

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Addressing Cultural and Religious Intolerance for Effective Teaching, Learning and Peace of the Primary School Children in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Gweru District Schools, Zimbabwe

Thondhlana Saiden

Lecturer, Department of Educational Studies, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Dr. Makawa James D.

Higher Degrees Supervisor, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Abstract:

The study was aimed at establishing the effect of religion and culture on effective teaching, learning and peace. The study was qualitative and used a case study design. The study was informed by ethnography. The sample for the study consisted of 140 teachers, 120 primary school children, 20 heads of schools, 1 District school inspector and 2 conflict resolution experts. The respondents were conveniently chosen in the mean while conflict resolution experts were chosen by snowballing. The findings were that ethnocentrism and xenocentrism was rampant negatively affecting effective teaching, learning and peace in the primary schools. It was also found out there was no religious and cultural appreciation impacting negatively on teaching, learning and peace fundamentalism also exists. It was recommended interalia that multicultural education and interfaithism be introduced in the primary school system.

Keywords: *Ethnocentrism, xenocentrism, teaching, learning, peace, multiculturalism, inter-faithism*

1. Introduction

Conflict in any organisation is inevitable (Sellman, 2003; Kreitner and Kinicki, 1997; Jandt, 1985; Deutsch, 1993). Ferguson(1977) points out that multiple ideas and beliefs result in conflict because of the production of opposing actions and vehicles. Conflict among primary school children (and even among teachers) usually arises due to their different cultural and religious backgrounds (Moix, 2006). When conflict is resolved well, research has shown this leads to effective teaching, learning and peace in the primary schools (Sellman, 2003). Culture and religion play a positive role if multiculturalism and inter-faithism are instituted in the school system (McGettrick, 2005; Mason, 2015; Ngara and Chang, 1985). Culture and Religion play a negative role when opposing aspects of these are upheld.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe stipulates that children have their rights and they should not be discriminated against due to their gender, language, culture, religion, class, tribe, or social status (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). The Constitution calls for multiculturalism and inter-faithism in Zimbabwe primary schools. These two aspects seem to be lacking in the Zimbabwe school system for there have been calls to Africanise the school curriculum (Mavhunga, 2006), to introduce the teaching and learning of African Traditional medicine and culture in the school curriculum (Kazembe, 2010), incorporation of both African Culture and Western culture in the curriculum (Ngara and Chung, 1985) and incorporation of the indigenous knowledge system in the school curriculum (Matsika, 2012). Further, to multiculturalism and inter-faithism Manson (2005) advocates for a rights-based approach to diversity in schools to maintain unity.

A study of the primary school Religious and moral education (RME) curriculum undertaken in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe by Marashe, Ndamba and Chireshe (2009) revealed that the RME curriculum was predominantly Christianity. Xenocentrism and ethnocentrism is present in the Zimbabwe primary schools as reported in the Sunday News, July 15 (2014); Standard, June 29 (2014) and Nehanda Radio, July 22 (2014).

Finally the researcher's experience as a teacher and a head of primary schools in Shurugwi and Mberegwa Districts for twenty-two years made him aware of the existence of xenocentrism and ethnocentrism in schools in the districts.

2. Statement of the Problem

Ethnocentrism and xenocentrism are rampant in Zimbabwean primary schools. Christianity and the dominant culture in communities are dominating the Religious and Moral Education curriculum at primary school level and relationships in the communities compromising effective learning, teaching and peace in the schools. The main research question is "How are xenocentrism and ethnocentrism influencing conflict resolution in the Primary schools in Gweru District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe and how can these be rectified?"

2.1. Research Sub-problems

The research sub-problems that led to the answering of the main research question were:

1. To what extent does xenocentrism affect conflict resolution in Gweru District primary schools?
2. To what extent does ethnocentrism affect conflict resolution in Gweru District primary schools?
3. How can conflict resolution be influenced positively through culture and religion in Gweru District primary schools?

3. Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at establishing how Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism influenced conflict resolution in the primary schools in Zimbabwe. It also aimed at the establishment of how Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism could be addressed so that there could be effective learning, teaching and peace in the primary schools.

4. Significance of the Study

The study was significant to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education policy makers and Curriculum designers in that they would discover how Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism affected effective teaching, learning and peace therefore, take corrective action. The study was also significant to Heads of schools and teachers in the primary schools in that they would be made aware of Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism and how they affect conflict resolution and how these could be eradicated to facilitate effective learning, teaching and peace.

The study was significant as well to the pupils in that their learning, teaching and peace would be facilitated because of the existence of a peaceable atmosphere. The parents were also to benefit in that they would learn ways of addressing Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism that causes divisions in their communities and hence affect the unity of community members.

5. Limitations of the Study

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

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

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

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

6. Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to primary schools in the Gweru District of the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Only participants from schools that could be accessed were invited to participate. The study focused on the effects of Xenocentrism and Ethnocentrism on conflict resolution in the primary schools and ways of eradicating them.

7. Ethical and Legal Considerations

The researcher took into consideration ethical and legal considerations of protection of subjects from harm, the right to privacy, the issue of informed consent, the issue of avoiding deception and the right of participants to participate freely. The above issues were pointed out by Merriam (2009) as important issues to be taken care of in every study.

8. Review of Related Literature

In reviewing related literature the following reviews are made; conceptual framework, theoretical framework and reviews of empirical literature.

8.1. Conceptual Framework

Quite a number of concepts have to be clarified so that the study results are understood. The terms that require clarification are; conflict; conflict resolution; teaching, learning, peace, ethnocentrism, xenocentrism, culture and religion, multiculturalism and inter-faithism.

8.1.1. Conflict

Rue and Byars (2003, p.285) view conflict as “an overt behaviour that results when an individual or group of individuals think a perceived need of the individual or group has been blocked or is about to be blocked”. This definition stresses the importance of basic needs like physiological needs, security needs, social needs, self-esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1991). Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995, p.539) are of the view that conflict involves “a disagreement about allocation of scarce resources or a clash of goals, status, values, perceptions or personalities. In the same vein Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2010) views conflict as happening when there is a disagreement about issues. Tumbo and Moyo (2013) define conflict as an absence of peace which involves fighting among people or groups and some misunderstandings among people or parties.

8.1.2. Conflict Resolution

Lam, (1988) contend that conflict resolution aims to end conflict before it starts to lead to physical fighting. Bamboo, Web Dictionary (2006) contend that conflict resolution is the process of resolving a dispute by providing each sides needs and adequately addressing their interests so that they are satisfied with the outcome.

8.1.3. Teaching

Teaching are those systematic activities by which the teacher helps pupils to learn to do certain things that will help them cope with and improve their environment (Mpopfu, 1994). Teaching, therefore, include imparting knowledge, skills, inducing learning, indoctrinating and conditioning.

8.1.4. Learning

Learning is seen by Weithen (2005) as a relatively durable change in behaviour or knowledge that is due to experience. The change of behaviour may be shown in either the way a person thinks, acts or feels (Mwamwenda, 1995).

8.1.5. Peace

Peace means adopting non-destructive ways to settle conflict and to live in harmony (Abebe, Gbesso and Nyawalo, 2006).

8.1.6. Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism implies viewing and interpreting reality only in terms of one's cultural beliefs and values (Gwirayi, 2010).

8.1.7. Xenocentrism

Xenocentrism means looking at reality in terms of other people's cultural beliefs and values and having total disregard of one's culture (Gwirayi, 2010).

8.1.8. Culture and Religion

Culture is the whole way of life of people and religion is part of culture (Gwirayi, 2010). Religion is made up of three areas namely: beliefs and values, religious leaders and followers and social institutions and networks (Moix, 2006). Culture consists of language, symbols and artefacts, interaction patterns and shared values, beliefs, norms and expectations (Gwirayi, 2010).

8.1.9. Multi-cultural Education

Abdulla (2009, p. 160) contends that multi-cultural education refers to the learning of cultures and other differences which include race, ethnicity, religion and so forth. Through this type of education children should develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills related to the respect and appreciation of different cultural differences.

8.1.10. Inter-faithism

Inter-faithism means people of different faiths learning about faiths different from theirs to respect and appreciate other faiths (Moix, 2006).

8.2. Theoretical Framework

The study is premised on ethnography particularly cultural analysis. Ethnography means writing about people (Goldburd and Husler, 2005 p.26). The distinctive features of ethnography revolve around the notion that people are meaning makers and an understanding of how people their worlds and the need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and which they both construct and utilize is necessary (Goldburd and Husler, 2005). People are seen as collaborating in the construction and maintenance of cultural meanings which inform their actions.

8.3. Empirical Literature Review

A multiplicity of literature attests to how culture and religion could lead to effective conflict resolution in schools. Religion can lead to conflict resolution if a multi-faith approach is adhered to (McGettrick, 2005; Manson, 2005; Barker and Anderson, 2005; Moix 2006). Christian schools should contribute to unifying people through teaching love, care and compassion, an appreciation of beauty and service to others (McGettrick, 2005). There is need for schools to practice the study of not only one religion but the world's religions as is the case in Scotland for the 5 – 14 year olds and that the school should promote unity of spiritualities and feeling among different faith groups (McGettrick, 2005). McGettrick, also argues for the exploration of common themes common issues, common practices and common beliefs. Fundamentalism, it is argued, will not promote harmony, peace and equality. Fundamentalism entails views being held with conviction and passion that is ideas, beliefs and practices which are contrary to the common good.

Manson (2005) advises that schools should adopt a rights based approach to diversity in schools. This, Manson states, would be taking the humanist view / principles rather than a religious view. The humanist principle requires concern for the common good and commitment to human rights. This entails also shared human values and mutual respect. Manson (2005) also suggests that if faith schools do not promote inclusivity. They have to be done away with.

Barker and Anderson (2005) point out that there exists an inter-faith education centre in Bradford in England that provides multi-faith activities including religious assemblies. The Centre aims at promoting friendship by encouraging children to reflect on these

fundamentally different beliefs and how they can embark on point action to create a cohesive community in the context of plurality. In the United States of America, Totterdell (2005) reveals that Horace Mann advocated for a common school including the inculcation of Christian morals where the Bible was used but its use confined to portions of portions of the Bible agreeable to all sects.

With regard to the effect of the predominant religion in the community around the school, Moix (2006) advances three areas of religion that could make religion aid conflict resolution or not. These three are religion as beliefs and values, religion as leaders and followers and religion as social institutions and networks. Beliefs and values can cause serious conflict when there are salient religious traditions or beliefs in the society or community that they tend to override other religions and when religious teachings expressed by those in conflict tend to influence discussions and behaviour of those in conflict. If religious beliefs and values respected in the society encourage constructive conflict resolution and of religious negatives or teaching provide for a move away from violence or provide for peaceful settlement, religion could be serving a conflict resolution function (Moix, 2006).

If the religious leaders and followers are actively involved in fanning conflict, then conflict could escalate. If leaders help to counter conflict and if they have resources that could help in mitigation and resolution of religious conflict, religion will be aiding conflict resolution (Moix, 2006). The religious institutions and organisations or social structures could fan conflict leading to its escalation. On the other hand, if the institutions and their structures are positively involved in conflict resolution then religion could lead to conflict escalation (Moix, 2006).

In Zimbabwe, there is evidence that religions like African Traditional Religion are looked down upon Marashe, Ndamba and Chireshe (2009) found out that African Traditional Religion was neglected and very little was done to remedy the situation. The syllabus at junior level was found to be Christocentric and textbooks were found to be based towards Christianity. The researcher recommended revision of Grade 3 -7 resource books, an incorporation of traditional stories, poems and drama and inclusion of African Traditional items in the examination.

Matsika (2012) has shown how erosion of African culture during colonialism in Zimbabwe has led to divisions. Matsika (2012) and Ngara and Chung (1985) argue that there would be less division in Zimbabwe if good values and beliefs from the western culture and African culture were taught in schools implying multiculturalism.

Nairaland forum, June 23 (2015) reports of the Apostolic Faith in Gwanda resisting immunisation at school because of religious beliefs which do not accept immunisation. This causes conflict between the religious sects and school authorities.

Culture is affected by ethnocentrism, Xenocentrism and cultural relativism (Gwirayi, 2010). Ethnocentrism implies viewing and interpreting reality only in terms of one's cultural beliefs and values. In Zimbabwe there are reports of an uproar against Shona speaking teachers in Ndebele primary schools because parents and officials argue that they do not know the language and the culture of the Ndebele people (Sunday News, July 15, 2014); Standard, June 29, 2014; Nehanda Radio, July 22, 2014). Xenocentrism means looking at reality in terms of other cultural beliefs and values and having a total disregard one's culture while cultural relativism implies studying and appreciating other people's cultures. In Zimbabwe, Xenocentrism might manifest itself when African children have a total disregard of the African culture and uphold Western culture. In Zimbabwe, a variety of views related to ethnocentrism have been advanced by some academics. Mangena (2006) posits that the moral education programme in Zimbabwean schools should include social values, norms and attitudes. Mavhunga (2006); Matsika (2012) and Makuvaza (2008) argue for the School curriculum that incorporates some indigenous knowledge rooted in African culture.

Mavhunga and Matsika advocated for the crafting of national educational philosophies encapsulating African cultural values (Ubuntu / Untu) rooted in African Culture. Unhu / Ubuntu is rooted in African culture characterised by such qualities as; responsibility, honesty, justice, trustworthiness, being hardworking, integrity, a co-operative spirit, solidarity, devotion to family and welfare of the community (The Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, 1999 cited in Mavhunga, 2006). Kazembe (2010) advocates the inclusion of information regarding African traditional medicine and traditional religion in the Zimbabwean school curriculum from the primary school to tertiary level. Ethnocentrism and xenocentrism conflict and might make its resolution become problematic.

When children come to school, they bring with them different perceptions and values for they come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Children therefore, rely on their cultural backgrounds to determine whether their learning experiences in school are meaningful to them (Gwirayi, 2010). Hence, Gwirayi (2010) indicates that teachers must learn about the culture of children they teach or community in which the school is located. Gwirayi (2010) also encourages that cultural relativism should be upheld in primary schools. Authorities like Kasambira (1998); Abdulla (2009) and Banks and Banks (1995) refer to cultural relativism as multiculturalism. Abdulla (2009, p.160) contends the multicultural education refers to learning of cultures and other differences which include race, ethnicity, religion and so forth." What is implied in this statement is that the children should develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills related to the respect and appreciation of different cultures and differences.

In a study on conflict prevention, management and transformation in Zimbabwean schools, Tumbo and Moyo (2013) had participants urging churches to desist from criticising the African Religion thereby fuelling conflict.

Kimmel (2006) and Ngara and Chung (1985) advocate for the creation of micro-cultures to avert misunderstanding and breakdown in relations. Misunderstandings arise from the fact that some people think other people should state their expectations and assumptions, that is, their mindsets. Nowadays, because societies are fluid, there is nothing like a common culture that shape their behaviour (Pedersen, 2006). Pedersen (2006) points out that some of our cultural teachers are friends, enemies, relatives, heroes, heroines and fantasies to name a few. These have a bearing on an individual's culture.

Kimmel (2006) also attests to the need for professional training in intercultural exploration to achieve understanding and develop communication skills. This could be done through role play and feedback from intercultural communication specialists and cultural representations to facilitate empathetic collaboration intercultural communication and problem solving. During training, trainees

should be made to gain subjective insight into how their own culture is perceived by others and how its assumptions and strategies contribute or detract cross cultural interaction (Kimmel, 2006).

Kimmel (2006) and Moyana (1989) also advocate for constructive controversies and peace building as some strategies to aid in the resolution of culturally related conflict. Pedersen (2006), on the other hand, developed two cultural grids, that is, the within person cultural grid and between personal cultural grid.

With regards to Zimbabwean Schools, Tumbo and Moyo (2013), found out some cultural and social norms that render children vulnerable to conflict namely: discriminatory exposure of culture to children, poverty, sexual abuse, belief that children should not have a say in society, bad role modelling by parents, failure by parents to pay school fees for their children and child headed families. They also found out that cultural practices like, respecting each other in whatever people are doing was an effective way of solving conflicts.

Modern practices such as exposing children to explicit content that they are not supposed to see were found by Tumbo and Moyo (2013) as resulting in a culture that has a negative effect on conflict resolution.

9. Methodology

9.1. Research Paradigm

This study was mainly qualitative. This approach is sometimes referred to as the subjective approach (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Neuman (1997) refers to it as the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm posits that social reality is obtained from people's definition of it and culture shapes these definitions (Neuman, 1997). Culture can change from time to time so does social reality. This paradigm respects the common sense aspect. It is for this reason that the researcher adopted this paradigm.

9.2. Research Design

Conflict resolution is a multidimensional phenomenon and can only be understood by taking an intensive study of the views by which various cultural and religious groups view conflict and how it can be resolved. The researcher drew largely on the case study. This was an intrinsic case study where no attempt was made to generalise beyond the single case or even to build theories (Silverman, 2010). Ethnography was adopted in the study. Ethnography means writing about people and involves cultural analysis (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005). Since the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution was the focus of the study ethnography was found to be ideal.

9.3. Data Generation Instruments

The instruments for data generation were the open-ended questionnaire, focus group discussion schedules, in-depth interview schedules and Delphi schedules. The open-ended questionnaires enabled the researcher to gather data because it is easier to construct and cheaper to administer (Denzim, 1997). The process of information from questionnaires is less complex compared to observation (White, 2005). Open-ended questionnaires had the advantage that they were ideal in gathering opinions (Anderson, 1994). Open-ended questionnaires have also the advantage of gathering opinions (Anderson, 1994). They also have the advantage of gathering data relatively simple, cheaply and in a short space of time from several locations (Anderson, 1990). Individual in-depth interviews enabled participants to express unique or controversial perspectives without fear of censure or with complete confidentiality, unlike the focus group interviews (Cresswell, 2008). The confidentiality allowed participants complete freedom to describe their world view. In-depth interviews allowed for probing and follow-up questions (Patton, 1987). Probing deepened the response to the question, increased the richness being obtained and gave cues to the interviewee about the level of responses that were desired (Berry, 1992). Focus group interviews were a collective interview. In collective interviews participants, through their interaction could provide data and some insights which could not be revealed through interviews with individuals. Focus groups resulted in a collective synergy, that helps to explore and clarify participants perceptions that could not be readily accessible in a one – on – one interview (Kruger and Casey, 2000 cited in Gall et al., 2007). The focus groups also helped participants to overcome the problem of reluctance to participate / contribute. The Delphi captured ideas from experts. This helped subjects to improve accuracy of results but being exposed to the information from others before coming up with the final ideas.

9.4. Selection of Participants and Informants

Gweru district has 55 primary schools the sample consisted of 20 primary schools that were conveniently sampled. The sample of teachers were seven teachers from each school making a total of 140 teachers and one head from each school making a total of 20 heads. The teachers were purposive sampled. Only those who showed interest in the area were chosen. The sample of children consisted of 2 children at infant level, 2 children at middle junior and 2 children at upper junior. These were provided by their respective class teachers. The total sample for the children was 120. The Delphi group consisted 2 experts who were chosen through snow balling. The District Education Officer of Gweru District also constituted the sample.

9.5. Data Collection Procedures

First permission was sought from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education then research assistants were trained, focus group discussions were carried out, in-depth interviews were undertaken and lastly the Delphi were undertaken. The whole process took one and half years. Only ten teachers and seven children were subjected to in-depth students.

9.6. Sufficiency and Saturation

The number of participants did not determine the power of the research and the criteria of sufficiency and saturation were used to determine the number of participants interviewed in the study following the advice of Rossman and Rallis (2003). The point of saturation was reached when information participants provided began to repeat itself through the participants' voice. In the case of interview with teachers saturation occurred at 10 and for children it occurred at 7.

9.7. Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher followed Merriam's (2009) analysis of qualitative data. These included;

- a) organising and preparing data for analysis that is, transcribing interviews, and data focus group notes and arranging the data into different types of sources;
- b) reading and re-reading data to get the sense of data and listing of broad themes. There after detailed analysis followed, which began by arranging into themes. Data for this study were coded according to the effect of religion and culture on conflict resolution.
- c) When themes were identified the researcher read through the notes again, noting relationships among themes and pertinent features within the themes and finally
- d) there was the choice of one category and the relation of all other categories to that category.

9.8. Trustworthiness of Collected Data

Trustworthiness encompassed issues such as credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (O'Leary, 2004). Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of multiple sources of data and a variety of informants. The focus group discussions had those ties with in – depth interviews. Dependability was enhanced through use of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. With regard to transferability, the researcher used thick descriptions of the process to allow other researchers who might want to research the same phenomenon to easily. Conformability was assured by letting study critiqued at workshops.

9.9. Pilot Study

The questionnaire instrument was pilot tested with 10 teachers while the in-depth interview was tested on 2 teacher colleagues in one school. The focus group discussion guide was piloted test at the same school. The pilot testing was intended to establish whether the participants would not get any difficulties in interpreting items. The pilot testing led to refining of items that resulted in participants getting what the researcher wanted to solicit from them.

10. Findings

The findings are presented by sex and where the teachers are operating. For the children only the aspect of where they attend school was considered. The Gweru Urban male teachers' responses the question on effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution, 90% (n=9) and in-depth interviews revealed that culture and religion were causes of conflict but at times could be used to resolve conflict. They pointed out that culture and religion escalate conflict when differences were emphasised for example some churches emphasise days of worship and healing practices. One participant remarked for example:

We the Vapostori do not believe our children should be healed at clinics and hospitals; we use holy water (teacher).

They also pointed out that if common values were emphasised that would lead to amicable resolution of conflict. The values they spelt out included respect for others, reconciliation, sharing and helping others. They pointed out that culture and religious differences lead to prejudice and might lead to tribalism and racism. One teacher in a predominantly Shona school remarked that Ndebeles were segregated against in the school. That state of affairs in a school might affect the way the Ndebele teachers taught and might have a ripple effect on learning. Below are extracts from three teachers;

Different cultural values v if emphasised might lead to prejudice, tribalism and racism (Male teacher)

I am a Ndebele teacher teaching in predominantly Shona school and my view are not taken because I am Ndebele. I have overhead teachers saying there is no need to listen to my views because I am Ndebele (Female Ndebele teacher)

Language difference sometimes lead to those belonging to the same language relating well to one another and not relating to the groups of other languages (male teacher).

Ninety percent (n=64) Gweru Urban female teachers' responses to the question on the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution and in – depth interviews revealed that culture and religion had both constructive and destructive effects in conflict situations. They pointed out that culture and religion became destructive if divisive issues were harped on but became constructive if unity was stressed. One teacher gave the example of Christians emphasising that Jesus is the only son of God and that he is the only way to God. This teacher pointed out that it did not go down well with other religious groups like those of African Religion and Islam. Below are remarks from two teachers:

The Christians emphasise that Jesus is the only son of God and this does not go down well with other religions like Islam who regard Mohammed as their prophet (male teacher).

We believe that common values of respect for others, reconciliation, sharing and helping each should be emphasised by the various churches and religions (female teacher).

A hundred percent (n=80) pointed out that such values as tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation and cooperation could be used in the resolution of conflict. With regard to culture one lady remarked that she had a pupil who was possessed by one of his ancestors and

she was afraid of this particular child. She called the parents to school and was shown how to deal with the child when such circumstance arose. Below is her actual remark:

I have a child in my class who sometimes gets possessed by an ancestral spirit and I am afraid of this child and the other children are also afraid of this child (female teacher).

Another lady who was teaching at one Christian denominational school remarked that she felt forced to follow procedures of that school which did not please her because her own Christian denomination did not subscribe to the denominational procedures. What this implies is that this teacher is demotivated which might affect the way she teaches and might consequently affect learning. Yet another lady remarked she no longer had healthy relations with her own sister teaching in the same school because she belonged to Jehovah Witnesses Church and my sister belongs to one of the Pentecostal churches. Below is her actual sentiment:

I no longer have healthy relations with my sister though we teach the same grades and are at the same school because I belong to Jehovah Witnesses Church and my sister belongs one of the Pentecostal churches. My sister says my school is not up to scratch (female teacher)

The two ladies could not see ideas pertaining to teaching though they taught the same grades.

The majority pointed out that they knew very little about other religions except Christianity. When conflict arose related to religion they found themselves siding with those who had a Christian inclination. Without an appreciation of other religions teachers are likely to look down upon those religions considered inferior or odd.

A hundred percent (n = 74) Gweru Rural female teachers in response to questionnaire question on the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution pointed out that culture and religion were the main causes of conflict and that such conflicts were the most difficult to handle. They pointed out that conflict resulted when differences in values and beliefs were, emphasised and stronger cultural groups wanted to impose their own beliefs and values on the minority groups. One example given was where a particular Christian denomination emphasised attending church on Sunday as anti – Christian which tended to discourage those who attended church on Sunday. Below are remarks:

As Seventh Day Adventists we believe worship should be undertaken on Saturdays. Those churches who worship on Sundays are lost because God rested on the seventh day after creating the earth (female teacher).

The Seventh Day Christian denomination view churches that worship on Sunday as anti – Christian. In our school there is a division between those who attend church service on Sunday and those who attend church services on Saturday. The two camps have had bad working relationships (male teacher).

In the school it created camps of those who attended church on Sunday and those who attended church on Saturday jeopardising their working relationship.

A hundred percent (n = 74) Gweru Rural female teachers in response to questionnaire question on the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution claimed that it was necessary to emphasise the common values as tolerance, respect for human life, forgiveness and reconciliation.

One thorny issue they noted was of language differences. One lady remarked that she was lonely because she worked in a predominantly Ndebele school when she was Shona. Though she was struggling to learn the language she seemed not appreciated in the school and contemplated leaving the school. Her remark is given below:

I am so lonely in this school because I am Shona and working in a predominantly Ndebele school. Every time I am told I am not aware of the Ndebele language and culture. They wonder why I am in that school. I am struggling to learn the language (female teacher).

What the above implies is that the teacher was isolated and it might affect her teaching and her sharing of ideas about teaching for the benefit of the children.

Eighty percent (n = 62) of the female teachers in Gweru Rural in response to the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution noted that television promoted a culture of violence in children. This leads to the promotion of violence in the schools jeopardising chances of schools becoming peaceful places. Below is the remark from one teacher:

Some television programmes watched by children these days promote violence, in fact most of them do (female teacher).

Seventy percent (n = 25) of the Gweru Rural primary school made teachers in their questionnaire responses to the questions on the effect of culture and religion on conflict resolution pointed out that culture and religion cause conflict but at the same time could aid to conflict resolution. They pointed out that some cultural beliefs and values fuel conflict, beliefs like the need to override others. The teachers remarked:

Some cultural beliefs fuel conflict like the need to override others (male teacher)

Also beliefs like subordinating females and children to males fuel conflict (Female teacher)

Some beliefs like subordinating females and children fuel conflict instead of leading to its resolution. Values and beliefs that could lead to amicable resolution of conflict include tolerance, respect, forgiveness and sharing (male teacher).

The issue of language differences was also brought out as a cause of conflict as well as lack of cooperation between teachers and pupils, affecting the ways teachers operated in class and how children learnt.

From the above findings, there seemed to be no differences in views on the effect of religion and culture between rural and urban teachers. Male and female teachers showed no differences either on how religion and culture affect conflict resolution. What comes out clearly is that differences in culture and religion play a divisive role.

10.1. Views of Pupils from Groups and Interviews

The majority of the pupils in focus groups and interviews in Gweru Rural primary schools expressed the views that some cultures were bad and some religions were bad so that they were warned not to associate with pupils from other cultures and religions lest they become unclean. Below is a remark from one pupil: "Our parents teach us not to accept religions which are not family religions. If we do we will be made unclean." (boy pupil)

When they got to school they only associated with those from cultures and religions approved by their parents.

When conflict related to say language and denominations were taken to teachers for arbitration however, they were frustrated when the leads or teachers sided with the pupils from their language group, culture or religious group. One pupil remarked:

"I am frustrated when teachers and leads side with those who belong to a certain culture or religion when they work at our differences" (girl child).

They also revealed they got frustrated in denominational schools when they were made to follow doctrines of those denominations. This is exemplified by the remark below:

"In this denominational school we are forced to follow procedures of this denomination yet we belong to other denominations, we really feel bored" (girl pupil).

The majority of pupils in focus group discussions and interviews suggested that it would be good if values and beliefs like; sharing, honesty, helping each other and loving one another were emphasised. These, they said were common in all cultures and religions. One pupil remarked this:

"I would suggest conflict will be resolved if we share, are honest, help one another and love. These are common in all religions" (boy pupil).

The majority of pupils from Gweru urban primary schools from focus group discussions and interviews also indicated that they resented African traditional Religion which they were told both at churches and at their homes was associated with evil spirits and witchcraft. A data casting of African Religion is shown in the remark below:

"I do not like African religion because my parents tell me it has to do with evil spirits and witchcraft. I cannot play with someone who behaves in African religion" (girl child).

Since they had no knowledge of other cultures or religions apart from Christianity anything not consistent with Christianity was not acceptable as exemplified in the excerpt that follows:

"I have no information about other religions apart from Christianity and anything not related to Christianity I will not take. Some of my friends do certain things I consider not Christian and I end up not playing with them" (boy child).

This state of affairs made those who shared the same values and beliefs moving together and playing together at school, the pupils stated. The pupils indicated the only wise thing to do was to emphasize common good values and beliefs.

One pupil remarked:

"What could promote conflict resolution are issues like sharing, honesty, helping each other and loving one another" (girl child).

The pupils also mentioned the stigmatisation of those with disabilities. Some teachers called them names associated with their forms of disability. This did not go down well with the pupils.

10.2. Views of Experts

Experts involved in the Delphi concurred that religion and culture could play both a positive and negative role in conflict resolution. They played a negative role when differences in values and beliefs were emphasised and played a positive role when virtuous beliefs and values were emphasised. They recommended multiculturalism and inter-faithism. Below are some of their remarks:

"Generally, cultural differences are fuelling conflicts in our societies. If we could teach cultural tolerance this would aid conflict – resolution in schools (expert).

The expert also recommended inclusion of all pupils in their classes. One expert remarked thus:

"These with disabilities are discriminated against leading to serious conflict. Conflict resolution could be upheld if inclusion was upheld" (expert).

11. Discussion on Culture and Religion and Their Effect on Conflict Resolution

Three themes emerged from the findings regarding the effect of religion on conflict resolution namely effect of religious beliefs and values, effect of religious leaders and followers and effect of religion and denominational schools as social institutions and networks while themes under culture were effects of norms, beliefs and values, effects of language and effects of xenocentrism and ethnocentrism.

Pertaining to culture it has been identified that different norms, beliefs, values and language negatively affect conflict resolution in primary schools. Religion negatively affects conflict resolution because of promotion of different beliefs and values by religious leaders, school authorities and denominational schools. The presence of xenocentrism and ethnocentrism in the schools is fuelling conflict. There is absence of religion and cultural tolerance. This confirms the views of Makuvaza (2008), Chung and Ngara (1985), Shizha (2008) and Nyota. The constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment number 2 (2013. p29) attest to the fact that Zimbabwe is a liberal democratic country. It attests to the right of every person to be treated equally and not to be discriminated against in terms of nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic and social origin, language, class, religions, beliefs political affiliation, opinion, custom, sex, gender, marital status or whether they were born out of woodlock. It also print out that people have the right to use the language of their choice (The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 2, 2013, p.31).

Gweru District has three private schools, seventy-three public school and fourteen church schools. Both religion and culture have negative and positive effects on conflict resolution (Perdesen, 2006; Maix, 2006; Matsika, 2012; Pring, 2005). The negative effects manifest themselves when a particular church or religion presents itself as the only institution of God. Faiths however, do not lead to division if virtuous values are respected (Halstead and McLaughri, 2005).

Traditional African religion is viewed as linked with witchcraft and sorcery a view confirmed by Matsika (2012) and Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and training (1999).

There is general concurrence that virtuous issues tolerance, love, care and compassion, service to others. This confirms the views of McGettrick (2005). There is also a general view that the divisive nature of faith or religions should be done away with. This confirms the views of Deer (2005); Totterdell (2005); Gallagher (2005); Levin, (2005) and Barker and Anderson (2005).

The issue of multiculturalism and inter-faithism is also brought out in the findings. This collaborates the views of Manson (2005), McGettrick (2005) and totterdel (2005).

12. Conclusions

From the findings it can be concluded that:

- Aspects of culture and religion are playing a divisive role. There are not helpful in conflict resolution.
- Ethnocentrism exists in parts of the Gweru District.
- Xenocentrism affects almost all areas in the Gweru district
- All primary schools in the Gweru district favour virtuous issues of culture and religion to be addressed.

13. Recommendations

From the conclusions pointed out above the following recommendations are put forward:

- schools to resort to multiculturalism programmes
- schools to resort to inter – faithism programmes in public and faith schools.
- schools to resort to cultural revolution programmes put forward by Moyana (1989).
- The use of Pedersen's (2006) grids to establish the real culture of school personnel and students and carrying out staff development on both personnel and students to get them on course that is harmony between behaviour and expectations.

13.1. Further research

Further research is required in the following area:

- A study with parents on the effect of religion and culture on conflict resolution.

14. References

- i. Abdullah, A.C. (2009). Multicultural Education in Early Childhood: Issues and Challenges. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, Vol 12(1): 159 – 175.
- ii. Abebe, T. T., Gbesso, A. and Nyawalo, P. A. (2006). University of Peace, Report on the working Committee meeting, on Peace Education in Africa, Addis Ababa Ethiopia: University of Peace.
- iii. Anderson, G. (1990). *Fundamentals of Educational Research*, London: The Falmer Press
- iv. Anderson, G. (1994). *Fundamentals of Educational Research*, (2nded), London: The Falmer Press
- v. Bamboo Web Dictionary (2006). Accessed 03/03/2012
- vi. Banks, C and Banks, R. (1995). *Multicultural Education*, New York: North Central Regional Education Laboratory.
- vii. Berry, J.W. (1992). *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Application*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- viii. Chung, F. & Ngara, E. (1985). *Socialism, Education and Development: A challenge to Zimbabwe*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- ix. Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1994). *Research Methods in Education* (4th Ed), London: Routledge.
- x. Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No 20) Act (2013). Harare: Fidelity Printers and Refiners
- xi. Cresswell, J.W (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. New Jersey: Sage.
- xii. Deer, C. (2005). Faith Schools in France: From Conflict to Consensus. . In Gadner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) *Faith schools Consensus or Conflict*, London: Routledge Falmer: 181-189.
- xiii. Deutsch, M. (1973). *The Resolution of Conflict*. U.S.A: Zale University.
- xiv. Ferguson, J. (1997). *War and Peace in the World's Religions*, London: Sheldon Press.
- xv. Gallagher, T. (2005). Faith Schools and Northern Ireland: A review of Research. . In Gadner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) *Faith schools Consensus or Conflict*, London: Routledge Falmer: 159-168.
- xvi. Gall, M., Gall, J.P., & Borg, W.R. (2007). *Educational Research: An Introduction* (8thed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- xvii. Goldbart, J. and Hustler, D. (2005). *Ethnography*, In Somekh, B. and Lewin, C. (Eds) *Research Methods in Social Science*, London: Sage Publications
- xviii. Gwirayi, P. (2010). *Sociology of Education: An Introduction*, Gweru: Mambo Press.
- xix. Halstead, J.M. & Mc Laughlin, T. (2005). Are Faith Schools Divisive? In Gadner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) *Faith schools Consensus or Conflict*, London: Routledge Falmer: 61-72.
- xx. Jandt, F. E. (1985). *Win-Win Negotiating: Turning Conflict into Agreement*, New York: John Wiley and Sours.

- xxi. Kasambira, K. P. (1998). Education, Administration and Management, Harare: College Press.
- xxii. Kazembe, T.C. (2010). Traditional Medicine and Traditional Religion should be included in School Curriculum in Zimbabwe, In Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, 22(1):61-89.
- xxiii. Kimmel, P. R. (2006). Culture and Conflict. In Deutsch, M., Coleman, P.T. & Marcus, and E.C. (Eds) Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice (2nd Ed) New York: Jossey Bass: 625-685.
- xxiv. Kreitner, R. and Kinicki, A. (1991). Organizational Behaviour: International Student Edition, 2nd Edition, London: Irwin.
- xxv. Lam, J. (1988). The Impact of Conflict Resolution Programs on Schools: A review and Synthesis of Evidence. Amherst, M. A: Research report prepared for the National Association for Mediation in Education (January).
- xxvi. Levin, L. (2005). Through the looking glass: Religion, Identity and Citizenship in a Plural Culture. From the view point of the modern Orthodox Jewish School. . Gardner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) Faith schools Consensus or Conflict, London: Routledge Falmer: 139-145.
- xxvii. Mangena, F. (2006). Issues of Curriculum Development for Moral Development. Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, 18(1):1-16.
- xxviii. Marashe, J. Ndamba, G. T. and Chireshe, E. (2009). The Teaching of African Traditional Religion in Primary Schools in Zimbabwe challenges and opportunities. University of Pretoria, <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/usea.20>. Accessed on 20/ 06/ 2015.
- xxix. Matsika, C. (2012). Traditional African Education: It's Significance to Current Educational Practices with Special Reference to Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press.
- xxx. Mavhunga, P. J. (2006). Africanising the School Curriculum: A case of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, 18(3):440-456.
- xxxi. Mpfu, E. (1994). Towards Successful Teaching, Harare: Books for Africa Publishing.
- xxxii. Mwamwenda, T.S (1995). Educational Psychology :An African Perspective (2nd ed) Durban: Butterworth.
- xxxiii. Moix, B. (2006). Matters of Faith, Religion, Conflict and Conflict Resolution, In Deutsch,
- xxxiv. M., Coleman, P.T. and Marcus, E.C. (Eds) the Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice (2nd Ed) New York: Jossey Bass: 582-602.
- xxxv. McGettrick, B. (2005). Perceptions and Practices of Christian Schools. Gardner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) Faith schools Consensus or Conflict, London: Routledge Falmer: 105-112.
- xxxvi. Moyana, T.T. (1989). Liberation and the Creative Act. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- xxxvii. Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative Research: A Guide Design and Implementation, San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- xxxviii. Nairaland forum (2015). Apostolic sect puts faith before Children's Rights, Prefers Dead
- xxxix. Kids- Religion 23 June 2015. www.Apostolic Sect Puts Faith Before Children's Rights. Prefers Dead Kids - Religion - Nigeria.htm accessed on 23/06/2015.
- xl. Nehanda Radio (2015) .Moyo Summons Dokora over Ndebele Speaking Teachers. <https://www.facebook.com/Nehanda Radio/posts 10/52409520156> accessed on 07/05/15
- xli. Neuman, L. W. (1997). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (3rdEd), Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- xlii. Rue, L.N. and Byars, L.L. (2003). Management: Skills and Application (10th Ed) Boston: McGraw Hill Irwin.
- xliii. Sellman, E. M. (2003). The Process and Outcomes of Implementing Peer Mediation Services in Schools: A Cultural Historical Activity Theory Approach. Unpublished, D. Phil Thesis University of Birmingham.
- xliv. Sunday News (2015). Uproar over Non Ndebele Speaking Teachers [www.sundaynews.com.zw/uproar-over-non-Ndebele speaking -teacher](http://www.sundaynews.com.zw/uproar-over-non-Ndebele-speaking-teacher). July 15 accessed 04/05/2015.
- xlv. The Standard (2014). Minister explains deployment of Non- Ndebele speaking Teachers. [www.thestandard.6.zw/.../minister-explains-deployment - non-ndebele speaking teachers](http://www.thestandard.6.zw/.../minister-explains-deployment-non-ndebele-speaking-teachers). June 29 accessed 06/05/15.
- xlvi. Tumbo, D. and Moyo, E. (2013). Key Informants Research Report on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Transformation for in school Zimbabwean Children, Harare: Environmental Action
- xlvii. Pedersen, P. (2006). Multicultural Conflict Resolution, In Deutsch, M., Coleman, P. T. & Marcus, E.C. (Eds) the Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice (2nd Ed) New York: Jossey Bass: 625-685.
- xlviii. Pring, R (2005). Faith Schools Can they be Justified. In Gardner, R. Cairns, J. & Lawton, D. (Eds) Faith schools Consensus or Conflict, London: Routledge Falmer: 51-60.
- xlix. Patton, M. Q. (1987), How to use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- i. Rossman, G. B. & Rallis, S. F. (2003.) Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research, (2nded), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - ii. Shizha, E. (2008). "indigenous ": what indigenous?: Beliefs and attitudes of Rural Primary School Teachers Towards Indigenous Knowledge in the Science curriculum in Zimbabwe In The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education vol 37: 80-90
 - iii. Silverman, D. (2010). Doing Qualitative Research, A Practical Handbook. London: Sage
 - liii. Weiten, W. (2005). Psychology Themes and Variations. New York: Wadworth Language Learning.
 - liv. Zimbabwe Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, Nziramasanga, C. T. (1999). Harare: Government Printers