking place some 35 kilometres away in Kadoma so the school did not have money to pay for the training, food and transport. Again, he argued that their school does not have much maintenance work to be done to warrant sending anyone for training.



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There were concerns by SDC committee members, Messrs. MacDonald and Sting who maintained that maintenance of infrastructure at Havana Primary School was not much of a priority as long as classrooms and grounds are kept clean and safe. One dynamic that emerged in both schools was that their capacities to lead and implement maintenance of infrastructure might not be sufficient.

### 5.5.4 Community participation and maintenance of school infrastructure

Basing on interviews with Mr. Kamba, Mrs.Zhou, Mrs.Joina and Mrs.Saungweme, it is evident that within Havana Primary School's community there could be deep divisions based on inequalities stemming from socio-economic status. In support of the foregoing, Chaka and Dieltiens (2008) argue that unemployment gives parents a low socio-economic status which prevents their participation. These divisions can affect a SDC's performance of such decentralised functions as maintenance of school infrastructure. Sometimes, instead of being a solution, the community becomes part of the problem.

Mr. Humba, chairperson of SDC Havana Primary School, mentioned that engaging their community in school maintenance was not automatic. He further mentioned that it was particularly problematic where parents with low levels of education felt that it was not their role to participate in school management and governance. This is supported by World Bank (2007) by proffering that parents may lack the competency to participate. However, it should be noted that once community participation becomes a top-down imposition and not a response to demands from communities for greater involvement, it becomes a problem. Indeed, in various national contexts many communities consider this kind of participation as an additional responsibility on the already considerable demands on their time and resources. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mrs.Chibode of Havana Primary School:

> *…It is a community that has no interest in the development of the school. The community is not progressive .When you ask them to play a part in improving the school; they will tell you… that they don't have the money. Worse still they do not attend parents' meetings (*November 14, 2018).

Lack of cooperation between school management and community members has contributed to poor maintenance of school buildings. Mr.Burombo, deputy head of



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Havana Primary School bemoaned that the perception of the local community towards public properties like schools needs to change because it is anti-developmental. He went on to mention that talk of community-based approaches whereby communities use locally available materials to refurbish school facilities do not apply at Havana Primary School.

Messrs. Burombo had this to say in during an interview session:

> *Low community participation greatly affects the learning environment in our school. It is because of low parental participation that the school has children learning outside under the trees and in the face of the inclement weather (*November 13, 2018).

Basing on what came from interviews, the teaching staff of Havana Primary School has largely attributed the absence of basic infrastructure and other facilities to the lack of participation of parents at the school. However, reasons for community's failure to take part in the school's development can be attributed to high poverty levels and the withdrawal of government grants as a result of neoliberal decentralisation.

Data from Oxford Primary School interviewees suggest that there is a growing understanding that parental, local school and public participation is necessary to organise and support a school for student success. This was supported by Mr. Conrad, the Schools Inspector, when he said that at Oxford Primary School parents accept that the school should develop from one level to another and they make contributions.

Mr.Chamangwiza, chairperson of Oxford Primary School, mentioned that the school's community through their SDC has worked hard to develop the school. He mentioned that parents suggested that the current fees and levies they are paying are so low that they cannot sustain the development of the school. Mr.Chamangwiza further mentioned that through the fundraising efforts of parents the school built an Early Childhood Development block which they have equipped with the most appropriate furniture. In addition, he mentioned that the parents' community built a library for the senior grades (five, six and seven) because the old one was now too small to cater for the increased school enrolment. Mr.Chamangwiza further mentioned that although it is an old school, facilities have been well maintained from



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the car park to children's hostels. Mrs. Collins shared what was said by Mr. Chamangwiza by detailing community efforts in procuring the school bus so that pupils can go for educational and sports tours. Mrs. Collins had more to say during an interview session:

*"The community has done some sterling work in replacing children's beds in the boarding and improving their diet". (*November 16, 2018).

A closer look at evidence obtained from foregoing Havana Primary School interviews with teachers, shows that even though decision - making power has been transferred to lower (community) levels this has not necessarily extended participation to its marginalized parents.

Mr Burombo, deputyhead of Havana Primary had this to say:

> *Parental participation has been very low. Although teachers are expected to communicate with parents they seem unable because few parents take the initiative to establish and maintain contact with their child's teachers and/or attend school functions (*November 13, 2018).

Willingness and commitment are equally important in determining the extent to which the communities in question can become involved.

### 5.5.5 Summary of theme findings

Data from interviews suggest that the responsibility of maintenance of school infrastructure was decentralised to both schools without the corresponding funds or sources of local revenue. The maintenance of school facilities involves substantial expenditure beyond the reach of poor communities of Havana Primary School. The school depends on a poor community and family households which cannot pay fees and levies to maintain the school's facilities.

Despite the tough economic situation, the upper middle class parent body at Oxford Primary School, has been able to fund raise and support the maintenance of school infrastructure. The issue of facility maintenance in both schools is haphazardly addressed at all levels of the school system. According to Xaba (2012), it is classified as being "unsystematic, uncoordinated and not holistic".

Findings suggest that at Havana Primary School poorly maintained infrastructure does not facilitate the educational process and therefore not fit for the purpose of pedagogical practice.



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### 5.6 Theme five: Promotion of school-community relations

In this section, participants' perceptions on the promotion of school-community relations are discussed as a theme and one of the functions of the SDCs in the two different schools. I consider the various actors in the two different schools and whether or not they have been able to fulfill the function and the subsequent problems they encountered.

#### 5.6.1 School - community relations under SBM

One of the advantages of decentralisation has been its perceived ability to bring about development with the active participation of the ordinary citizen. The decentralisation process, through shifting of power from the centre to the periphery, aims to enable the citizens, either directly or indirectly, to be more involved in the decision – making process in many areas such as education.

Schools do not exist in isolation as they are a key part of their community. This gives them the opportunity to work together with other community members, to promote a shared vision and community ownership of the schools, and to form strategic partnerships with families and community organisations, for the benefit of all. The reality is different at Havana Primary School where poverty and politics at school have had a negative influence on school - community relations. Politics has tended to divide the community on issues pertaining to the running of the school.

In the case of Havana Primary School, Mr. Burombo (deputy school head) hinted during an interview session:

> *The notion of community among parents at our school is at times confusing because the actions of the parents do not imply that they are operating as a coherent entity with a clear identity (*November 13, 2018).

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Brett and Thompson (2016) support the aforementioned by mentioning that conflicts arise when democratic processes become subverted by small groups whose interests do not coincide with those of the school and society as a whole. Mr. Burombo further mentioned that parents and the community lack interest in school activities as evidenced by poor attendance at school meetings. The foregoing was supported by Mr. Humba, who affirmed that the school community is made up of different groups often locked up in competitive relationships at the expense of the development of the school.



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The situation was different at Oxford Primary School where Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School had this to say when asked, "Is the SDC the only stakeholder involved in efforts to promote school-community relations?"

> *It is not an SDC-only issue. The school head as an "ex-officio" member of the SDC plays a crucial role in the promotion of school-community relations. The SDC works with school head because it is him who creates the space of engagement between school and community* (November 16, 2018).

The concept of community participation is contested. The school head determines the kind and reasons for participation, and how participation will be conducted. This is supported by Mr. Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson of Oxford Primary School, who reiterated that the role of the school head is foremost in the development of positive school - community relationships. School heads working closely with the SDC can play an effective role in the promotion of school - community ties. The foregoing is possible when everything is going well for communities. This changes in communities that are as impoverished as that of Havana Primary School which is reluctant to cooperate on issues to do with developments in the school. Mr. Burombo mentioned that poverty as a socio-economic factor among community members of Havana Primary School negatively affects their level of participation in school – related issues.

While shared responsibility from all stakeholders is encouraged, there is a greater expectation on the school head to engage, grow and sustain the partnership between the school and community to enable stakeholders to share in the responsibility of education governance. During an interview session with Mr. Bob James of Oxford Primary School, he mentioned that school heads have influenced the manner and depth in which external stakeholders were engaged in the school and had shaped the way in which they value their engagement within the context of decentralised education management. The findings are similar to World Bank (2007)'s report that school leaders are in a strategic position to influence how communities participate in school management. They may limit the participation of community stakeholders to trivial school concerns. However, too much reliance on the school head highlights another significant development. While education decentralisation was meant to redistribute authority and responsibility, the process



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seems to have inadvertently centralised authority and influence at the school level onto the school head.

Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School affirmed the following during an interview:

> *It has been difficult to establish and enhance relations between parents and community members on one hand and among school heads and teachers on the other. It seems parents are unaware of their role in their children's education (*November 13, 2018).

The foregoing assumes that the community is united, however, that of Havana Primary School is not. Its community is poor and therefore does not commit itself much in efforts to develop the school. The kind of participation which this community was expected to be engaged in was one which responded to the shortcomings and deficiencies of the State in delivering public services as a result of the neo-liberal inspired policies.

Mr. Sawe, one of the teachers at Havana Primary School mentioned that tensions have developed in the community as the SDC has tried to deal with the problems of school failure in an era of tight budgets caused by neo-liberal inspired policies such as the withdrawal of government education grants and subsidies.

Mr. Bob James, deputy head of Oxford Primary School was asked during an interview session, "Are community preferences and priorities taken into consideration when making school decisions?" He mentioned that it is not always the case and that it depends on the situation at hand. He highlighted a case when the school proposes to increase fees and levies against the interests of parents. Mr. Bob James was supported by his counterpart, Mr. Burombo, who asserted that the preferences of parents are not always taken into consideration when making school decisions. He went on to note that:

> *It's difficult to please everyone. Decisions to increase fees and levies are informed by financial experts within the school after astute planning. Such increases are aimed at advancing the interests of the school and pupils not for personal again (*November 16, 2018).

Mr. Bob James, the deputy school head of Oxford Primary School went on to mention that parents had requested on numerous occasions to have their



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children's diet improved and the school agreed to that. He went on to note that one of the priorities of parents was to use the school bus to transport day scholars because of the scarcity of public transport in the town. The school decided to use the school bus to carry day scholars at a reduced fare in the morning and after work. According to interview data from Mrs. Mubango and Mrs. Collins, Oxford Primary School has, through requests from the community, rented out its large hall and sports grounds for use after normal hours by the local community at a fee.

On the other hand, Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School mentioned during an interview session that:

> *When we grant parents' requests, they in turn should reciprocate. Parents have never acceded to such school's requests as attendance at school meetings, reducing children's absenteeism, paying school fees, buying school uniform and assisting children with homework* (November 13,2018).

Mr. Burombo mentioned that the school's preference was, with the help of parents or community, to stop political groups from interfering in school affairs. He noted that parents have done nothing about it, instead, they have been supporting such political groups. However, he noted that parents requested an increase in the number of SDC committee members to four and this was granted by the school. In addition, Mr. Humba, the chairperson, noted that due to the financial problems the school finds itself in, community leaders approached him to lease some of the classrooms during weekends for church services and hosting of weddings. This kind of community preference was granted by the school. This became a source of additional income for the school. According to Mrs. Zhou, a senior teacher at Havana Primary School, a community preference or priority that was accommodated by Havana Primary School was the provision of free lunch to marginalised children. Responses from teachers indicated that many school children take school meals because of poverty at home.

### 5.6.2 Parents mandated to play a role in school-community relations

Statutory Instrument 87 of Act, No.5 of 1992 gives power and authority to parents through their SDCs to:

(a) Provide and assist in the operation and development of the school;



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(b) Advance the moral, cultural, physical and intellectual welfare of pupils at the school;
(c) Promote the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future pupils and their parents and its teachers.

The range of parental participation is very broad. It is not confined only to participation in meetings or seminars; it is at all levels. During interview sessions, Mrs. Tozarira and Mr. Tivakudze (Oxford Primary School) were asked how parents have been involved in school activities. They indicated that parents have been involved in many school activities starting from attending school conferences and events to meetings and being members of different committees in the school. Their responses were supported by their colleagues, Mrs. Young, Mrs. Crossover and Mr.Dhaimana who mentioned that parents tutor children and help them with homework and written assignments. They further mentioned that parents help their children in the completion of their school assignments, and for this purpose they provide supportive home environment and ensure that children observe regularity in school attendance.

However, this is what Mr. Sutumani of Havana Primary School said during an interview:

> *Particularly in low-income communities like that where our pupils come from, teachers voice concerns that parents fail to help educators do their jobs. As a result for their part, many parents and community members experience the school as an alienating institution…* (February 10, 2020).

Parents and communities are thus critical to the school improvement process, yet poor school – community relations can create obstacles in their ability to play that role.

The problem is the assumption that communities constitute single entities. Some parents within a school community develop a culture of participation while others in the same community develop a culture of non-participation. It is the duty of the SDC to navigate such situations as it makes important decisions. Furthermore, while participation may appear on the surface as equally available to all members, research has found that communities offer varying degrees of opportunity for participation. Several studies suggested that higher income individuals have greater access to school boards and increased opportunities for input into decisions.



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Previous research by Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2007) supports the foregoing by affirming that even though decision making power has been transferred to lower levels, this does not necessarily extend participation to the marginalised, it may only extend to privileged groups.

Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School went on to highlight problems caused by parents who are not paying school fees. He narrated that the school practice is that if a parent defaults in paying school fees for a child the school administration withholds end of term or Primary School Leaving Examination results for such children and these are only released once fees are paid. The practice of non-payment of fees and levies was said to be recurring at Havana Primary School as evidenced by the excerpt from an interview with Mrs. Chipanera:

> *We have more than 2000 learners here. But how many pay fees? The community here … feels children should go to school for free... Need to teach community. Need to change the mindset. (*February 07, 2020).

The foregoing view was shared by Mr. Hanzu of the same school who expressed disappointment that the issue of non-payment of fees had become political. He noted that there has been some constant political interference in the issue of fees such that it has become a hindrance to raising standards in the school. The community at Havana Primary School has lower education levels and no resources to depend on, including the necessary time, money and civic skills to engage in school activities and meet their financial obligations to the school.

Teacher interviewees, Messrs. Kamba, Shumba, Mulemena and Sawe of Havana Primary School shared the same sentiments that their SDC is unable to get parents to come and engage them in matters related to the payment of school fees. The same interviewees also felt that de-politicising the payment of school fees would be very welcome among all education professionals.

In support of the foregoing this is what Mr.Sawe said:

> *During elections, politicians from two main political parties in Zimbabwe, Zanu (PF) and Movement for Democratic Change promise parents that if they vote them into power, fees and levies which they owe the schools will be written-off.*(February 10, 2020).



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However, parents at Havana Primary School, through focus group discussions had different views as evidenced by what Mama Patty said:

> *We must reverse the politicisation of the payment of school fees and instead encourage productive partnerships between us and our school. We seem to be fighting a losing battle all the time.This kind of releationship gets us nowhere as a school (*December 22, 2018).

Politicians use their power to influence school decisions. In support to the foregoing, Grant-Lewis and Naidoo (2007) concur that marginalised parents do not have the power to challenge existing patterns of participation. School committees are frequently dominated by the wealthy and most powerful within a community (Gershberg et al., 2008).Politics are present at every level of the school's educational process from local to national. Politics are in the organisational context wherever there is power to be gained, resources to be divided, recognition to be earned or influence to be brokered.

Mr. Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School had this to say:

*"Every year the local politicians try to influence the giving of examination results to defaulting parents in order to please them and get their favour as voters."(*November 13, 2018).

Focus group discussions noted that there is often lack of cooperation from a large number of parents in matters related to payment of school fees. The discussions noted that although the SDC at Havana Primary School was communicating school issues through meetings with parents, the communication was not effective. Communication is critical in community participation activities as it enhances trust among stakeholders. SDCs are accountable to the rest of the community and thus may need to communicate effectively.

One parent, Mama Jomo, had this to say during a focus group discussion:

> *The school problems have been worsened by the non-attendance at school meetings by parents. Many of the parents do not participate in these meetings because they think that the school belongs to the government so they do not see the need to come to the meetings (*December 22, 2018).

The thinking among the generality of parents of Havana Primary School indicates lack of awareness on the part of the community concerning issues of participation. Another factor which came out of Havana Primary School focus



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group discussions is the feeling by parents that their participation will bring no change. It was noted that community engagement is not automatic and could be particularly problematic in marginalised or disadvantaged areas where parents with low levels of education may not feel it is their role to participate in school management and governance.

Mr.Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School, was concerned that failure to attend meetings and lack of cooperation from parents would prevent the achievement of SDC plans in such areas as budgeting, student discipline and academic performance. However, it should not be about numbers of parents but whether parents who attend are actively engaged in the process of decision - making on matters that affect their children's learning. If this is not the case, then parents will have reason for not attending. Since education is a public good, its purpose needs to be a subject of public debate by parents, teachers and local community through heightened attendance and deliberations at meetings. Therefore, if attendance at school meetings continues to be poor, it implies that SDCs will not be held accountable to the people. From interviews with Messrs. Kamba, Sawe, Tirivavi and Burombo (Havana Primary School), it was noted that the community where the school is located sometimes perpetuates the very problems experienced at the school. Again, the kind of participation becomes externally induced, not being initiated by the communities experiencing the problem.

When asked, "What are your experiences working with parents of Oxford Primary School?" The SDC chairman responded:

> *… I am an elected member I am supposed to represent interests of parents but you realise that on a number of occasions you are on a collision course. … Boarder child parents are normally paid up but 70% of non-boarder child parents are not paid up…There are… fights with non-boarder child parents (*January 9, 2019).

Schools are run with funds and this fact makes the financial position of a school important to its effective functioning. Under neoliberal educational decentralisation, communities have been acknowledged as important stakeholders in the development of the education sector at all levels. However, the situation of communities was worsened, according to Chipika et al., (2000) , by the neoliberal



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inspired ESAP which resulted in government retrenching 25% of the civil service, withdrawing subsidies, and introducing user fees in the education sector, making it difficult for parents to pay school fees.

Havana Primary School focus group discussion participants reported that the majority of parents have a negative attitude such that they do not see the value of education. What participants see on the surface are fees not being paid by parents, they do not look deeper to ascertain what the cause is. They went on to mention that such parents do not know that school progress is about parental participation. What we see could be participants who do not have much understanding that the problem of school fees affecting Havana Primary School is a result of neo-liberal policies which impoverished the community.

The involvement of parents in SDC and school activities differs greatly in both Havana and Oxford Primary Schools. The latter is a former Group "A" (white) school. This group of schools was characterised by students chosen from rich families, relatively affluent classes.

This is what one parent, Mrs Clement, said during a focus group discussion at Oxford Primary School:

*"Community cooperation with the SDC has improved teaching at our school.Parents are sensitive to issues concerning the welfare of their children."*(December 16, 2018).

Bruns et al., (2011), supports the foregoing quotation by affirming that community participation in schools helped to increase attendance of pupils and teachers.

Mrs. Ponzo, one of the parents, raised an important issue during focus group discussions at Havana Primary School:

*Our SDC is unable to access information from the community for the benefit of the school. There is inadequate sharing of information between the school and us as parents due to poor attendance at meetings (*December 22, 2018).

Information flow between parents and school bodies engenders transparency which is an essential requirement and responsibility of micro-level governance. Parents noted that attending meetings allows them to access information and at times documents and records regarding the running of the school by the SDC. It was also noted during focus group discussions in both schools that poor information exchange



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between parents and SDCs has brought many challenges in the performance of some school responsibilities. For example, some of the school plans may be affected because parents are not in attendance to discuss financial constraints faced by their school. On the other hand, during an interview, Mr. Chamangwiza, the SDC chairperson (Oxford Primary School) had this to say:

> *Attendance at our meetings is encouraging and parents realised the importance of their attendance. Parents are actively engaged in the process of decision-making in matters that affect the education of their children. Their participation is internally-initiated, premised on their ability to self-organise (*January 9, 2019).

The foregoing was supported by Mr. Bob James, deputy school head, who noted that by virtue of their higher levels of competence, the participation of parents at Oxford Primary School enables them to manage the processes of governance and the intricacies of negotiation.

Mr. Chamangwiza supported the view that Oxford Primary School's parents participate actively in matters regarding the development and welfare of the school. This view was shared by Mr. Bob James who affirmed that the parents are forthcoming and proactive in school development issues; they are vocal and upfront, and want their school to progress. For parents to participate equally and fully in school governance, they must possess the qualities and quantities of resources to dispatch their duties satisfactorily. This is in line with the report from World Bank (2007) that participation requires a certain level of competency from participants so that they are able to negotiate the political arena. This does not exist at Havana Primary School.

However, the situation was different at Oxford Primary School, where during focus group discussions, parents mentioned that they participated in fostering school-community relations because they felt valued and recognized by the school and the SDC.

Mr. Lewis, one of the parents said this during a focus group discussion at Oxford Primary School:

> *As parents we are already satisfied that we participate in school affairs, we feel proud with the fact that our opinions are heard and our side clarified. They always give us importance and we appreciate that a lot (*December 16, 2018).



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Despite the challenges, community participation at Oxford Primary School, has generally been positive and advantageous to the school. Mr. Bob James confirmed during an interview that the projects are being undertaken because of the good camaraderie among the parents, teachers, students, administrators and that everything was very open and transparent.

### 5.6.3 Political involvement in school affairs

There is need to take cognizance of the fact that strong political commitment in which the poor and marginalised have a voice, is a pre-requisite for the success of decentralisation. Local political leaders should understand that decision making is now in the hands of parents who have put themselves in control of the local SDC.

When Mr. Chamangwiza, the chairperson of Oxford Primary School was asked, “Has the work of the SDC been influenced by privileged groups?” He had this to say:

> *... Politicians came wanting to use the bus, 90% of my constituency didn’t want ...We have parents who are prepared to pay up to $500 not $120 per term for a day scholar. They want those who can’t afford to pay to leave… there are people who want the school to be elite…* (January 9, 2019).

The situation at Oxford Primary School is that there is a larger percentage of parents who are relatively affluent such that they can influence school decisions in their favour. Mr. Gabriel supported the foregoing quote, when he said that some of the parents with children attending Oxford Primary School are active in Zimbabwe’s politics or are part of the government machinery.

On the other hand, Messrs. Burombo, Shumba, Sawe and the SDC chairman mentioned during interview sessions that the nature of interference in the affairs of Havana Primary School and that of its SDC was political. They generally felt that politicians, especially the local Member of Parliament interfered in SDC and school activities particularly those to do with payment of school fees.

Mr. Shumba had this to say during an interview session:

“*Some Members of Parliament are interfering in the payment of fees by influencing defaulting parents not to pay. The school has become a political battleground “. (*February 10, 2020).



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Mr. Shumba further mentioned that what makes parents who are defaulting in their payments of fees at Havana Primary School to be "very gullible" is their desperation under tough socio-economic conditions (unemployment, poor service delivery and material poverty). He stated that they fall for anything in order to survive. He narrated that parents become "highly responsive" to any promises by politicians. Hence, looking at widespread poverty currently prevalent in Zimbabwe and the relatively weak and ineffective State apparatus, we would expect patron – client ties to be commonplace.

Political involvement is another significant factor that has affected the relative autonomy of the public schools, especially Havana Primary School. Mr. Burombo, deputy school head, reckoned it to be the biggest challenge for them, as this kind of involvement tends to affect almost every aspect of the functioning of their school. He further mentioned that political involvement occurs during the election of SDC members, fund raising activities, attendance at school meetings, admission or expulsion of pupils, releasing of results to pupils, recruitment or termination of support school staff. Political involvement was mentioned during focus group discussions with parents of Havana Primary School. Parents agreed that political leaders, for example, ward councilors mobilised the community to participate in building of the school.

When Mr.Humba, chairperson of Havana Primary School was asked, "How have privileged community members influenced SDC or school activities?" The reply was:

> *We have politicians coming in. We set targets…and many come in to overturn those decisions…and…threaten…the school administration. We have an MP…admonishing the SDC and school administration… (*November 13, 2018).

There were shared concerns among such interviewees as Mrs. Chibode, Mrs. Zhou and Messrs. Mbizi and Sutumani (Havana Primary School), that politicians behave like that in order to build their political image among community members who vote for them. However, in a democracy there is nothing wrong with politicians canvassing in public spaces but they are not expected to threaten other role players. The school is a participation space with its own protocols, internal and surrounding



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power relations that shape the boundary of participation spaces and thus determining what is possible within those spaces, and who may enter.

This is what Mr. Zhou said during an interview:

> *According to local anti-neoliberal politicians, the issue of fees is meant to hurt poor parents at Havana Primary School. Poor parents are affected by a combination of government cuts in expenditure on education, the re-introduction of fees and a decline in earnings (*February 10, 2020).

Mrs. Zhou suggested during an interview session that political interference was a manifestation of ignorance on the part of local political leaders who instead should work hand in hand with the SDC and school administration to ensure that parents pay their school fees timeously. When fees are paid, the money can be used for the development of the school which eventually gives credit to political leaders and promotes their political images and positions.

**5.6.4 Institutional capacity and school-community relations**

There was a general consensus among teacher interviewees at Havana Primary School that SDC members need training in order to execute their responsibility of promoting school - community relations.

The foregoing assertion was supported by Mr.Conrad, the Schools Inspector, during an interview session:

*"There has been improvement in school - community relations because of training workshops organised by the Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture*"(January 7, 2019).

Institutional causes which relate to limited skills and capacity to build networks and partnerships were often identified by teacher interviewees as a cause of poor school - community relations. It has been noted through interviews that school - community collaboration at Havana Primary School is at a minimal. The community believes that they do not have what it takes to participate collaboratively, for example, competence and resources, including time and money.

During an interview session, Mr. Chamangwiza, SDC chairperson mentioned that at Oxford Primary School there are cordial school-community relations. This supports the fact that the school does not exist in isolation of the community. A high-performing school requires broad-based community support and support that will



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come from communities that are well informed and well engaged in the educative processes that go on in the school.

### 5.6.5 Resources and school - community relations

Mr.Burombo, deputy head of Havana Primary School, mentioned during an interview session that relationships between parents, teachers and school administration have often been poor. He further mentioned that one of the root causes is material. Material root causes are structural and difficult to shift and they include the effects of poverty on the school.

Mr. Burombo's point of view was shared by Mrs. Zhou who had this to say:

*"Our school is located in a high population density urban area characterized by social fragmentation, unemployment, child-headed households, hunger and poverty." (*February 10, 2020).

From the foregoing quotation, it is clear that these conditions which existed in the community had a negative effect on school - community relations. The community had become marginalised and impoverished such that it failed to support the school in development-related issues. Neoliberal policies had destroyed all the gains that parents of Havana Primary School had made. One of the often-repeated charges against neoliberal policies is that they benefit the wealthy members of society. Saltman (2015) supports the foregoing by affirming that neoliberal education was seen as an instrument for sorting and grading learners. It is an education that consolidates the long standing social and cultural reproduction functions of schools (an education based on class).

The following quotation is from one parent, Mrs. Pullen, during a focus group discussion at Oxford Primary School:

*"We have managed to build two classroom blocks, buy furniture for Grades one to seven. We have managed to provide for the basics of what teachers want".* (December 16, 2018).

This situation is tied powerfully to parental wealth. Poor school children are cast off into unchallenging and under-resourced schools where their chances of academic success are minimal. Gershberg et al., (2008) contends that some communities are better resourced than others because they have the human, physical and financial resources which give them the voice needed to take full advantage of the



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opportunities presented by education decentralisation. In studies conducted in other parts of the world, parents' identity labels such as socio-economic status, employment status, and levels of education, race and ethnicity have been shown to have significant influence on their involvement in school governance (Brown & Duku, 2008). Parents from such poor high-density communities lack the cultural capital to maintain positive school-community relations. Mr. Chipanera (Havana Primary School) asserted that parents' own educational experiences influence their involvement in their children's schooling at Havana. In a focus group discussion at Havana Primary School, one parent, Mama Jomo, had this to say with regards parental participation:

> *As parents we feel that our participation is just nominal in the sense that it has no effect in the making of real decisions that influence the learning of our children. Thus, we have been disengaged in our children's learning and future (*December 22, 2018).

It has often been noted that parents experience difficulties in dealing with teachers and this is rooted in their lack of confidence and lack of resources.

Mr Tambawoga indicated that cultural capital at a school like Oxford becomes a central family-based endowment which parents from low-income backgrounds do not have. The foregoing is further explained by Bardhan and Mookherjee (2005) when they examine the possibility of capture of public resources by local elites under decentralisation. In such cases, the non-elite have little voice in local decisions and their preferences and needs tend to go unfulfilled. He further mentioned that many of the middle-class parents at Oxford Primary School had academic achievements and this educational success translated into self-confidence and a sense of entitlement in relation to parental participation. He mentioned that the middle-class parents were far more adept at getting their viewpoints across in dialogue with teachers, displaying certainty, self-assurance and an ability to counter opposing perspectives, which are all aspects of cultural capital. Mr. Burombo (deputy head) mentioned that the working- class parents at Havana Primary School were much more hesitant and apologetic when talking to teachers.

The lack of self-assurance among parents at Havana Primary School meant that they could not express themselves. At Oxford Primary School, the middle-class parents' combination of relative affluence, educational expertise and self-certainty



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gave them options that most of the working-class parents at Havana Primary School did not have. According to Mr. Bob James, deputy head, without cultural capital at Oxford Primary School, parents in most cases cannot make it into the SDC structures. Oxford Primary School has upheld a culture that favours the well-off and discriminates against the poor. However, low socio-economic status and lack of a formal education do not always mean that an individual has a poor understanding of one's society or community.

### 5.6.6 Summary of theme findings

Findings suggest that at Havana Primary School the school community is made up of different groups often locked up in competitive relationships at the expense of the development of the school.

The SDC at Havana Primary School community has to deal with the challenges of failing in an era of tight budgets caused by the withdrawal of government education grants and subsidies due to neoliberal inspired policies. The problem of school fees affecting Havana Primary School is a result of neo-liberal policies which impoverished the community.

Findings indicate that community engagement is not automatic at Havana Primary School; it is particularly problematic in such marginalised or disadvantaged areas where parents with low levels of education may therefore not feel it is their role to participate in school management and governance. At Oxford Primary School, higher income SDC members and parents have greater access to the SDC and increased opportunities for input into decisions.

Politics are commonly found in the organisational context wherever there is power to be gained, resources to be divided, recognition to be earned or influence to be gained. The school head at Havana Primary School has to acknowledge the reality that politics is part of the daily routine and he needs to work with that process so that educationally sound decisions ultimately result for pupils in the school.

Neoliberal educational decentralisation created inequalities from the differentiated way in which education was organised at Oxford and Havana Primary Schools.



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# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

## 6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, conclusion of the main findings, recommendations, implications of the research and its contribution to the continuing discourse on educational decentralisation are discussed. Future directions that may be undertaken as a way to further the understanding of decentralised school governance and management in Zimbabwe's public schools are outlined.

The study elicited the views of school heads, SDC members, teachers, schools inspector and parents. These are the various actors directly involved in the implementation of educational decentralization at the school level.

The central research question of the thesis is, "How did SDCs implement the decentralised governance and management functions?"

## 6.1 Conclusion

Conclusions in each of the areas of inquiry based on research findings and analysis are discussed in this section.

### 6.1.1 New and increased responsibilities for school heads

In increasingly decentralised and accountability-driven environments school heads as SDC members in both schools took on more responsibilities than before. Teachers were appointed to various cross-functional committees, and allocated leadership positions, thus curtailing any autocratic tendencies by the school head and introducing more participative forms of decision-making.

### 6.1.2 Management of school finances and collecting fees

From the discussion of findings it can be concluded that accountability through the use of finance sub-committees in both school sites is a viable mechanism to improve the quality of finance management under a decentralised school governance system (see Section 5.3.3 and 5.3.4). Limited literacy, specifically in finance management knowledge, skills and experience, limits the ability of SDC members to participate fully in finance-related issues especially preparing and managing school budgets



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(see Section 5.3.4). There is broader participation and ownership of the budgeting process at Oxford Primary School than at Havana Primary School where fewer stakeholders participate.

The abrogation by the government of its responsibility to provide education grants (tuition) and subsidies put the SDC of Havana Primary School in a direr financial situation than that of Oxford Primary School. As per neoliberalism, the role of the State is to maximise opportunities for competition in public sectors including schools. Furthermore, a neoliberal approach assumes that market reforms will improve the quality of education by freeing schools from the restrictive control of bureaucrats and creating incentives to innovate through market competition (Kuehn, 2008). Examination results have become a convenient indicator of what the "quality" of a school may be. For a school to compete successfully in the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE), it must invest substantially in terms of resources and this is what Oxford Primary School has been doing. Havana Primary School has failed to compete successfully in the PSLE because it is poorly endowed with resources (see Section 5.6.2). Competition may lead to segregated development in education, where one school is better resourced than the other, depending on the economic status of the parents that constituted the parent body (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002).

### 6.1.3 Procurement of resources

It can be concluded that SDCs in both schools experienced shortages of teaching-learning materials caused by a cut on the education budget and central government passed on the costs to communities and households (see Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.5). Both schools under neoliberal educational decentralisation competed for scarce resources under conditions of stringency in Zimbabwe.

Oxford Primary School embraced the use of information technology (IT) in the procurement of resources. However, Havana Primary School had reservations about the use of IT in procurement on the grounds that it complicates the procurement process for their traditional small suppliers.

For the purpose of accountability, Oxford Primary School's SDC segregated procurement and finance functions in order to prevent the possibility of intentional manipulation if one person is in charge of both. At Havana Primary School,



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procurement and finance were combined in order to cut on costs of employing fully-fledged personnel for two separate sections.

Clearly, with resource inputs per pupil which at the extremes differ by a factor of 50, the educational experience of children in the two schools are quite different. The heavy dependence upon individuals, families and communities for the provision of facilities, equipment and materials, through fees and voluntary contributions, has led to a highly differentiated structure of schooling. The support, especially at Havana Primary School, which the parents can afford to give, is insufficient to provide schooling which is adequately resourced.

### 6.1.4 Maintenance of school infrastructure

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that at Havana Primary School maintenance planning is coincidental, and not all stakeholders are involved. Thus, its poorly maintained infrastructure does not facilitate the educational process and therefore not fit for the purpose of pedagogical practice. Due to a better budget, Oxford Primary School has outsourced most of its maintenance work. The affluent parents at Oxford Primary School have been able to extensively fund-raise to ensure that all maintenance activities are carried out and that facilities and equipment are functional at all times. Maintenance of infrastructure in both schools is classified as being "unsystematic, uncoordinated and not holistic". This implies that school infrastructural maintenance is not accorded any priority and it is not part of the whole-school development plan (see Section 5.5.1).

### 6.1.5 Promoting school-community relations

Based on the discussion of findings, it can be concluded that one of the challenges faced by the SDC at Havana Primary School is that its community is made up of parents with lower education levels and with no resources to draw upon, including the necessary time, money and civic skills to engage in school activities. However, at Oxford Primary School the higher income members and parents have greater access to the SDC and have increased opportunities for input into decisions affecting the running of the school. Parents' socio-economic status has influenced their involvement in their children's schooling at both school sites. Higher socio-economic status at Oxford Primary School becomes a central family-based endowment which parents at Havana Primary School lack (see Section 5.6.2). At Oxford Primary School, the middle class parents' combination of relative affluence, educational



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expertise and self-certainty gave them options which most of the working class parents at Havana Primary School did not have.

Politics are found in the organisational contexts of both schools' SDCs wherever there is power to be gained, recognition to be earned or influence to be brokered.

### 6.2 Conclusion to the main research question

This section is a discussion of conclusion to factors that influence the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in Zimbabwe.Based on the findings of this study as reported in the previous chapter, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Nonetheless, the main conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that school governance is a new terrain and is certainly not without its challenges. The implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs was more successful at Oxford Primary School than at Havana Primary School. This was because the two SDCs implemented educational decentralisation under different historical, political and socio-economic contexts or conditions.These contexts influenced the overall development of the schools.

Educational decentralisation is implemented under a SBM environment. The theme of new and increased functions and responsibilities for school heads was influenced by SBM which increased the authority of actors at the school site (school heads, teachers and SDC members). There was increased teacher participation in such key areas of SBM as management of school projects. This provided more opportunities for teacher-led decisions, which is one of the conditions that make SBM work.

Resource procurement as a function was performed by SDCs under SBM. Through SBM, school heads, teachers and SDC members are delegated authority to procure resources for the school and are held more accountable. In addition, the SDC function of maintenance of school infrastructure under decentralised governance was performed under SBM. SBM gives parents the opportunity to work together with other community members, to promote a shared vision and community ownership of the schools, and to form strategic partnerships with families and community organisations, for the benefit of all (see Sections 5.1; 5.3.1; 5.4.1; 5.5.1 and 5.6.1).

Institutional capacity as a factor has been found to have an influence on the performance of SDCs' functions. On issues related to institutional capacity, school



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heads in both sites have the managerial and technical skills to deliver decentralised school governance and oversee on-going processes (see Sections 5.1; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.4; 5.4.2; 5.4.4; 5.5.3 and 5.6.4). At Oxford Primary School, it was evident that for the role of managing finances they recruited SDC members with good education and financial skills for preparing and managing school budgets. On institutional capacity for the function of maintaining school infrastructure, SDC members in both schools did not have enough capability, experience and skills in maintaining school infrastructure (see Section 5.5.3).

Resources influenced the implementation of educational decentralisation by SDCs in the two schools. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that school heads experienced financial constraints which affected the execution of their new functions and responsibilities.

Community participation as a factor has had an influence on how SDCs have implemented the decentralised functions. There is a general lack of parental and community support within Havana Primary School's community due to deep divisions based on inequalities of class. Parents' participation is crucial to the success of educational decentralisation and this is related to the socio-economic status of community members (see Section 5.6.2).Thus, educational decentralisation reforms in highly disadvantaged schools and communities are less likely to succeed**.**

## 6.3 Recommendations

(a) Shifting power and authority to the school unit implied changes in school governance and management arrangements which resulted in increased responsibilities for school heads. There was also the incorporation of parents through SDCs into school governance despite their incapacities and inadequacies (Havana Primary School) leading at times to failure to perform their roles and/or role conflict with the school head. Therefore, it is recommended that the roles of school heads and SDCs in relation to the implementation of educational decentralisation must be clarified and legislated. It is paramount that capacity building initiatives to equip SDC members with skills in governance be initiated. Training sessions and workshops should be continuously held. Such workshops should be aimed at enhancing and empowering SDCs so that they are put in a position to plan, develop



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and become more conscious of their key role functions and responsibilities. Special provision should be made to accommodate illiterate members of SDCs by conducting training in indigenous or 'mother-tongue' languages. When these SDC members are adequately trained, they will become confident of their role functions and knowledgeable of what is actually expected from them in terms of the law.

(b) With reference to other research studies (World Bank, 2007, 2010; Berhman and King, 2001; Pellini, 2010) and an analysis of the research data, it can readily be concluded that Havana Primary School's SDC, which is township-based, is struggling, with no real attempt being made by the District School Inspectorate to help support and assist them overcome their many problems. As a result, there is an apparent dearth in skills, legal knowledge, transparency, accountability, as well as a general lack of commitment and involvement by SDC members and parents alike. Accountability and increased capacity in the management of school finances are crucial to the implementation of educational decentralisation by schools. Therefore there is need for capacity building empowerment to be prioritised by the District School Inspectorate for SDC parent members in township-based schools. It is particularly recommended that the District Schools Inspectorate employ a special school governance team to assist schools that are failing as well as monitor the school governance within the district. According to the Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation Policy of 2020, the Public Service Commission (PSC) will consider proposals to provide immediate posts to Provincial and Metropolitan Councils which will enable empowered Local Governments to have an immediate capacity to manage Council affairs, as well as provide administrative management services. Local councils should have skilled manpower, as well as other administrative structures to manage personnel, procurement, and maintenance and service delivery in areas under their jurisdiction.

(c) Section 35:624 of the Zimbabwe Education Act, No. 24 of 1994 gives schools the mandate to raise their own revenue to be used at the school level. However, evidence from this study revealed that the delayed and non-payment of fees and levies by parents at Havana Primary School have substantially reduced the ability of its SDC to meet the school's operating expenses. Central government's withdrawal of education (tuition) grants to schools exacerbated SDCs difficulties to execute their



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financial responsibilities. Therefore, in order to advance the long-term perspective to development, SDCs need to have reliable funding sources. This problem could be minimised by strengthening internal revenue sources for Havana Primary School. More innovative methods of revenue generation should be introduced to boost the school's budget. Schools should have more diversified financial sources or multiple revenue streams and the government should re-introduce per capita grants. Finally, schools should put in place sustainable strategies for collecting fees and levies.

(d) The speed with which procurement committees receive and process information is very slow and this affects the efficiency and effectiveness of resource procurement, especially that of Havana Primary. Schools should introduce the use of information technology (IT) in the procurement of school resources. Schools need to have IT to link up suppliers to their procurement systems for faster process flows, efficient distribution of information and increased transparency.

(e) This study has showed that due to the demands of the new curriculum and inadequate funds, both schools experience shortages of learning materials. Again, funding availability has remained unpredictable under Zimbabwe's hyperinflationary environment; as a result, support provided by government together with what parents could afford was insufficient to provide schooling which is adequately resourced. Therefore, the Zimbabwean government should increase budget allocation to education in order to avert shortages of teaching-learning materials and assist poor schools.

(f) The problems faced by the SDCs with regards to the maintenance of school infrastructure seem to be overwhelming. Interview data showed that both schools do not have functional policies on school maintenance. Based on this, it is recommended that schools should give infrastructure maintenance priority status. All stakeholders should be involved in school maintenance planning (collective responsibility) so that school infrastructure improves the educational process by making it fit for pedagogical practice. The government should construct more schools in the district to ease pressure on schools with high enrolments and old infrastructure.



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(g) School fees seem to have compromised the access of disadvantaged pupils to education. Interview and focus group discussion data indicate that there are inadequate levels of affordability between parents of the two schools with richer parents able to pay more fees which support high level of resources per pupil. Data show privileged access of richer parents to good quality education for their children. The difference between the schools is rooted in the socio-economic status of parents. Based on the foregoing, the Zimbabwe Government should introduce educational policies that promote equality and protect vulnerable children from discrimination at enrolment and during educational practice. According to the Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation Policy of 2020, devolution policy implementation to the sub-national tiers of government will be underwritten by commensurate amounts of fiscal disbursements to Local Authorities. This will entail developing a complex fiscal distribution formula, designed to achieve equitable development status in all sub-national tiers of government. Already, Treasury has begun distribution of not less than 5% collected revenues to eligible sub-national tiers of Government (Government of Zimbabwe, 2019).

(h) This research has shown that educational decentralisation has been implemented differently at the two schools (in one case it has been more successful than in the other case). Successful implementation of educational decentralisation is context-specific. The application of any approaches and strategies to decentralisation need to systematically assess and consider the historical, economic, social and political nuances within a given environment. One school has the requisite conditions or resources, both material and human, while the other does not have. One is a historically disadvantaged school with a community that has high rates of unemployment and low levels of education. These factors have a bearing on the willingness and commitment of the community to participate in the development of their school. In line with Barankay and Lockwood (2007), decentralisation has positive results when local level authorities have a low fiscal deficit and when schools are located in affluent localities (Galiani et al., 2008). Therefore, it is recommended that the prescript from which educational decentralisation is formulated should be the same so that its implementation is uniform across all public schools.



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Overall, the District Schools Inspectorate, working closely with the Provincial Education Directorate, Mashonaland West, needs to provide more support to struggling and failing schools especially in previously disadvantaged areas. It is in this regard that I recommend an umbrella "School Development Board" that regulates the functioning of the SDCs as well as provides additional support for problems arising within school governance. It is also recommended that the District Schools Inspectorate takes a greater interest in evaluating, monitoring and assessing SDCs in schools, especially in previously disadvantaged schools. Management of the District Schools Inspectorate has to ensure that district strategic plans are drawn through meaningful engagement of all stakeholders at the local/school level. Thus, the District Schools Inspectorate must organize regular fora at the community level to brief the people on activities of the inspectorate and central government policies and programmes.

However, this makes it abundantly clear that educational decentralisation alone does not make sense, but a decentralisation process combined with a clear government role in setting standards, provision of materials, support training and supervision, matters. This is supported by the "Zimbabwe Devolution and Decentralisation Policy, 2020" which stipulates that there should be monitoring to facilitate oversight of the maintenance of standards and adherence of local authorities to appropriate Central Government policy and legal frameworks.

### 6.4 Contribution to the educational decentralisation literature

The research adds to the body of knowledge in the area of applied research because the literature has mostly been from specific country case studies on the impact of decentralisation on education output, with less evidence on comparative studies at the micro level. By advancing an understanding of educational decentralisation and the challenges experienced at school level and presenting a practical glance at how SDCs responded to those challenges, I filled the knowledge gap that exists in relation to educational decentralisation at school level. The study also adds to the existing stock of knowledge on decentralisation and educational decentralisation implementation by confirming the earlier works of Hanson (1997) and Faguet (2014) which suggest that when decisions are implemented closest to those affected, they are empowered to make decisions and better decisions are made. If



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decentralisation, in principle, is expected to shift decision-making closer to local actors and shareholders (Chapman, et al., 2002), and to improve access to services including education, then the argument is that this will create a more equitable society and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

This case study design has both exploratory and explanatory characteristics in understanding the uniqueness of various educational actors (school heads, teachers, SDC members, schools inspector and parents), and their experiences in implementing educational decentralisation.Thus, the study provides a detailed analysis of the various experiences of stakeholders in a given context. The primarily theoretical studies reviewed (for example, Glewwe & Maiga, 2011; Cheema, 2007; Steiner, 2005; World Bank, 2001), lacked such local contextualisation. These studies were thorough but they did not give voice to actors in a specific context thus failing to contextualise the data in specific local practices. By studying decentralised school governance at the local level as opposed to broader decentralisation, the research is yet another micro-indicator to investigations. This study has been at the micro level, that is, the school level, as opposed to many studies on educational decentralisation that have used comparative international data overtime and with a strong bias in favour of quantitative research.

At the micro-level, the research may be important for school heads as it focuses specifically on their practice. The thesis provides information and opinions that are directly relevant to the new responsibilities and accountability systems that school heads are experiencing. The study provides practice-based findings from the perspective of actors which is an important source of knowledge creation and help in accounting for the behavioural effects of the actors in the educational decentralisation process.

Although globally there have been extensive studies to determine the impact of decentralisation on education outcomes, efforts to study the factors in the context of Zimbabwe's decentralised school governance system have been negligible.The research has addressed the research questions on whether the schools which have had power and authority transferred to them through the decentralisation process have sufficient competencies, structures and resources to properly fulfill the numerous and complex tasks assigned to them.



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It has been established that in-depth research on school governance under educational decentralisation is prevalent in developed countries, but relatively scarce in developing countries. The research provides important insights related to the beliefs, identities, behaviours and interrelationships of local actors which tend to be ignored in the global debate around the desirability of school committees under SBM. With their focus on the impact of educational decentralisation, quantitative studies have not fully examined processes underlying their results leaving out many factors and relationships. The study was on processes and examined the dynamics shaping relationships, and illustrating relationships between school governance and decentralisation.

From a critical perspective and basing on arguments made in the study, public schools lack a strong fiscal base and suitable structures necessary for supporting a thorough educational decentralisation policy.It is evident that educational programmes are bound to fail if governments adopt a decentralised format without making adequate provision for financing the responsibilities decentralised to lower level organs. Resource available in the two case studies did not match the decentralised responsibilities. Schools had to leverage donor resources to fill the gap.

Decentralisation amplified local disparities and promoted greater inequality between two differently endowed school communities. Therefore, it could be right to suggest that decentralisation may not always be the appropriate intervention when weighed against the contextual realities of a country.

Although the notion of community particiapation emerged as a fundamental tenet in the promotion of decentralised school governance, it was absent in a poor public school. Those who had power, for example, the school head, determined who participated in school decision making. Depite the fact that decentralisation is equated with democracy, there is no equal participation in a decentralised school governance system because participation is determined by the most powerful. Poor school communities do not have the power and access to decision making because the kind of participation at their disposal is exogenous, imposed on them and therefore not sustainable.This implies that the interests of certain groups of the school community are not sought, accommodated or represented through popular



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participation, a key objective of decentralisation. The discriminative participation rendered attempts at educational decentralisation meaningless.

Reliance on the school head highlights a significant recurring finding across both school sites: that while educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe was meant to redistribute authority and responsibility, the process had inadvertently centralised authority and influence at the school level onto the school head. This supports the view of several decentralisation proponents, Caldwell (2005), Daun (2009), Litvack ans Seddon (1999), Zajda and Gamage (2009) that centralisation could exist within the context of decentralisation and thus this will mean trying to find a balance between centralisation and decentralisation.

### 6.5 Implications for decentralised educational governance and management

The results of the research may be useful not only for the future decentralised educational planning policies and practice but also could offer an empirical example to the other policy decisions in educational delivery. In the process of transformation, moving from centralised to decentralised educational planning, the policy makers should consider the transfer of administrative and managerial authority for taking decisions concerning education to local and school levels, identifying the gaps or educational needs and strategizing to ensure quality educational delivery, institutionalised training programmes and to improve the capacity of other stakeholders in education.

This research highlights the seriousness of implementing educational decentralisation to improve the quality of educational delivery and increased participation in decision making by stakeholders in the education enterprise. Despite the fact that decentralised educational governance and management entails a bottom - up approach to educational planning, it is characterised by many problems. In an effort to deepen the decentralisation process and facilitate community participation in the decision-making process and provision of basic educational infrastructure at the local or district level, the level of practical functionality of the decentralised educational sub-structures is very crucial. The interviewees suggested strengthening of all machinery needed to improve decentralised educational governance and management as it is the conduit for active community engagement in decision- making at the local or school level.



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The study considered that decentralisation requires serious capacity development for planners and other stakeholders in a system of decentralised education governance and management. Capacity development, where it does occur, in the case of Zimbabwe, is mainly the result of learning from practical experiences and on-the-job training. Training is particularly valued in a situation where educational officials felt their initial education is far from enough to address the challenges entailed in decentralised educational governance and management.

### 6.6 Future research directions

This research only investigated two public schools, so future research could investigate other policy development efforts by SDCs within the context of decentralised education management with more schools of different types. In particular, further research could also be undertaken to examine the impact of decentralised school governance on student learning outcomes using comparative quantitative surveys on a large number of schools.

The experience of other countries that implemented decentralisation shows that there is no direct correlation between educational decentralisation and an improvement of the education system as a whole. More research is needed in the near future on the changes that happened in Zimbabwe's education, post-decentralisation. This should include a comprehensive description of the components and the levels at which decision-making is transferred. It would also be worth considering the other dimensions such as the perceptions of stakeholders and any differences that still exist between legislation and implementation.

Specifically, this research could be taken forward through a series of new projects that would consider educational decentralisation and its effects on the professional roles of district school inspectors, school heads, and teachers. This could be achieved through longitudinal studies at national level. If this is not possible due to the vast amount of resources involved, then local studies would represent a good start.

External political groups have had influence on the direction of school affairs and apparently constrained the appropriate implementation of decentralised school governance at the micro-level. What is not clear however is how the trend of political



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influence could be effectively developed to benefit rather than constrain or frustrate the decentralisation process?

More research on this topic is desirable. Findings from this study and from prior studies show the financial difficulties of urban primary schools in poverty-stricken communities. Since it is not desirable to suppress the autonomy of affluent schools regarding educational investment, the objective of addressing the financial difficulties of primary schools in poor urban areas should have a higher priority as a pre-condition for educational decentralisation. Further research on this topic is needed on issues concerning the role of government sources in financing primary education under decentralised school governance.

The evidence seen in various references used in this study suggests that to date, decentralisation and, especially, school autonomy, can improve schooling with some risk of increased inequality of outcomes. However, not enough is known about how to best realise this positive potential of decentralisation, for poor communities.

This study was therefore important as it contributed to scholarly literature on educational decentralisation initiatives in formal settings particularly public schools. New themes and new insights reflecting experiences of various actors in general and Zimbabwean realities in particular emerged from the data analysis and these could inform the implementation of educational decentralisation at other different institutions of learning besides public schools.



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

**Application for permission to conduct research at two primary schools in Chegutu**

Regional Director

Ministry of Education

Mashonaland West

Chinhoyi

Zimbabwe

Date __________________

**Title:** The role of School Development Committees in implementing educational decentralization in Zimbabwe.

I am seeking permission to conduct research on the above mentioned title at two primary schools in Chegutu. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

I will conduct interviews with school heads, teachers, parents and members of School Development Committees. The information to be provided by participants will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of this study only. Individual names of participants will not be disclosed. The study will be based on the principle of voluntary participation and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

Yours faithfully

James Stephen Dhliwayo (PhD candidate)

Signature _________________

Professor K E Weber (Research Supervisor)

Signature __________________



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# APPENDIX II

## Permission to carry out research in Mashonaland West Province: Chegutu

B

*All communications should be addressed to "The Secretary for Primary & Secondary Education*
*Telephone: 732006*
*Telegraphic address : "EDUCATION"*
Fax:794505

**REF:** C/426/3/Mash West
Ministry of Primary and
Secondary Education
P.O Box CY 121
Causeway
**HARARE**

09 November 2018

Dhliwayo James S
Hous No. P320
Pfupajena T/Ship
Chegutu

Re: **PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN Mashonaland West PROVINCE: CHEGUTU DISTRICT: HARTELY 1 AND PFUPAJENA PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Reference is made to your application to carry out a research at the above mentioned schools in Mashonaland West Province on the title:

**"THE ROLE OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES IN IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL DECENTRALISATION IN ZIMBABWE "**

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director Mashonaland West Province who is responsible for the schoosl which you want to involve in your research. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the school. Where students are involved, parental consent is required.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education by December 2018

L. Mkwala
Acting Deputy Director: Planning, Research and Statistics
For: **SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**
Cc: P.E.D – Mashonaland West Province



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## APPENDIX III : Authority to carry out educational research: schools in Chegutu

→ HEADS: HARTLEY 1 PRI SCHOOL
PFUPAJENA PRI SCHOOL

Please, grant him permission to conduct his research.

C

*All communications should be addressed to "The Provincial Education Director"*
***Telephone: 067-23043/25655***
***Tele Fax: 067-23320***
***Email edumashwest@gmail.com***

**ZIMBABWE**

**Ref :C/246/1/MW**

**Ministry of Primary & Secondary Education**
**Mashonaland West Province**
**P.O Box 328**
**Chinhoyi**

9/11/2018

The District Schools Inspector
Chegutu District

**AUTHORITY TO CARRY OUT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: SCHOOLS IN** ...Chegutu... **DISTRICT: MR/~~MRS/MS~~**:...Dhliwayo...
**ECNO/~~IDNO~~**...[illegible]... **STATION**......
**DISTRICT**...—... **INSTITUITION**...University of Pretoria...
**REG.NO**...[illegible]... **PROGRAMME**...PHD – Edu. Mgt. and Policy Mgt...

The above named student has been granted authority by the Provincial Education Director to carry out a research in...Chegutu...District. The student has been advised to visit your office before entering the schools.

Please ensure that the learning and teaching programmes at the targeted schools are not interrupted in any way; the student strictly adheres to the activities and topics specified in his/her letter of request and that the research should be conducted according to the given time frame.

The District Schools Inspector is requested to liaise with the researcher on the specific schools where the research will be conducted and advise the Provincial Office of the chosen schools. Furthermore, the District Schools Inspector should ensure that a copy of the research findings is submitted to the Provincial Education Director once the research is completed.

**FOR PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR**
**MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE**

CC.Mr/Mrs/Ms...Mr Dhliwayo...



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## APPENDIX IV

### Administrative consent form

I, ________________________________ (full name) have read the description of Mr. James Stephen Dhliwayo's intended research and I am satisfied that I understand its content. I support the research and give permission to Mr. James Stephen Dhliwayo to conduct the research study in the school including interviews with teachers, governing members of School Development Committees, and focus group discussions with parents of children attending senior grades in the school who will be selected to participate in this research project. I also agree to participate in in-depth interviews with the researcher. The school will assist Mr. James Stephen Dhliwayo in accessing requested school documents. I also understand that all participants have the right to choose to withdraw from this research project at any time before its completion, and the information collected will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes (completion of his doctoral thesis and the publication of subsequent articles).

School Principal's/Head's signature.......................................................:

Date: ...................................................................

School stamp



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**APPENDIX V**

**Letter of invitation to participate in study.**

Date ______________________

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies (Faculty of Education), University of Pretoria, South Africa.

I am conducting a research study under the supervision of Professor K E Weber. In this research I intend investigating the role of school development committees in implementing educational decentralization in Zimbabwe. I would highly appreciate it if you would kindly agree to participate in this research study. Your participation will involve taking part in interviews which will be conducted at a location and time mutually agreed upon. All data collected during interviews will remain confidential. Your actual name will not be used in the thesis and other reports. Only researchers will have access to the information collected in this project which will be kept in a locked storage at the University for a period of five years following the completion of the research project. Neither your name nor your school's name will appear in any reports of this research. You will have the right to review any information being used with regard to your participation.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation in this research project is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Throughout the process, you will be free to raise any questions or concerns with myself or my supervisor.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. In case you have questions and concerns which may require my immediate attention, you can contact me at:

0027780138029 or e-mail jsdhliwayo@yahoo.com.

Sincerely yours

James Stephen Dhliwayo

Signature ________________________________________

Supervisor

Professor K E Weber

Signature ______________________________________



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**APPENDIX VI**

**INFORMED CONSENT**

I, ………………………………………………………………….. (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter, fully and I do consent to participate in the study by James Stephen Dhliwayo, entitled: **The role of school development committees in implementing educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe.**I do consent to the audio-recording of my interview/ focus group interview. I am also aware that there are no unforeseeable direct risks or harm associated with my participation in this study.

______________________

Signature

_______________________

Date

For more information, you may use the following details:

- J.S. Dhliwayo. Mobile No: (0027) 78 013 8029; email: jsdhliwayo@yahoo.com
- Supervisor: Prof. K E Weber; Mobile No: (0027) 83 294 8048; Tel No.: (0027) 12 420 2902; email: eweber@up.ac.za

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours

_____________________

James Stephen Dhliwayo



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## APPENDIX VII

**Focus group discussion participant information (PART A)**

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is James Stephen Dhliwayo, a doctoral student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies (Faculty of Education), University of Pretoria, South Africa. I am conducting a research study under the supervision of Professor K E Weber. The study is entitled, "The role of school development committees in implementing educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe". I am carrying out focus group discussions as I seek to understand the experience of parents. All that would be required of you is to discuss your experiences with your peers, while I record the detail relevant to my research. The intended duration of this exercise should be about 3 hour in one of the classrooms at the school.

You are under no obligation and will suffer no loss or penalties for refusing this request.

There are no risks if you participate as your name and school will not be mentioned in the final report. Pseudonyms will be used instead of real names. You can decline to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with or leave the session at any time.

The information gathered from any discussion will be stored in my personal computer, but you can request to have it destroyed.

**Focus group participant consent (PART B)**

I.......................................... (full name) agree to take part in a focus group discussion on the role of school development committees in implementing educational decentralisation in Zimbabwe. I participate with the knowledge that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also acknowledge that I am not entitled to any remuneration for participating.

Signature

____________________________



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## APPENDIX VIII

### Interview guide for SDC members

A. Introduction

Start by briefing interview about the nature and purpose of the interview. Inform them about audio recording interview proceedings and observing confidentiality of information obtained.

1. Please describe your responsibilities.

2. What other duties do you perform outside these?

3. What have been your experiences working with the SDC?

4. Please describe the criteria used to elect SDC members.

5. Please explain whether it would be fair or unfair to elect SDC members on the basis of the skills-set they possess or on the basis of their representativeness.

6. Are you empowered as SDC members? Please explain.

7. What changes have been introduced by the SDC in the school?

8. How have SDC members related to the school head and other stakeholders? Please explain.

9. Please describe how you are involved in the procurement of resources for the school.

10. What is the level of availability of resources in the school? Please explain.

11. What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure efficient use of resources? Please explain.

12. Please explain how the SDC is involved in the management of school finances.

13. How is the school funded? Please explain.

14. How have you been involved in the maintenance of school infrastructure?

15. What kind of relationship exists between the school and the community?

16. Please describe whether decisions arrived at during your meetings reflect community interests/preferences.

17. Has SDC activities been influenced by privileged groups from outside? Please explain.

18. What kinds of skills do SDC members have? Please explain.



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19. Have these skills helped SDC members in performing their allocated tasks/duties? Please explain.

20. What skills training might SDC members need? Please explain.

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Can I contact you later in case I have additional questions or some issues to be clarified?

Thank you.



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## APPENDIX IX

### Interview guide for school heads

A. Introduction

Start by briefing interview about the nature and purpose of the interview. Inform them about audio recording interview proceedings and observing confidentiality of information obtained.

1. Please describe your responsibilities.

2. What have been your experiences working with the SDC?

3. Please describe how SDC members are chosen?

4. What changes have been introduced by the SDC in the school?

5. What have been the effects of the changes in the school?

6. Give specific examples of the changes.

7. Please describe how you are involved in the procurement of resources for the school.

8. How are you involved in the financial management of the school?

9. How have school finances been accounted for?

10. What flexibility does the SDC have for budgeting school finances?

11. What is your understanding of the school operating as a “commercial unit?”

12. What examples of income generating projects do you have in the school?

13. Has the number of teachers enabled the school to deliver intended education services?

14. What is the level of availability of resources in the school? Please explain.

15. How is procurement of resources for the school done?

16. How are resources allocated?

17. What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure efficient use of resources? Please explain.

18. What is the source of school funds?

19. How are the funds used? Please explain.

20. Who owns school facilities? Please explain.



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21. Who is responsible for the maintenance of school facilities?

22. What kind of relationship exists between the school and the community?

23. Please describe whether decisions arrived at during school-community meetings reflect local priorities/preferences/interests?

24. Describe the general level of resources among parents.

26. Describe parental involvement in school activities.

27. How have SDC activities/work been influenced by privileged outside groups?

28. Please describe the kinds of skills which SDC members have.

29. Should SDC members be chosen on the basis of skills or qualifications or just representativeness? Please explain.

30. What skills training might SDC members need? Please explain.

31. What kind of training has been given to SDC members? Has it been appropriate or effective? Please explain.

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Can I contact you later in case I have additional questions or some issues to be clarified?

Thank you.



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# APPENDIX X

## Interview guide for Schools Inspector

A. Introduction

Start by briefing interviewees about the nature and purpose of the interview. Inform them about audio recording interview proceedings and observing confidentiality of information obtained.

1. Please describe your responsibilities.

2. What have been your experiences working with School Development Committees (SDCs)?

3. Should skills or qualifications be considered when choosing SDC members? Please explain.

4. What prompted the change from Education Officers to Schools' Inspector?

5. What administrative changes have been introduced by SDCs in the schools?

6. What problems do you think SDCs face? Please explain.

7. Please describe how you are involved in the procurement of resources for the schools.

8. Describe the level of availability of resources within the District Schools' Inspectorate.

9. What is the level of availability of resources in the primary schools under your charge? Please explain.

10. What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure efficient use of resources in primary schools? Please explain.

11. Who owns school facilities?

12. What is the role of the District Schools' Inspectorate in the maintenance of school facilities?

13. How are you involved in the financial management of schools?

14. Does the District Schools' Inspectorate contribute funds to the schools? Please explain.

15. What kind of relationship exists between your office and the SDCs?

16. Please describe whether decisions arrived at during your meetings reflect priorities/interests/preferences of local schools.



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17. Please describe whether decisions arrived at during your meetings reflect priorities/interests/preferences of school communities.

18. Have there been reports of SDCs' activities being influenced by the actions of privileged groups such as political parties? Please explain.

19. What mechanisms has the District Schools' Inspectorate put in place to minimize the influence of such groups?

20. Have the transfer of responsibilities from central government to the district and then school level been accompanied by relevant skills or competencies? Please explain.

21. What skills training might SDC members need? Please explain.

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Can I contact you later in case I have additional questions or some issues to be clarified?

Thank you.



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## APPENDIX XI

### Interview guide for teachers

1. Has the SDC been involved in the procurement of resources? Please explain.

2. Has the SDC been involved in management of school finances? Please explain.

3. Has the SDC been involved in maintenance of school infrastructure? Please explain.

4. Discuss the level of maintenance of infrastructure at this school.

5. Are there trained people for school maintenance?

6. Are there funds set aside for school maintenance?

7. Does the school have a policy/plan on school maintenance?

8. How do you feel about overcrowded classrooms?

9. What do you see as the ideal school infrastructure?

10. What is the level of investment in infrastructure at this school?

11. What resources does the school need?

12. How have you made your class or school competitive?

13. Please describe the level of availability of resources within classroom/school structures.

14. Have there been reports of misappropriation of funds within SDCs? What could have prompted this?

15. What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that resources are allocated and used correctly within the school?

16. Would you prefer the idea of operating the school system along market/commercial lines? What examples do you have to support this? What could be the limitations to this idea?

17. What are your perceptions about school-community relations? Comment on the nature of school/community networks.

18. Does the community use school facilities? If so, for what purposes?

19. What resources are available in the community which the school can make use of?

20. Is there any networking in place to ensure that the school has resources?



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21. Do you see the importance of the community in resource mobilisation? Which resources do you have in mind?

22. What resource mobilisation strategies are in place at this school?

23. To what extent do decisions arrived at in meetings reflect local needs and priorities. Please explain.

24. What have been the changes in school management that have occurred within the school over the years you have been here? Of these changes which one do you think has had the greatest effect?

25. In what ways have teaching staff been empowered? Please explain.

26. What has been the influence of privileged groups on SDC's activities/roles? What has been the impact of this?

27. Please explain whether it would be fair or unfair to choose members the SDC on the basis of the skills-set they possess or on the basis of their representativeness?

28. Please explain whether members of the SDC should be provided with training in those skills they lack?



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## APPENDIX XII

**Focus group discussion guide (parents)**

A. Demographic data (please tick appropriately)

Focus group participants' demographic information

Date ______________ Time______________ Place______________

What is your gender?

O Male; O Female

What is your level of education?

O Tertiary; O Secondary; O Primary; O Other(please specify)

What is your occupation?

O Professional; O Artisan; O Farmer; O Vendor; O Businessperson; O Other(specify)

How often do you attend SDC meetings?

O Always; O Sometimes; O Occasionally; O Never

How often do you get involved in school activities?

O Always; O Sometimes; O Occasionally; O Never

What is your age? O 15-19 years; O 20-24 years; O 25-29 years; O 30-34 years; O 35-39 years; O 40-44 years; O 45-49 years; O 50+

For how long have you been associated with this school?

O 0-4years; O 5-9 years; O 10-14 years; O 15-19 years; O 20+

What is the distance between home and school?

O 0-2 O 3-4 O 5km+



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What is one thing you like about this school?

_________________________________________

What is one thing you dislike about this school?

_________________________________________

**B. Questions**

Ask the group to suggest some ground rules. The moderator must be neutral.

1. Please describe the criteria used to elect SDC members.

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses in the manner in which SDC members are elected?

3. Are SDC members empowered?

4. What evidence is there to show this?

5. Discuss the suitability of the size of the SDC vis-à-vis tasks to the performed.

6. Please discuss the level of availability of material resources within the SDC.

7. Please discuss the level of availability of material resources within the school.

8. Discuss fund raising activities by the SDC.

9. What are the funds used for?

10. What accountability mechanisms are in place within the SDC and school to ensure that resources are used correctly/efficiently?

11. What impact have the raised had on the school?

12. Please discuss parental participation in SDC activities.

13. Please discuss your participation in SDC and school activities?

14. In what activities do you see an increased participation of parents?

15. Discuss whether parents have enough information on the activities of the SDC.

16. What prevents you from participating maximally in school activities?

17. Discuss the influence of privileged groups in SDC/school activities.

18. Should SDC members be chosen on the basis of their skills/qualifications?

19. What skills do SDC members lack? Should they be provided with training?



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20. Are SDC's/school's finances sustainable?

21. Discuss relations existing within the SDC.

22. Discuss relations between the SDC and other stakeholders.

23. What positive or negative developments can you attribute to the work of the SDC?

24. How have you been given the chance to determine your children's learning?



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