

**Parental Involvement in School Development Decision-Making in Gokwe North District Primary Schools**

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**KEYWORDS** Primary school, support services, consultation, decision-making, participation

**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of parental involvement in decision-making in schools in the provision of financial resources in order to provide quality education. A sample of six primary schools was chosen from Nembudziya Cluster, Gokwe North District; which consisted of 158 respondents namely 30 school development committee members, 6 school heads, 60 teachers and 60 parents. The descriptive cross sectional survey method was employed. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as research instruments. The data collected was grouped and classified. The data was finally categorised and summarised in the form of tables and graphs with complete summaries of relevant findings. The study revealed that the involvement of parents in school administration is a welcome idea accepted by all stakeholders however, the Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 needs to be revised in many areas as parents are abusing the instrument deliberately to retard school development. The case in point is the election of new members annually into the committee. Members in the committee who support school development projects tend to be voted out in

favour of those who are antidevelopment as the latter support meagre and unproductive levies. The study has also revealed that there is a tendency in most schools at annual general meetings (AGMs), to peg school levies which are very low and non-viable for school development. Another revelation of the study was the SDC members' ignorance of the school's accounting records.

## **INTRODUCTION ~~BACKGROUND~~**

This article on parental involvement in school development decision-making processes in Zimbabwe has been carried out during the time when government policy in education put emphasis on massification of education. The policy has resulted in the expansion and erection of many primary and secondary schools in many communities such as urban, mines, farms and rural areas. However, the policy has financially strained government coffers such that the government can no longer cope with the educational needs. The government's support has consequently dwindled and hence the responsibility of school development has been transferred into the hands of the communities through the institution of School Development Committees (SDCs) and School Development Associations (SDAs).

Some of the school development committees' mandates as cited in Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992:613 are:

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

From the above citation, it is the sole responsibility of these communities to see to it that the school infrastructure and learning materials are sufficient. The government has thus reduced its expenditure in education with parents now paying building funds and sports levies, to enable the schools to function with the assistance of SDCs. Also in view of the above citation, school development committees have to perform duties that would see school infrastructure improving, use of scarce financial resources improving as well as material and human resources improving.

It is over twenty years now since the government established school development committees in schools so as to involve parents in the day to day running of school affairs. It is therefore necessary to document their progress based on the effectiveness and/or extent of parental involvement.

### **History of parental involvement in the education of their children**

Children begin learning at birth and the learning process never stops even in adulthood. Their first teachers are their parents especially the mothers who usually teach the children basics such as first communication and first steps. Many body activities are introduced to the child by the parents on a day to day basis. In educational psychology it is a fact that parents are involved in the education of their children as from birth until adulthood. This therefore means that involvement of parents in their children's education is as old as mankind. Thus the parents know what they want their children to learn and how they should be taught.

In Zimbabwe, the Education Amendment Act of 1991 empowers the responsible authority of every non-government school to establish a School Development Committee which is governed by Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992. The main purpose of the SDC according to this statutory instrument is to enable the parents through the SDCs to provide and assist in the operation and development of the school. The instrument empowers parents of the school with administration and management rules on school development. School development should not rest completely in the hands of teachers, parents should assist. Furthermore, the instrument authorizes the parents to develop the schools infrastructure, and to provide learning and teaching equipment.

A report on the capacity study of the Ministry of Education (2010:17), pronounced the other reason for establishing School Development Committees as the alluring prospect of substantial cost sharing. Since the government reserves have dwindled, parents are now being required to partly pay for their children by means of paying school levies and fees. Thus, there is cost sharing between the government and school community. As parents pay school fees, the government provides schools with per capita grants.

Bowora and Mpofu (1995:180) further point out that;

SDCs seek to 'bridge the gap' between what the government can provide and what the communities provide in their schools.

The above citation points to parental involvement in the development of their local schools by paying levies. Parents can also be involved in bridging the gap by moulding bricks and other forms of labour provision such as carrying river sand and gravel for construction of classroom blocks. On the other hand government pays teachers' salaries, provides stationery and textbooks through the distribution of per capita grants.

The SDCs as parent representatives should plan and budget the levies they raise from parents. It is at an annual general meeting where the parent assembly agrees and approves the budget presented to them by SDCs. The Ministry of Education will only approve the budget agreed upon by a parents' assembly. This complementary support between parents and government will lead to quality education service delivery in schools.

The Board of Governors and Parent Teachers Associations which were existing in the past comprised of a number of influential community members such as politicians, church elders and chiefs. Here, no special skill or criterion was considered when nominating members into the board (Nyangari 1993, Chivore 1995)

The Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 though it outlines the criteria needed for one to be nominated as an SDC member, it is silent on the essential managerial skills and academic qualifications required of SDC members. No minimum academic qualification is given for one to become an SDC member. Thus anyone nominated can become an SDC member as long as he/she is a parent or guardian of a child at the school, regardless of the education and managerial related skills.

A Handbook for School Development Committee (2010:9) defines a School Development Committee as:

“A legal body of persons elected by the parents/guardians of the school to be responsible for overall management of the school as an institution.”

A School Development Committee therefore, is a body of persons legally recognised by the government and is been appointed to manage the school. It represents parents/guardians of a school in the management of the school. The body is an entity which can be sued and can also sue in its own right.

If SDCs are responsible for the overall management of the school, managerial related skills should have therefore been outlined in the statutory instrument as a prerequisite for members to be elected into the committee. For example, the post of a chairperson and the post of a treasurer needs someone who is literate, mathematically competent, who has a background in handling books of accounts. The SDC secretary also needs to be literate and with a background on secretarial functions.

Bowora and Mpofu (1995:229) argue that;

The school should establish, develop and maintain satisfactory relations with the community in which the school is situated.

They advocate for a dialogue between the school and the community for effective and efficient operation of the school. Teacher-parent discussions will lead to development and maintenance of satisfactory relations between the school and the community. Conflicts between parents and teachers will thus be minimised. The planning and management of the school must consequently be done with teachers in concurrence with parents/guardians of children at the school. The above statement points to parental involvement in school administration, for a school to function efficiently and effectively according to government policy.

Bowora and Mpofu (op; cit) argue that;

“...an effective school involves parents as partners in the education process.”

The school is built within the community and the children come from the community. The community thus has its own expectations on the type of education which is to be imparted to its children. For example, the children need to be taught the culture of the community. The education imparted to children should enable children to carry out jobs and activities within the community with ease. Parents therefore must be involved in the education process so that they provide required learning and teaching resources. They also need to be involved in school curriculum identification to enable the children to fit into the job market available in the community.

Although parents are not as competent as teachers in the management of schools, their involvement is still crucial. Parents can fund-raise money for school projects and parents can mobilise the community to support school programmes, hence parental involvement in school

affairs. Taking a look at Zimbabwe's educational growth and expansion since independence, the then Secretary for Education, Chifunye, as cited in CDU-UNICEF (1997:3) argues:

The education system would not have achieved and sustained such expansion without community support for school construction, maintenance and the purchase of various teaching/learning materials.

This assertion above chains the importance of parental involvement in school management. The parents then, had assisted in building classrooms and maintenance of existing structures and by providing financial and materials support.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in this study was the descriptive cross sectional statistical survey method. The descriptive survey methods consist of methods and procedures to be used to collect, organise present and characterise the set of data computations. Quantitative data will be used which would be numeric in nature expressing measured characteristics and conveying concepts such as quality and amount. According to Borg (1987), one needs to first collect descriptive information needed to understand the nature of the subject before moving on to the study of micro complex relationships. Since much of the research is aimed at describing the characteristics of schools development committees, school heads and teachers and the school infrastructure, the descriptive method survey research method is most suitable. The sample comprises of 156 respondents from 6 schools. Of these, 6 respondents are school heads, 60 are teachers and 30 are SDC members. There also 10 parent representatives per each school thus totalling 60. The survey method according to Barker *et.al* (1995:72), enables the researcher to do studies in depth and detail. The design allows the researcher to probe, prod and cajole respondents to enter the inner recesses of the individuals. Thus, the survey method creates a conducive atmosphere whereby the respondent is persuaded to say out otherwise, what he was not supposed to say out that is; what is normally deemed to be private information is released by the respondents. In order to increase validity in this research the questionnaire and interviews were used. It is assumed that the weakness of one instrument is impliedly overridden by the strengths of the others.

## RESULTS

### Did you ever receive any SDC training?

100% SDCs have indicated that they received some training on the roles and functions of SDCs. These results infer that all SDCs are now expected to be capable of carrying out their roles and functions as SDCs. If they fail it is due to other reasons and circumstances that have nothing to do with training.

### Who did the training

Table 1: Response on SDCs training facilitators

| FACILITATOR           | NUMBER OF RESPONSES | %          |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Head                  | 17                  | 57         |
| Responsible Authority | 6                   | 20         |
| Ministry Of Education | 7                   | 23         |
| Old SDC members       | 0                   | 0          |
| Donors                | 0                   | 0          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>30</b>           | <b>100</b> |

Table 1 revealed that 57% of the SDC training was done by school heads while the Ministry of Education facilitated 23% of training. A responsible authority carried out 20% of SDC training. No donors or old SDC members were involved in this process. The scenario above implies that all major stakeholders were involved in the training of SDCs. However school Heads had the upper hand followed by the Ministry and lastly the responsible authority. The information indicates that there was no balance of involvement in the training of SDCs by all stakeholders.

### The Training Duration

The chart in Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of SDC members (66%) were trained in one day. This is more of an induction course than training. SDC members cannot master all the managerial skills needed in managing schools in one day. The better trained members had a 5 day workshop and the number only constitutes 13%. The data reveals that training of SDCs is inadequate especially when one considers the level of education SDCs have.

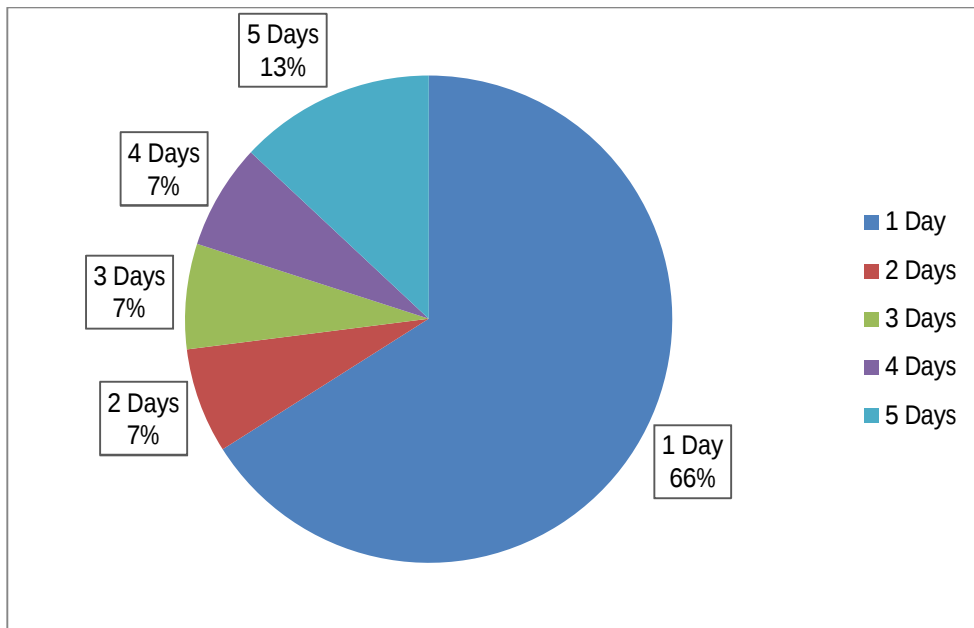


Figure 1 : Response on Training Duration

### Who does the school budget?

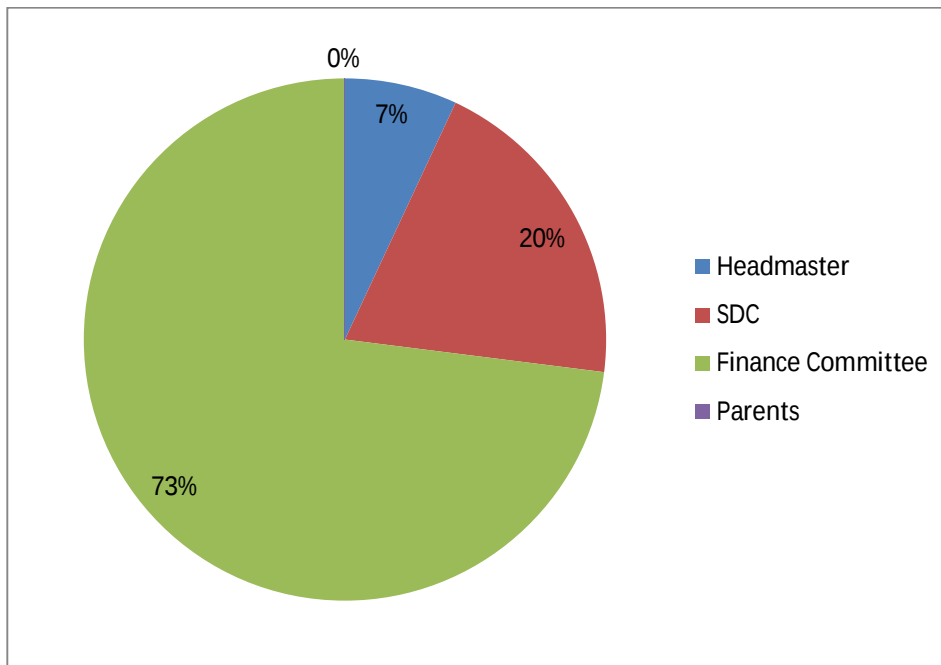


Figure 2. Budget Responses

73% of the SDC members in Figure 2 indicated that the school budget is done by the finance committee, 20% indicated that the SDC does the budget while 7% of respondents identified the head as the one who does the budget. The illustration above reveals that it is not clear amongst SDCs on who is responsible for the preparation of the school budget. The information further reveals that some SDCs are not fully versed with the Statutory Instrument of 1992 on people responsible for school budgeting. The above information is further supported by SDC interview sessions which revealed that some schools give financial guidelines while others neglected this duty.

Interviews with parents revealed that the majority were ignorant of the schools financial guidelines and only a few confirmed schools have financial guidelines on schools planning and budgeting. This implies that most SDC members in Gokwe North, Nembudziya have not been trained adequately on financial administration especially on budgeting.

#### Receipting of money is the responsibility of:

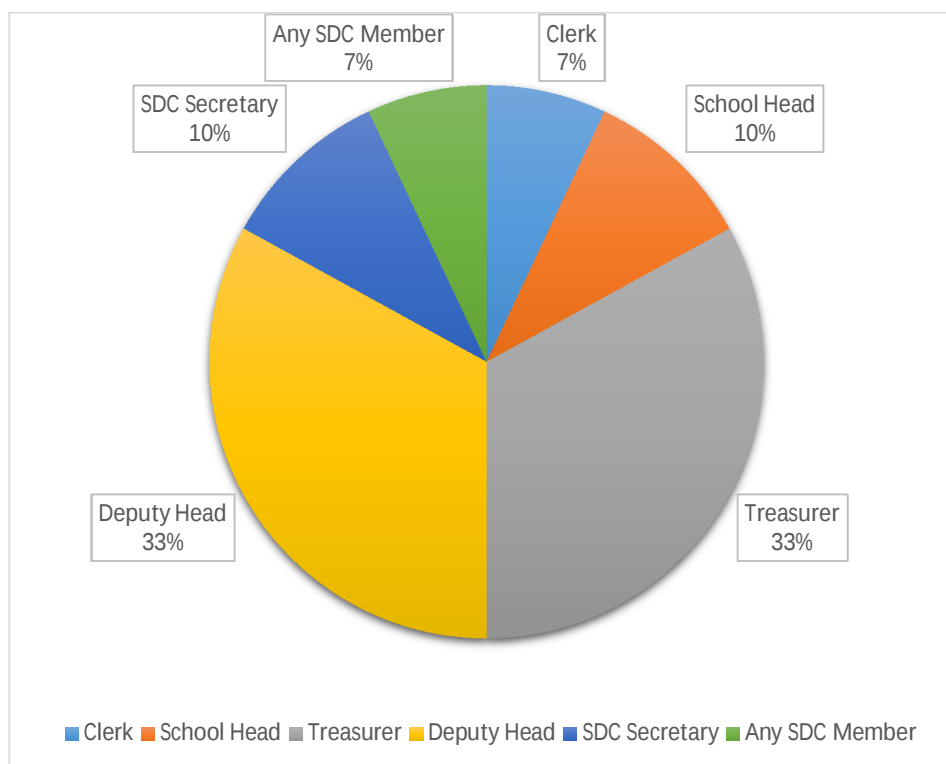
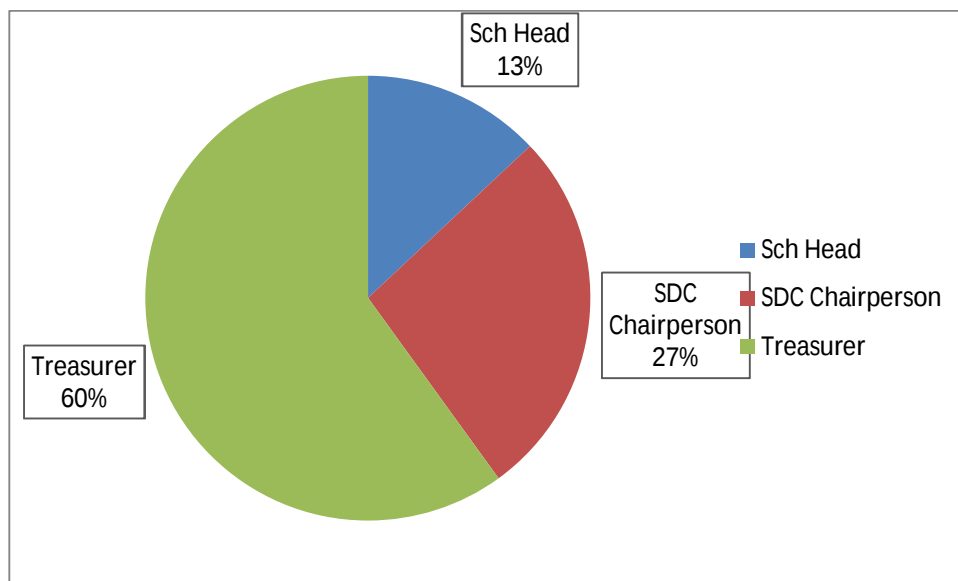


Figure 3. Receipting Responses

33% of the respondents in figure 3 said the treasurer receipts money. Another 33% said the deputy head receipts money, 10% identified the SDC secretary as one who receipts money at school, yet another 10% indicated that the head receipts money. 7% said the school clerk receipts money and another 7% said any SDC member can receipt money at the school. The interview also revealed that clerks, SDC secretaries, deputy Heads and treasurers all collected and receipted money in schools.

However, treasurers are not supposed to collect school funds. It is the duty of the school clerk and or school bursar. Villagers are also not allowed by Ministry policy to stay at school and receipt funds. Information above reveals that most SDC members in Gokwe North Schools do not know who is who when it comes to the receipting of school money.

#### Who presents the financial report at an AGM?

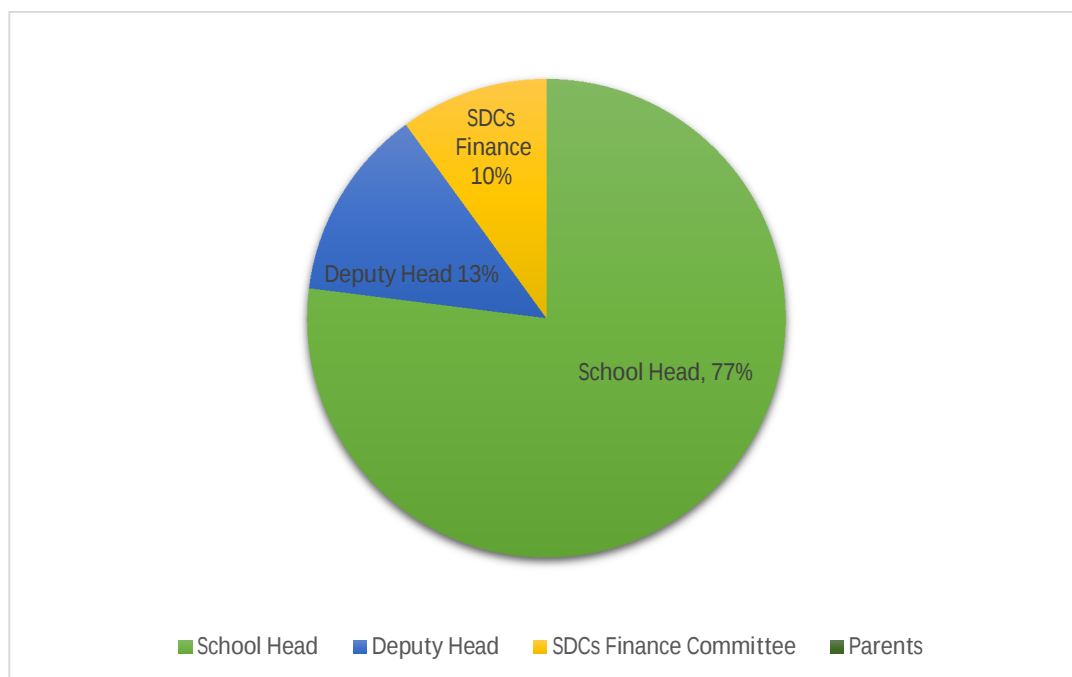


*Figure 4. Financial Report Responses*

60% of the visited schools have their financial reports presented by the treasurers. The schools are presenting their financial reports according to Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992. According to Figure 4, 27% of the schools have their financial reports presented by the SDC chairpersons and

13% presented by the school heads. Interviews revealed that heads presented financial reports because some SDC treasurers lacked the confidence to present figures to parents due to their mathematical and scientific incompetence. This reveals that not all school treasurers are conversant with school books of accounts; which is also an indication that the training given to SDC on financial administration is inadequate.

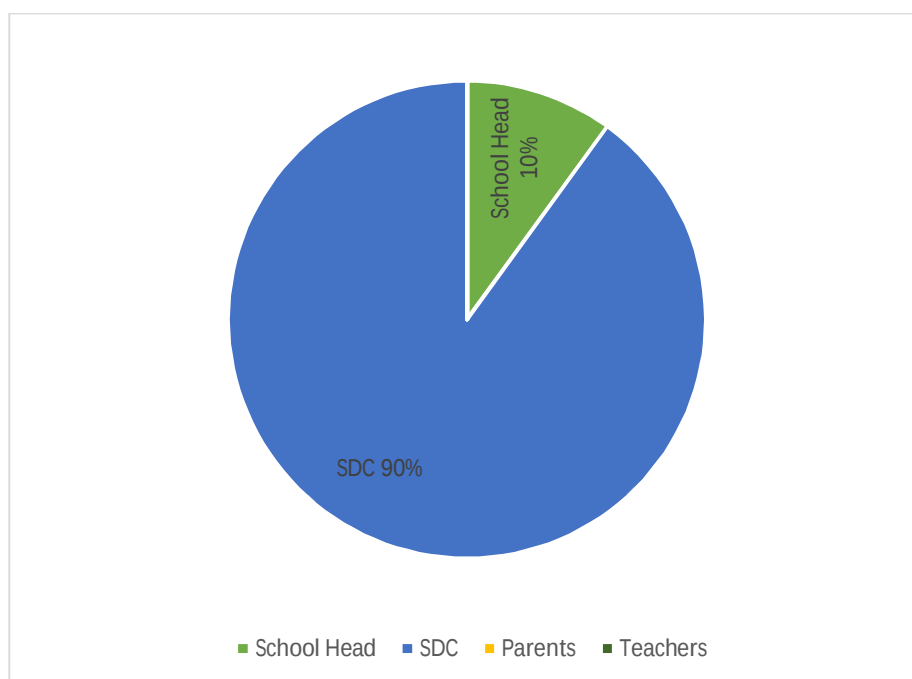
### Who supervises the school budget?



*Figure5: Budget supervision Responses*

According to figure 5, 77% of the respondents have indicated that school heads supervise the school budget, 13% indicated the deputy heads while 10% have indicated SDC finance committee as the one responsible for supervision of school budgets. This information shows that most SDC members are ignorant of who is responsible for the supervision of the school budget. This also is another indication of shortfall in training of SDCs on their roles and functions in financial management. This may be the reason why some heads are able to abuse school resources.

### **The purchase of school assets and payments of school projects is done by;**



*Figure 6: Purchase of Assets and Payments Responses*

In figure 6, 90% of the SDC members indicated that purchase of assets is done by the SDC while only 10% said the school heads carried this responsibility. No one indicated teachers or parents as asset purchasers. This implies that the majority of SDCs know who is responsible for the purchase of assets which indicates that trainings covered adequately the asset procurement procedures.

### **The SDC training equipped members with adequate skills and knowledge on the roles and functions of SDC members**

As seen in Table 2, 53% of the SDC respondents and 17% of the school heads strongly agreed that the training acquired equipped them adequately with skills and knowledge on the roles of SDC members. 37% of SDC members also agreed while 10% disagreed. Though the majority of the respondents agreed that the training has equipped them with adequate knowledge on the roles of SDC members, failure by some respondents to answer some questions positively given in this questionnaire is a clear indication that the trainings were shoddy.

Table 2: Response of proficiency of SDC training

| OPINION           | NUMBER OF RESPONSES |            |          |            |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------|----------|------------|
|                   | SDC                 | %          | Heads    | %          |
| Agree             | 11                  | 37         | 3        | 50         |
| Strongly Agree    | 16                  | 53         | 1        | 17         |
| Disagree          | 3                   | 10         | 2        | 33         |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                   | 0          | 0        | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>30</b>           | <b>100</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>100</b> |

Interviewed parents also revealed that SDCs were capable of fulfilling their roles and functions, but lacked knowledge on financial management. 50% of heads agreed that the SDC training has adequately equipped SDC members with skills and knowledge on the roles and functions of SDC members while 33% strongly disagreed. The responses given by both SDCs and Heads are similar, thus one may conclude that SDC trainings equipped SDC members with skills and knowledge for meaningful school developments to take place, but as others strongly disagreed it may indicate that the training did not cover all that is in Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992 adequately. This may also indicate that some heads might have noted some shortfalls from SDC members on their roles and functions in the committee.

### **SDCs are conversant with all books of accounts at the school**

Table 3 shows that 70% SDC members agreed, 20% strongly agreed and 10% disagreed that they are conversant with all books of accounts at the school. This implies that the majority of SDCs are capable of handling all books of accounts at the school while only a few are not capable of handling books of finance.

Table 3: Response on proficiency of the SDC with school accounting records

| OPINION | NUMBER OF RESPONSES |   |       |   |
|---------|---------------------|---|-------|---|
|         | SDC                 | % | Heads | % |

|                   |           |            |          |            |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Agree             | 21        | 70         | 2        | 33         |
| Strongly Agree    | 6         | 20         | 0        | 0          |
| Disagree          | 3         | 10         | 3        | 50         |
| Strongly Disagree | 0         | 0          | 1        | 17         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>30</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>100</b> |

However there is conflict of opinion between SDCs and school heads on this issue. Only 33% of school heads agreed, while 50% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed, that SDCs are conversant with all books of accounts. As heads are the ones who are always in contact with SDCs it may imply that the majority of SDCs are not so conversant with books of accounts at the school. After some probing during interviews, heads revealed that most SDC members cannot interpret entries into the cash books; neither can they understand or reconcile cash books at month ends. It was also revealed that the latter cannot scrutinize statements in readiness for processing payments.

**The term of office is too short and thus compromises the quality of services offered to the school by School Development Committees.**

As shown in Table 4, 46.7% of the SDC members agreed, 40% strongly agreed while 13.3% disagreed that the term of office for SDC members is too short and thus compromises the quality of services offered at the school by it. As the majority of SDC members agreed to the statement, this implies the SDCs' term of office which runs from beginning to end of year, is too short for meaningful development to take place in schools. The heads also echoed the same sentiments as 33% of the sample agreed while the remaining 67% strongly agreed that the term of office for SDCs is too short and thus compromises quality of service offered.

Table 4: Response on term of office of SDC members

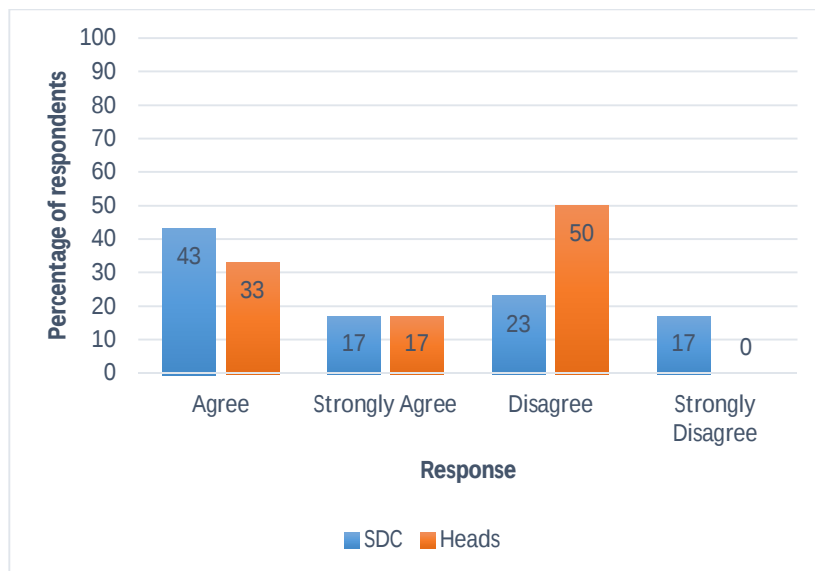
| OPINION        | NUMBER OF RESPONSES |      |       |    |
|----------------|---------------------|------|-------|----|
|                | SDC                 | %    | Heads | %  |
| Agree          | 14                  | 46.7 | 2     | 33 |
| Strongly Agree | 12                  | 40   | 4     | 67 |

|                   |           |            |          |            |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Disagree          | 4         | 13.3       | 0        | 0          |
| Strongly Disagree | 0         | 0          | 0        | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>30</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>100</b> |

Interviews revealed that the majority of parents and teachers felt that the one year term of office for SDCs was not enough for SDCs to bring about development in schools. They said the outgoing committees leave some school projects incomplete and the new members might be interested in completing the projects. Teachers commented that the term of office leads to waste of resources as new members need training annually. All these revelations are an indication that the SDC term of office needs to be reviewed upwards.

**At an AGM parents are supportive on the tabling and approval of school levies that are viable for school development projects.**

As illustrated in Figure 7, 43% SDC respondents agreed, 17% strongly agreed, 23% disagreed, 17% strongly disagreed that parents are supportive on the tabling and approval of school levies that are viable for school development. This reflects the majority of parents are supportive on the approval and tabling of school levies in Gokwe North Primary Schools. According to the opinion of SDC members only the minority of parents are not supportive. However, the scenario on the ground pertaining to school development reveals that most projects are not completed in time due to many parents who are defaulters in payment of school levies.



*Figure7: Response on parental support on tabling and approval of levies at AGMs*

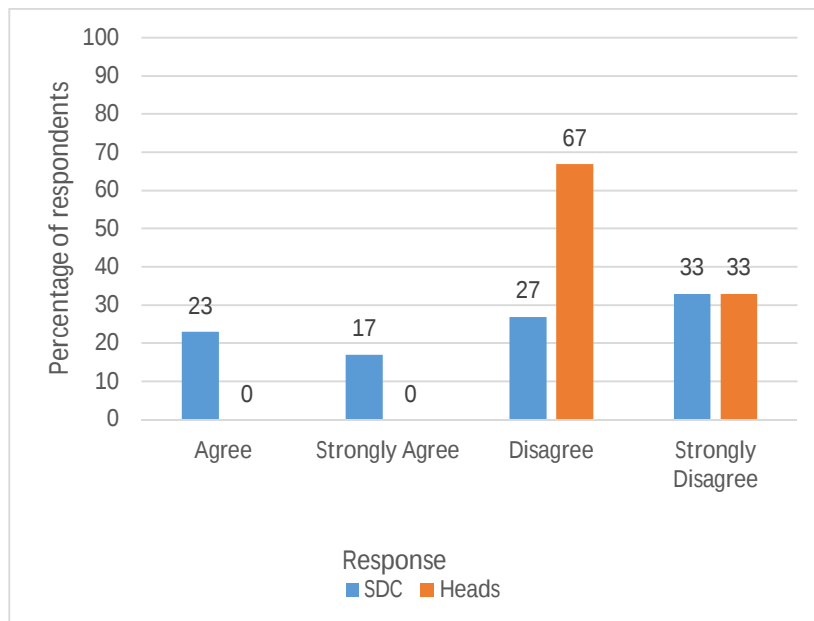
Figure 7 also indicated that 33% of heads agreed, 17% strongly agreed while the remaining 50% disagreed that the parents are supportive at AGMs. The opinions of both SDCs and heads are thus relatively similar. This implies viable levies in schools are charged, approved and supported by the majority of parents in schools. Therefore one expects meaningful development in schools in Gokwe North, Nembudziya cluster.

There is some significant progress in terms of school infrastructure development and into the procurement of learning or teaching material. Interviews with teachers revealed that parental involvement in school administration has helped a lot in the pegging and lobbying for viable levies to develop school. They cited the phasing out of pole and dagga classrooms of the 1980s which had been replaced by classrooms built of brick and corrugate iron sheets. Phasing out of hot sittings of the 1980s by provision of adequate classrooms in the 1990s, shows parental support.

There are still however, major challenges still faced due to inadequacy of parental financial support in rural schools. For example, it will be difficult to achieve a pupil to text book ratio of 1:1 with such low fees. Structures such as administration blocks and ECD will take ages to construct, worse still many parents are defaulters in payment of such low levies.

### Teachers do not value involvement of parents in the management of school development projects

As reflected in Figure 8, a total of 40% of the SDC members feel that teachers do not value parental involvement in the management of school development projects while the remaining 60% feel otherwise. This implies that parents see teachers appreciating their involvement in school projects management.



*Figure 8: Response on teacher's lack of regard of parental involvement in schools projects management*

On the other hand 67% of the heads disagreed while 33% strongly disagreed that teachers do not value the involvement of parents in the management of school development projects. The scenario above reflects that all heads view teachers valuing the involvement of parents in the management of school projects. This implies that teachers realise that for school projects to be implemented effectively in schools parents should be involved in their management.

Interviews with teachers revealed that involvement of SDCs was most esteemed as they offered teachers a partnership with parents in the education of the child. SDCs create a platform where schools get to understand what parents can afford for school development projects, which gives teachers the opportunity to manage school resources together with parents. Teachers also

revealed that parental involvement brings about transparency between the school and the community. Therefore, the implication is that parental involvement in the management of school projects must remain in schools.

### **There is a conflict of authority between SDC chairperson and school head**

Table 5 indicates that 17% of the school heads agreed that there is conflict of authority between the school heads and SDC chairpersons. However, 33% disagreed and a further 50% strongly disagreed with this. The information portrays a conflict of authority exists in a third of schools in Gokwe North, hence the need for training and retraining of SDCs as well as school heads.

Table 5: Is there a conflict of authority between SDC chairpersons and the school head

| <b>OPINION</b>    | <b>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</b> |            |              |            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
|                   | <b>SDC</b>                 | <b>%</b>   | <b>Heads</b> | <b>%</b>   |
| Agree             | 4                          | 13         | 1            | 17         |
| Strongly Agree    | 5                          | 17         | 0            | 0          |
| Disagree          | 13                         | 43         | 2            | 33         |
| Strongly Disagree | 8                          | 27         | 3            | 50         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>30</b>                  | <b>100</b> | <b>6</b>     | <b>100</b> |

Table 6: Heads opinion on the hindrance of school projects by teacher-SDC conflicts

| <b>Opinion</b>    | <b>Number of heads</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Agree             | 3                      | 50         |
| Strongly Agree    | 3                      | 50         |
| Disagree          | 0                      | 0          |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                      | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>6</b>               | <b>100</b> |

As seen in Table 6, all the school heads agreed (50% strongly) that conflict between SDCs and teachers hinders the progress of school development projects. This means the training of SDCs

must cover all areas pertaining to conflict triggers and how they can be avoided. There is thus need for retraining of SDC members and school heads.

**“As a head I feel parents should not be involved in school development management as SDCs.”**

Table7: Head’s response on whether parents should be involved in school administration

| <b>Opinion</b>    | <b>Number of Responses</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Agree             | 0                          | 0          |
| Strongly Agree    | 0                          | 0          |
| Disagree          | 1                          | 17         |
| Strongly Disagree | 5                          | 83         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>6</b>                   | <b>100</b> |

Table 7 shows that the heads generally disagreed that parents should be left out of school administration. As illustrated, 17% disagreed while 83% strongly disagreed with this.

**It is the school Head who makes his/her administration plan for development of the school and the SDCs simply rubber stamps**

There were ranging opinions on whether or not the head makes the administration plan for school development with the SDC simply being rubber stamps. 13% of SDC members strongly agreed while 20% disagreed with 66.7% that strongly disagreed with this.

Table 8: Response on whether or not the head makes plans and just uses SDCs as rubber stamps

| <b>Opinion</b>    | <b>No of Responses from SDCs</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| Agree             | 0                                | 0          |
| Strongly Agree    | 4                                | 13.3       |
| Disagree          | 6                                | 20         |
| Strongly Disagree | 20                               | 66.7       |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>30</b>                        | <b>100</b> |

From the information in table 8, it is likely there are some school heads who make their administration plans for development and present them to SDCs for adoption as there are 13.3% respondents who strongly agreed. The bulk of school Heads work together with school development committees in making administration plans for development of the school. There is still need for retraining of school heads and SDCs.

Interviews with parents also revealed that there are some heads who make their school plans alone and make SDCs adopt them. However it seems the majority of heads make school plans together with SDCs. The majority of interviewed SDC members confirmed that they work together with school heads at a meeting to come out with a school plan.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study has revealed that all heads in Nembudziya cluster are qualified teachers and have substantive grades as school heads. The study has also revealed that 50% of heads have experience of between 16–20 years as school heads and the least experienced (35%) have a range of 11–15 years' experience and this constitutes. The vast experience the school heads have is likely to make one believe that they must be effective in the implementation of school programmes and schools development projects included. All things being equal these heads are supposed to excel school programmes and projects to greater heights. Conversely the study has revealed that there is a high staff turnover on the part SDCs. 70% of SDCs are voted out of office before they attain 2 years of experience. This leads to waste of resources as most time and money is invested in training the 70% SDCs who would have been voted in and only to be dumped the next coming year.

The article has also revealed that all SDCs have been trained in their roles and functions as SDCs. What is alarming is the training duration of 2 days to 5 days. 66% of SDCs have one day training and 7% have 2 days training. What can one learn from such type of training which is too short a duration? The trainings are more of an induction than real training. Failure by some SDCs to answer some questions correctly in the questionnaire has also exposed that most SDCs are not conversant with their roles and functions as articulated by Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992.

The article further revealed that the competence in handling school books of accounts by SDCs is questionable. Interviews with heads and SDCs revealed that the bulk of the latter in Gokwe North cannot read, extract and interpret information from a cash book correctly. The SDCs rely heavily on heads and deputy heads on management of books of accounts and presentation of financial reports at AGMs; a scenario subject to embezzlement of funds by whoever is handling them.

The article revealed a 100% consensus of appreciation amongst school heads, teachers, SDCs and parents that establishment of school development committees in schools is a noble thing that should remain in schools. All stakeholders said SDCs create a platform where school link with the community and vice versa. However, the study exposed that SDC members' term of office was too short a period for meaningful development to take place. 100% of school heads said the term of office should be revised upwards and all the teachers said the term of office must be revisited. 56.7% of SDCs also indicated that the term of office was not enough for meaningful projects. School heads and teachers said that the term of office for SDCs leads to waste of resources in training SDC members annually. As has been revealed earlier on 70% SDCs are voted out of office with only a single term in office.

Finally all interviewed persons in this questionnaire have sited the following problems which SDCs face in the running of school business;

- (a) Lack of funds to construct buildings
- (b) Lack of relevant financial knowledge and skills in handling school finances
- (c) Lack of cooperation from parents in paying levies in time
- (d) Conflicts of authority between school heads and SDCs

## **CONCLUSION**

All interested parties in this article, that is the Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture, school responsible authorities and school heads; do not treat the orientation and training of SDCs with the weightiness it deserves. In-service and training workshops for SDCs are haphazardly done. There are no clear cut guidelines on the number of workshops one has to attend in order to fully master their roles and function as an SDC member. The 1–5 day workshops and training

given to SDCs are insufficient for them to acquire enough knowledge and skills in the running of school development programmes. The bulk of SDCs, 66%, attended a one day training workshop. Definitely, this falls far too short a training to enable the school development committees to master the real dictates and requirements of SDCs in the handling of school development programmes. Finance Management for example cannot be mastered in a one day workshop.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

All stakeholders involved in the in-servicing and training of SDCs should take the training exercise seriously. There should be a balance of training of SDCs done by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, school heads and the responsible authority. All stakeholders should be workshop facilitators and work as a team. Thus on the day of training, all should be present to avoid misinformation of newly elected SDC members by either one of the stakeholders.

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