

Acrimony or Harmony? The Case of Relations Between Mother Schools and their Satellite Schools in a Selected District in Masvingo Province

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated the emergence of a new type of school that was ushered by the land reform in Zimbabwe. The new schools which are termed satellite schools were attached to established schools. By virtue of having a satellite school attached to the established school, the later was termed the mother schools. This study unpacks the relationship between the mother schools and their satellite schools in a selected district. The study was guided two research questions; How do mother schools relate with their satellite schools? Why are mother schools engaging with satellite schools in these particular ways? The study purposively sampled five mother school heads and five satellite school heads. Data for the study was generated through key informant interviews. This paper established that the relationship between mother schools and satellite schools had elements of both acrimony and harmony in a selected district. The relationship between the mother school schools and satellite schools was influenced by the responsible authority, enrolment of the mother school, the distance between the mother school and the satellite school as well as social capital. From the findings of this study, the government is recommended to draw a policy guiding the setting-up of satellite schools as well as their interaction with their mother schools.

Keywords: Satellite schools, mother schools, acrimony, harmony, Masvingo province, Zimbabwe

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A plethora of studies have analysed the land reform in Zimbabwe leading to the emergence of a number of perspectives. Among the perspectives that emerged include the political, economic, human rights perspectives which have negated implications of the land reform on education. The major implication of land reform on education entails the emergence of satellite schools. The advent of the land reform in Zimbabwe at the turn of the 21st century has been accompanied by a new type of school in the education system. The land reform led to a demand for schools among other social services in the areas affected by the land reform. The Zimbabwean government redistributed white-owned commercial farms to the landless black

majority from the year 2000. The redistribution of land from the commercial white farmers to the landless majority resulted in a demand for schools in these former commercial farms. The provision of education services in the former commercial farms led to the establishment of satellite schools.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The satellite school phenomenon is relatively undeveloped due to its nexus with the land reform in Zimbabwe. The demand for education in these former commercial farms necessitated the establishment of new schools known as 'satellite schools' (Langa 2012; Hlupo & Tsikira 2012; Mutema 2012; Tarisayi 2015). Hlupo and Tsikira (2012, p. 604) define a satellite school as a, "budding school operating under the auspices of a well-established mother school". Mutema (2012, p. 102) aver that, "previously there were no schools around commercial farms as white farmers had very small families and they either drove their children to schools far away from their farms or sent them to boarding schools." The redistribution of these former commercial farms to the landless led to a demand for social services in general and schools in particular. Thus, the argument in this paper that the advent of land reform gave birth to the mushrooming of satellite schools in and around the former commercial farms. Tarisayi (2015, p. 303) revealed, "that the advent of land reform in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 has had a profound impact across the socio-political landscapes including education." The satellite schools were a product of the realisation that there was a need to provide education to the children of land reform beneficiaries on the new farms. Satellite schools can be viewed as extensions of the already established nearby school for administrative purposes (Mavundutse, Munetsi, Mamvuto, Mavhunga, Kangai and Gatsi, 2012). The satellite school phenomenon can be viewed in the same light as the establishment of rural day secondary schools in Zimbabwe in the 1980s just after independence to address demand for secondary education in the rural areas. However, satellite schools were peculiar in that there were linked to mother schools at their inception. Hence, previous studies have basically focused on conceptualizing satellite schools without necessarily unpacking their relationship with their mother schools.

The staff of the satellite schools were drawn from the mother schools and thus appeared on the pay sheet of the mother school. In addition, the satellite schools utilized the examination centres at their mother schools for external examinations such as Grade 7 and Ordinary Level examinations. Therefore, satellite schools can be viewed as apparently an extension of the mother schools. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education avers that there are 1796 satellite schools in Zimbabwe (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education 2015). Discourse on the satellite schools in Zimbabwe is still in its infancy. An emerging thread on satellite schools discourse views satellite schools as a product of the land reform (Mutema 2012). Whereas, other emerging themes on satellite schools have been on the challenges faced by satellite schools (Mavundutse et al. 2012; Tarisayi 2015) as well as comparative studies on the performance of mother schools and their respective satellite schools (Hlupo & Tsikira 2012). Tarisayi (2017) established the social capital influences of land reform beneficiaries on satellite schools in Zimbabwe. Tarisayi and Manik (forthcoming) studied the contribution of social

networks to a selected satellite school. Studies on satellite schools have negated to interrogate the relationship between mother schools and their satellite schools despite the apparent fact that these schools are linked. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this vacuum and contribute to the emerging discourse on satellite schools in Zimbabwe.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was guided by two critical questions; How do mother schools relate with their satellite schools? Why are mother schools engaging with satellite schools in these particular ways? In pursuance of these critical research questions the researcher adopted a case study approach. Yin (2003, p. 01) states, “in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Thus, the researcher studied the relationship between mother schools and their respective satellite schools in their real-life context. The researcher purposively sampled five mother school heads and their respective satellite school heads from a population of 95 mother schools and their respective satellite schools in Masvingo province. Data was generated through key informant interviews with ten purposively selected school heads, five mother school heads and five satellite school heads. Maxwell (2001) states that the key informant interviews are in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community. Thus, the school heads who participated in this study were selected because of their knowledge of the interaction between mother schools and satellite schools in Masvingo province. In addition, key informant interviews provide a way of generating data by asking key informants to talk about the relationship between mother schools and their respective satellite (Miller and Brewer 2003).

3.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

3.1 CODES USED IN THIS STUDY

CODE	EXPLANATION
MS1	Mission (Church) owned mother school 1
MS2	Mission (church) owned mother school 2
CS1	Council-owned mother school 1
CS2	Council-owned mother school 2
CS3	Council-owned mother school 3
SMS1	Satellite of Mission (Church) owned mother school 1
SMS2	Satellite of Mission (church) owned mother school 2
SCS1	Satellite of Council-owned mother school 1
SCS2	Satellite of Council-owned mother school 2
SCS3	Satellite of Council-owned mother school 3

Table 3.1 Codes used for the participants in this study (Field data: 2016)

Table 3.1 above captures the codes that were assigned by the researcher for the participants in this study. The researcher’s codes in this study can be classified as setting/ context codes as suggested by Bogan and Biklen (1992). The codes captured the responsible authority of the participant schools in this study. For example, MS1 refers to a mother school that is owned and

ran by the church, also known as a mission school. The researcher captured the actual words of the participants in italics.

3.2 HARMONY

This study established that there was a harmonious relationship between the mother schools and satellite schools in the selected district as revealed by the participants in this study. The school heads of MS1 and MS2 revealed that they had supplied building materials for the construction of the first classroom block at their satellite schools respectively. The head of MS1, a mission school revealed, *“We provided all the building materials for the first classroom block our satellite school. The church took it upon itself to support this initiative”*. This was also concurred by the head of the recipient satellite. The head of the recipient school, SMS1 revealed, *“Our mother school has been our pillar. MS1 has provided building material for our first block. All that was left for us is to provide labour for the construction of the classroom block”*. Thus, from the contribution by the participants in this study it can be noted that the relationship between mother schools and satellite schools can be characterized as a partnership. In addition, the participants in the semi-structured interviews also extended the partnership to donating furniture, textbooks and sports equipment and uniforms. The heads of SMS1, SMS2, SCS1 and SCS2 revealed that they were provided with core textbooks and furniture by their mother schools. Hence, it can be argued that the relationship between mother schools and their satellite schools can be regarded as a partnership. Therefore, the satellite schools can be viewed as benefiting from their mother schools. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of a satellite school by Hlupo and Tsikira (2012, p. 604) as, *“a budding school operating under the auspices of a well-established mother school”*. Thus, it can be argued from this study that the mother schools provided a launch pad for the satellite schools in the selected district.

3.3 ACRIMONY

The study also noted that the relationship between the mother schools and satellite schools was characterized by acrimony. The heads of the satellite schools, CSC1, SCS2 and SCS3 revealed that there was acrimony between their respective schools and their mother schools. SCS1 head averred, *“Our mother school seems threatened by our very existence and let alone our success”*. This was concurred by CSC2 head, *“Our mother poaches our talented pupils, be it athletics, soccer or netball. They accept pupils from our school without proper clearance”*. Whereas, the head of CSC3 further revealed, *“Science teachers are a bit of a challenge these days. Our mother school recently took our Science teacher”*. Thus, this study established that there was competition between these newly established satellite schools and their well-established mother school. The head of one the mother schools, CS1 acknowledged that, *“It’s natural that the community compares us and our satellite school. We are then forced to make sure whatever we do, be it sports or academics, we must fare better than our satellite school”*. Hence, this finding supports the findings from a comparative study of mother and satellite schools in Mwenezi district by Hlupo and Tsikira (2012). Therefore, it can be argued from this

study that due to the competition there were acrimonious relations between the mother schools and their satellite schools in the selected district.

4.0 REASONS FOR THE MOTHER SCHOOL’S ENGAGEMENT WITH SATELLITE SCHOOLS

4.1 RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY

This study on the relationship between mother schools and their satellite schools in Zimbabwe established that the ‘responsible authority’ places a crucial part in the engagement of a mother school and its satellite school. According to the Education Act, Chapter 25:04, ‘responsible authority’ in relation to or a school, means the person, body or organization responsible for the establishment and management of the school. The schools which participated in this study had different responsible authorities. There were two mother schools, MS1 and MS2 and their respective satellite schools, SMS1 and SMS2 which had churches as their responsible authorities. Whereas, three mother schools, coded CS1, CS2 and CS3 as well as their satellite schools had the local government or council as their responsible authority. A bulk of non-government schools in Zimbabwe are owned by Rural District Councils, which are corporate bodies. These schools are some of the most disadvantaged in terms of facilities and the human resources (Nziramasanga, 1999, p. 42). The head of MS1 revealed that, *“The church is supporting and encouraging our efforts at our satellite school”*. As has already been revealed in the study (Section 3) that church schools are in partnership with their satellite schools as compared to council schools. This was aptly revealed by the donation of building materials to satellite schools by MS1 and MS2. Hence, it can be argued that satellite schools with mother schools which are church-owned are benefiting greatly from benevolent relations. Whereas, mother schools controlled by rural district councils are not as benevolent to their satellite schools. Therefore, it can be extrapolated from this study’s findings that churches through their well-established schools are supporting satellite schools as compared to the local government authority.

4.2 ENROLMENT AND SIZE OF THE MOTHER SCHOOL

According to this study the relationship between the mother school and its satellite school is also influenced by the school’s enrolment and size. The enrolments of the mother schools which participated in this study are captured in Table 4.1 below.

SCHOOL	ENROLMENT
MS1	1200
MS2	1400
CS1	376
CS2	330
CS3	147

Field Data: 2006

The statistics shown in Table 4.1 above can be utilized to buttress the argument that well-established schools with high enrolment numbers are more supportive of their satellite schools. This finding concurs with the contribution by the head of CS1 who revealed that mother schools are compared with their satellite schools by the community. Thus, it follows that the mother

schools with smaller enrolments feel threatened by the establishment of satellite schools, hence their rivalry. In addition, mother schools with larger enrolment have more resources at their disposal to support their satellite schools. Furthermore, despite being well-established the mother schools are struggling to attract more pupils. Therefore, it follows that the establishment of satellite schools within the vicinity of the mother schools reduces their catchment area. The effect of enrolment on relations was aptly revealed by the rivalry between mother school CS3 and its satellite school SCS3 which has an enrolment of 147 while its satellite school has an enrolment of 184. The satellite school has outgrown the mother school in terms of enrolment and ultimately resources at its disposal therefore exacerbating the rivalry between the two schools.

4.3 DISTANCE BETWEEN MOTHER SCHOOL AND SATELLITE SCHOOL

The relationship between mother schools and satellite schools is also a determining factor in the relationship between schools studied in this study. The participants in this study revealed that the shorter the distance between the mother school and its satellite school the greater their rivalry. The heads of mother schools, CS1, CS2 and CS3 revealed that if the satellite schools are located within a radius of 5km it increases rivalry. The rivalry according to this study emanates from the satellite school being established within what used to be the mother schools' catchment area. In addition, being in proximity also implies pupils, parents and community have the option of enrolling at the mother school or satellite school. Therefore, the growth and prosperity of the satellite school has direct implications on the enrolment of the mother school due to proximity. Proximity can be argued to imply that the mother schools and satellite schools instead of working together towards the growth of the later they end up competing for pupils for survival to a greater extent.

4.4 SOCIAL CAPITAL

The other emerging theme from this study pertains to the role of the social capital in the interaction between the mother schools and satellite schools. Woolcock (2001, p. 02) avers that, "social capital refers to the norms and networks that facilitate collective action". The participants in this study revealed that the relationship between the mother schools and their satellite school was a product of the social networks between the head, teachers and parents of the two schools. These social networks, which this researcher view as social capital determine to a greater extent how the two schools interact. Despite the apparent rivalry between some of the mother schools and their satellite schools that participated in this study, the participants revealed that there were networks between staff and parents of the schools which are beneficial to the satellite schools. Therefore, it can be argued that the relationship between a mother school and its satellite school is influenced by social capital.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper concludes that mother schools and satellite schools relate through both harmony and acrimony. There was both acrimonious and harmonious relations between mother schools and their satellite schools in the selected district. The relationship between the mother school

schools and satellite schools was influenced by the responsible authority, enrolment of the mother school, the distance between the mother school and the satellite school as well as social capital. The study further revealed that church managed schools were more supportive to the satellite schools as compared to council managed schools. From the findings of this study, the government and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education are recommended to draw a policy guiding the setting-up of satellite schools as well as their interaction with their mother schools. In addition, responsible authorities such as rural district councils should provide resources for the establishment of satellite schools. Finally, the education sector should ensure the early registration of satellite schools so that they stop relying on their mother schools.

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