

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN SCHOOL HEADS AND ART AND MUSIC  
TEACHERS. A CASE OF URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MASVINGO, ZIMBABWE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study analyzed conflict resolution between school heads and teachers in Masvingo urban at primary school level. It adopted a qualitative paradigm. The instruments used in the study were questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The population comprised two hundred and fifty primary school teachers, ten school heads and twenty-five Art and Music teachers. Purposive sampling was employed in the study. The analysis found out that Art and Music are not granted the due respect they deserve due to conflicts existing between school heads and teachers at primary school level. The conflict leads to deprivation of needs, skills and interest in pupils. The study also noted the unfair distribution of resources at school level leading to neglect of the subjects. It has also been revealed that teachers misinterpreted the syllabuses, which led to improper teaching of the subjects. The analysis concluded that the conflict could be resolved by prioritizing the learners' needs and interests as well as mutual understanding between the school heads and Art and Music teachers. Concerning negative attitudes, continuous professional development would help minimize the conflicts. Recommendations from the study were that schools heads and teachers prioritize pupils' needs and interests. Teachers were also encouraged to teach the subjects in earnest and showcase pupils' work to prove the subjects' relevance at primary school level. Schools were challenged to engage in extensive continuous professional development to improve pedagogy and interest in the subjects.

**KEYWORDS:** Art and Music, Conflict Resolution, Continuous Professional Development, CPD, Educational Reforms

**Background to the study**

The pre-colonial education system perpetuates influencing negatively post-colonial education system in Zimbabwe. Moyo (2003: 89) avers that, "While in pre-colonial times dual system of education was created by the racist ideology, after independence a dual system in Africa has been created...". This entails that most features of the pre-colonial education

still show in the current education system, for example, the Zoning system which divides pupils from attending school in different residential areas. Such features create gaps and conflicts in the education fraternity. Some of the gaps include differences in subjects offered in various residential schools. On the other hand, conflicts emerge in prioritization of subjects taught in schools.

The 1980 educational reforms in the school curriculum enabled the teaching of Art and Music, which were never offered at primary school level before. It should be noted that the 1980 educational reforms were largely informed by the ZANU PF manifesto. The reforms paved way for curriculum planners to design new primary school syllabuses. These national syllabuses were distributed to schools by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). At school, heads with the help of teachers were required to formulate a school syllabus from the national one. The school heads as a result had the mandate to place subjects anywhere they desired. Therefore, practical subjects such as Art and Music were marginalized.

Following the implementation of educational reforms in the 1980s some significant changes were noted in the primary school education. All subjects were taught, the only hiccup was shortage of resources. This was the main hindrance of a proper and complete implementation of most practical subjects such as Art and Music. As a result of this problem of resources school heads were forced to prioritize academic subjects at the expense of practical subjects, causing them to suffer because they were not examinable at grade seven. Mupondi and Munyaradzi (2013: 483) argued that, "The majority of the pupils channelled out by Zimbabwean schools in post- independence did not have relevant practical training skills since the curriculum was mainly academic and theoretical". This means that the teaching and learning of Art and Music in the 1980s was entirely overshadowed by academic subjects. In the 1990s the primary school education saw a whirlwind of changes as both curriculum planners and school heads battled to contain the economic meltdown which was beginning to overshadow the country. As a result the teaching and learning of practical subjects such as Art and Music continued to suffer. Hence, the teaching and learning of Art and music in the 1990s was going in circles and no significant improvements were noted. After 2000 school heads further faced severe financial problems and they over-stretched their budgets (Munyaradzi, 2012).

The accumulation of economic hardships in the early twentieth century gave birth to further alienation of practical subjects. Art and Music continued to be neglected as school heads tried to contain their school budgets. In some primary schools Art and Music were not taught as

teachers concentrated on academic subjects at the expense of practical ones. This was further aggravated by exodus of teachers to the Diaspora for greener pastures leaving practical subjects with no one to man. The little practical resources which were acquired in the 1990s were lost or damaged during the confusion of 2008 (During this period the country was at an economic standstill, the government failed to pay its workers and no one was monitoring schools). Two years later when the country slightly recovered from the economic slumber the education sector installed a mechanism to boost pass rate in schools. This resulted in further down playing of practical subjects, culminating in neglect of art and Music. This therefore, prompted this analysis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Conflict between school heads and Art and Music teachers has always been a controversial issue. In most urban primary schools practical specialist teachers are often protective of the teaching and learning of the subjects (Mugochi, 1988). The trend is evident in Masvingo urban primary schools. Art and Music teachers are always at loggerheads with school heads as regards the significance of the two practical subjects. This leads to the shunning of the subjects resulting in failure to teach them properly, let alone recognizing the subjects and the school timetable. The failure to implement this part of the curriculum has led the researchers to carry out this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study sought to assess the extent to which art and Music are recognized in primary schools. The treatment the two subjects are rendered was analyzed. The study also sought to find out the conflict existing between school heads and Art and Music teachers leading to their neglect. It further evaluated resolutions that could be met to arrive at a consensus.

### **Research objectives**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which Art and Music are recognized in primary schools;
2. To evaluate the treatment of art and Music at primary school level;
3. To examine the conflict among school heads and art and Music teachers and
4. To establish resolutions that could lead to correction of the status quo.

### **Assumptions**

The research assumed that:

- Art and Music as subjects are not given the place they deserve in the school curriculum.
- Teachers have no interest in the teaching and learning of Art and Music.
- School heads have a negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of Art and Music.
- Pupils like learning Art and Music.
- Primary schools in Masvingo urban do not have adequate resources for Art and Music.

### **Research Methodology**

Research design according Yin (2011), is a logical plan. This involves linking the objectives, the data to be collected and the strategies for data analysis to address a problem. A qualitative approach was used in this study. Kothari (2006) views a qualitative approach as a full detailed, in-depth understanding of a case which uses inductive reasoning.

### **Population and Sample**

#### **Population**

The population of this study was made up of approximately two hundred and fifty Art and Music teachers and ten primary school heads. Kombo and Tromp (2006: 76) aver that, “ A population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurements...”. Therefore, a population helps to give a general idea of the results.

#### **Sample**

Maxwell (2009) in Yin (2014) defined a sample as a portion of elements taken from a population which is considered to be representative of the population. This study looked at twenty-five Art and Music teachers and one school head per school. All urban primary schools were selected.

#### **Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling procedure was employed in carrying out the study. Sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study (Mare, 2007: 79). He also views

purposive sampling as a way of selecting participants according to certain features suitable for the study. Therefore, purposive sampling was employed to select participants for the study.

### **Data collection and instruments**

Data collection refers to the gathering of planned data (Yin, 2011). Borg and Gall (1989) identify an instrument as any device or tool used for systematically collecting data from subjects or participants. The study used the following instruments:

1. Questionnaires - which were given to teachers and school heads;
2. Interviews – where some teachers and school heads were interviewed and
3. Documentary analysis - where timetables, syllabuses, pupils' work, schemes of work, and other record books were consulted.

### **Findings**

The study revealed that Art and Music were not given the due respect they deserve. Although the subjects appeared on the school time table they were not taught as should be. From the questionnaires distributed to teachers and the interviews held with them, it was evident that the subjects were taught in passing. This means that they were given very little time and sometimes no time at all. About eighty percent of the respondents indicated that in most cases the two practical subjects were not taught before lunch. Teachers were forced to teach them after lunch or during their spare time when pupils were tired and not able to concentrate. This entailed that first preference was given to examinable academic subjects such as Mathematics and English. School heads interviewed showed that they could not figure out the relevance of the subjects in the school curriculum because they were not examinable. Some reiterated that the significance of the subjects was only realized during school competitions and special functions. Therefore, this information clearly explained the undermining of the teaching and learning of Art and Music.

The study found out that there exist conflicts between school heads and teachers pertaining to the teaching and learning of Art and Music at primary school level. One of the conflicts as elicited by questionnaires and interviews with the respondents involved the provision of teaching and learning resources in the subjects. The conflict lied in that school heads prioritized Art and Music in allocating financial votes. This meant that academic subjects always got the lion's share. Consequently, the subjects suffered as they were left with little or nothing to spare.

From the results gathered from the study most teachers lacked interest in teaching the subjects because they were demotivated by lack of resources, support from the school heads, limited time and the period these subjects were allocated. Furthermore, upper grades especially six and seven did not concentrate on these subjects, but the rest, which were examined at the end of the course. Apart from attitudes exhibited by teachers and schools, it was also found that parents undervalued the subjects as they did not show any interest in helping pupils with their Art and Music work.

Document analysis revealed that no work in Art and Music was assessed. School teachers misinterpreted topics in Art and Music, for example, they took Art to be drawing and craft work. On the other hand in Music they asked pupils to sing. In the classroom there were also no displays of pupils' work and little or no work done by the teacher. It was also noted that the scheming and planning of the subjects had a bias towards the misinterpretation of subjects mentioned above.

Teachers and school heads that were given questionnaires and interviewed highlighted that there was need to reach a common ground to enable the proper teaching and learning of Art and Music. The main area of conflict proved to be budget in terms of distribution of funds and time tabling. Teachers were worried that they had no say in such administrative issues.

### **Discussion**

The teaching and learning of Art and Music at primary school level was always problematic especially in urban primary schools who often aimed at very high pass rate. Nevertheless, the problems created by the conflicting parties in schools were artificially made. It was generally noted that both school heads and teachers had negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of the two subjects. On the other hand school heads lamented that there were little or no teaching and learning resources, but teachers always cast the blame on them. On the contrary, teachers castigated the school heads' lack of support of Art and Music. On this note it was imperative that school heads be educated on the significance of Art and Music as subjects in the curriculum. This would help schools treat all the subjects at par.

Failure by teachers to interpret the Art and Music syllabuses showed some shortcomings in the teaching and learning of the two subjects. Teachers mixed up and confused concepts ending up improperly teaching them. As a result it appeared as if they were repeating the same concepts over and over leading to a marginal propensity to teach concepts from the subjects. It was noted that they used teacher-centered instead of pragmatic methods echoed in

the Dewey philosophy (Barker, 1986). This means that pupils needed to be given an opportunity to do work by themselves.

Despite the conflict existing between school heads and teachers there were possibilities that resolutions could be achieved. This was only possible when both parties considered and prioritized the needs and interests of the child's life skills. This done, resources would be fairly distributed amongst all subjects without favoring a particular discipline. On the other hand, negative attitudes of school heads towards Art and Music could be improved by Continuous Professional Development (CPD) through workshops, seminars and staff development meetings.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis has examined the conflict between school heads and teachers and the extent to which Art and Music were treated at primary level. The study also noted the limited availability and little support the areas were receiving. The study concluded that the conflicts could be resolved through prioritizing the learners' needs and interests as well as mutual understanding between school heads and teachers. On negative attitudes, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) would be the answer.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that:

- School heads prioritize pupils' than their own needs and interests;
- Teachers prove to school heads the importance of the subjects by teaching them and showcasing work by pupils;
- Although other resources can be improvised school heads allocated resources equitably;
- Teachers follow the time table religiously, that is, teaching the subjects according to the time table to avoid undermining them and that
- There be numerous sessions of Continuous Professional Development for both teachers and school heads on methodology and importance of Art and Music.

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