

Parents' perceptions of education offered by secondary mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Mission boarding schools were built by Christian Missionaries, in collaboration with local communities, with the view to provide affordable and quality education to African children who were marginalized by the British Colonial system. In essence, the schools are jointly owned by the church and local communities. After independence, parents continued to prefer mission boarding schools, particularly for academic excellence, and moral standards, and to allow them to focus on employment and investment in the future. Over time, however, the education for all agenda led to the emergence of private schools, and the general population also accessed government and council-owned schools. The study sought to understand the perceptions of parents towards mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland, with a view of evaluate and perhaps, influencing corrective measures, towards continuing to provide competitive advantage on the market. Considering the novelty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers used an online questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, which was shared with parents on school WhatsApp platforms, hence purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used. Permission was sought from the school authorities and Education Officials. The data was encoded into the Kobo toolbox and analyzed using SPSS and NVivo to produce results. Some of the data were posted to Data Wrapper for a more appealing graphical presentation. The findings were that parents are still satisfied with academic excellence but worry about dilapidated infrastructure, poor road network, failure to adopt blended learning, disjointed synergies with stakeholders, and misgovernance amongst other follies. The recommendations are for schools to reserve quotas for local students and ancillary staff, create sound synergies with stakeholders, have feedback platforms, improve school infrastructure and road network systems, adopt blended learning, and most importantly, respect that the schools are co-owned by the local communities and the church.

Keywords: Accountability; Stakeholders; Perceptions; Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE); School.

I. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is a former colony of the British government. Before attaining its independence in 1980, in the then 'Rhodesia', there existed a dual education system: firstly, government schools were meant for white children, whilst mission schools, run by Christian Missionaries, often perceived as philanthropists, provided education to black children. (Kanyongo, 2005) explains that the new exchange economy that was introduced by the white settlers created a need for a more formal education system. This was a departure from the African barter trade and mostly communal system that kept the

society in cohesion. However, to keep the black population in subservience, the white racist government ensured that Missionaries would not 'over-educate' blacks (Nherera, 2000). This is because they required cheap labor and wished to monopolize the economy. The consensus amongst white minority populations was to provide 'practical education' to the black population, with just enough skills to follow instructions and work on white-owned farms and industries (Atkinson, 1972).

Mission boarding schools, therefore, played a pivotal role in minimizing illiteracy amongst the Black populace during the colonial era. Importantly, however, there was a bilateral relationship between the Missionaries and the communities. Whereas Missionaries provided technical expertise, the black communities provided labor and local resources for the construction of infrastructure at mission boarding schools across the country, hence entailing that the schools were jointly owned by both the church and the communities (Muchagumisa, 2022). In essence, mission boarding schools were perceived as an extension of the benevolence of the church; and a practical way of expressing the Christian faith. At independence, in 1980, reforms in the educational system that promoted access to basic education for all people encouraged missionary schools to revive and implement a robust system that promoted sound education to African children who could afford their fee structures. This is expressed by (Kanyongo, 2005) who observes that 'Soon after independence, most governments of developing countries reformed their educational systems to align them with new national goals. Zimbabwe is one such country that embarked on massive reforms of its education system in 1980.'

The Zimbabwe education system is experiencing a metamorphosis. In the past, parents stampeded to send their children to mission boarding schools, mostly for academic achievement, and for moral reasons. In a newspaper article by (TheZimbabwean, 2022), the major findings were that the performance gap between government day and boarding schools, versus mission boarding schools, is conspicuous. (Gandiya, 2013) cites that the

'gap between these schools continues to widen with each public examination, forcing parents and other stakeholders to seek answers about contributory factors. But it's not rocket science – most experts agree that the

high pass rates achieved by church-run and government boarding schools are down to discipline, dedicated and qualified teachers, adequate learning materials and an environment conducive to studying.'

Yet, in the late 1990s to date, political and economic upheavals unsettled the Zimbabwean population's ability to afford meaningful education. This unfortunate scenario led to the mushrooming of private schools that present flexible payment terms, with the folly, that most of them are non-compliant with the government's educational regulations and standards. (Mhandu, 2016) concurs, bemoaning the failure of colleges and private schools to meet the requisite standards of the educational system. (Tichagwa, 2012) sums up that 'the sprouting of these independent colleges worsened the decline of the education system.'

These independent colleges and schools are, however, a creation of the Zimbabwe Constitution, which in section 75 (2) states that

'Every person has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions of reasonable standards, provided they do not discriminate on any ground prohibited by this constitution' (GoZ, Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No.20, 2013).

It is therefore constitutional, for one who has the resources, to establish and maintain an educational institution in Zimbabwe, but it is also mandatory that one is in compliance with the regulations of the Education Act which emphasizes the provision of compulsory, quality education to all Zimbabwean children.

Research gap

The emergence of a series of private schools and colleges which are cheaper, more flexible, and offer convenience, and variety, has presented serious competition to mission and government schools. The adoption of a competence-based curriculum 2015-2022 (Manokore, 2021), and inclusive education (GoZ, Education Amendment Act (15-2019), 2020); the emergence of technological advancements, socio-economic transformations, COVID-19 (Mandikiana, 2020), and other changes over time are some factors that may have affected the previous trend and demand for mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland.

It is the quest of this study to unearth the demand and satisfaction levels, assess whether mission boarding schools have withstood the test of time, and adopted the relevant transformations in the need to meet the principles that motivate parents to send their children to these schools. This is largely informed by Mandikiana (2021)'s recommendation that there is a need for the Zimbabwe education system to adopt and adapt new technologies toward the implementation of blended learning, during, and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period. With the adoption of inclusive education (GoZ, Education Amendment Act (15-2019), 2020), it also remains to be seen how mission boarding schools have fared towards enacting this policy.

Research questions:

1. What motivates parents to send their children to mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district?
2. In what ways are these schools meeting the expectations of parents?
3. What relationship exists between schools and stakeholders regarding the effective governance of these institutions?
4. How accountable are mission boarding schools to parents?

The objectives of the research were to:

1. Explore parents' motivation towards sending their children to mission secondary boarding schools in the Mutasa district.
2. Evaluate parents' satisfaction with the service delivery from mission secondary boarding schools in Mutasa.
3. Assess the relationship between schools and stakeholders.
4. Establish the level of accountability of schools to parents as key stakeholders to the institutions.

Contribution to the study

The study is an evaluative and advocacy tool for imploring mission boarding secondary schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland to review their relevance versus their objectives, vision, and mission upon establishment. Considering that mission boarding schools were built in the pre-independence era, the study also aims to advocate for a metamorphosis, imploring schools to change with the times and assume new technologies such as blended learning, if they are to continue to be relevant. Although the study focused on Mutasa schools, the results and recommendations are generalizable to all mission boarding schools in Zimbabwe, and perhaps, to other parts of the globe.

Aim:

The study evaluated the governance of church-affiliated secondary schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland, Zimbabwe.

Statement of the problem

Mission boarding schools were built before Zimbabwe's independence, mostly by local communities with the assistance and under the guidance of Christian Missionaries. The major aim was to bridge the education gap for children of African origin who were not afforded similar educational opportunities due to racial discrimination in government and private schools, pre-independence. After independence, mission boarding schools continued to provide educational services although, over time, the emergence and accessibility of private schools to native Zimbabwean children has threatened these institutions.

Scholars such as (Mhandu, 2016) have exposed that private colleges and schools play a significant role in bridging

the learning gap for Zimbabweans who mostly cannot afford the mainstream education system. However, such institutions are mostly designed with low to medium-social-class clients who make special arrangements for flexibility on fees payments, and learning times, amongst other considerations. There are, however, other learning institutions that are specifically for the affluent Zimbabwean community who are more interested in not only achieving academic excellence but are also specific about the amenities and infrastructure at the learning institutions. Such parents consider a broad spectrum of variables as contributory to their decision to enrol their children at a specific school. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system was hugely exposed, especially for lack of preparedness to offer continued educational support to learners, mostly due to limited infrastructure and technologies. This second category of learning institutions, however, took the opportunity to outshine other traditional schools, as they were able to provide online learning through the use of various technologies (Mandikiana, 2020).

Are mission boarding schools therefore able to withstand their legacy of being the schools of choice by Zimbabwean parents, considering the emergence of different colleges and private schools across the district, province, and country, as individuals exercise their constitutional right to establish learning institutions if resources permit them, and also considering different life circumstances and emergency situations such as COVID-19 which necessitated blended learning?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Education in present-day Zimbabwe is perceived as a strategic roadmap toward achieving sustainable development. (Tichagwa, 2012) explains that

'education is a fundamental right; it is a means to the fulfillment of an individual as well as the transfer of values from one generation to the next. Education is also critical for the economic growth of a country.'

Yet, over time, government and public schools degenerated and seemingly continue to degenerate. As the country has adopted a vision to achieve an upper-middle-class economic status, the National Development Strategy (NDS 1) documents are surprisingly silent on the strategic role of education in the development trajectory (GoZ, National Development Strategy 1, 2020). The government appears to concentrate significantly on economic growth, without paying particular attention to the contribution of the education sector to sustainable development. Although the government has systematically committed to funding schools through its fiscus, the significant contribution comes from different partners within the education sector, inclusive of the United Nations, Civil Society Organizations, and Faith-Based Organizations. This is observed by (Hamann, 2008) who explains that sustainable development cannot be achieved through government action alone and the private sector has an important role to play. Madziyire (2015) also concurs that

'One way of attaining sustainable social development in Zimbabwe is for more businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals to develop a culture of giving financial and material support to underprivileged public schools...This is because of the failure of governments to fulfill their traditional functions' (Page 1).

The implication is that parents have over time, continued to patronize missionary boarding schools as they are somewhat independent of government interference. Parents are a vital component of the education of their children. Not only are they the first teachers of their children, through socialization, but they also provide for their children's educational, physical, emotional, and other needs. Put together, parents and children, along with close relatives, form a family cell that is an embodiment of love, affection, sacrifice, and childcare (Ceka and Murati, 2016). After Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, African parents found themselves with the responsibility of assuming gainful employment, thereby limiting the time they would have to meet their daily needs and pay attention to their children. The age-long responsibility of parents, especially mothers, to provide protection, and oversee the development of their children into a total personality (Good, 1988), was slowly replaced by mission boarding schools.

In addition to the seemingly independent nature of mission boarding schools from government interference, it is also important to understand some of the advantages of these schools. Gandiya (2013) explains that mission boarding schools perform better than government and council schools because of their stringent screening policies when enrolling learners for form 1 or form 5 classes. Additionally, the former Minister of Education, Arts, and Culture, David Coltart (2013), explains that mission boarding schools continue to perform better because of a history of discipline, dedicated and qualified teachers, as well as adequate learning materials which are not only funded by the parents and the church, but also through the benevolence of well-wishers from all over the world.

The advantages of sending children to boarding schools include independence and self-reliance, confidence, discipline, standard living, social confidence, educational excellence, moral consciousness, and holistic development, amongst others. Another key aspect that contributes to the high pass rate and better quality of education in mission boarding schools is that learners are privileged to enjoy decent meals. Wilder Research (2014); Florence, Asbridge, & Veugelers (2008) have shown that nutrition is a vital aspect of intellectual development, with learners who enjoy a spectrum of nutritious food performing better in class, and in examinations.

The downside includes homesickness, empty nest (for parents), trouble blending in, bullying, academic pressure, limited focus on extra-curricular activities that are outside those offered at the school, and gender separation, for same-sex schools (Aparna, 2018); (Mugove, 2017). For American students, (Pember, 2022) argues that 'former students attested to physical abuse, sadness to leave their families, while others

reported sexual abuse'. Despite the disadvantages, parents have over the years, preferred sending their children to missionary boarding schools, particularly, for the reasons of academic excellence, and moral training, and to permit them to focus on their careers and development for their families.

From the mid-1990s to date (2022), an era of private schools and colleges has emerged. Mhandu and Dambudzo (2016) interrogate the existence and genuineness of private colleges in Harare, and their findings are that

There is a serious need for the government, educational planners, policy-makers, and policy implementers to be alert and knowledgeable about the existence of private colleges for prudent educational planning. The Education Ministry should be clear on the operations of private colleges to give direction and guidance (Page 120).

It emerges therefore that although they offer certain privileges and bridge the educational gap, inclusive of tailor-made and flexible fees payments, some private schools do not meet the standards of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and there is a need to monitor them closely for compliance towards protecting the interests of learners and parents. (Muchagumisa, 2022) also bemoans the intention of some churches, as responsible authorities towards talk of privatization of mission boarding schools, arguing that it is a betrayal of the intentions of missionaries to provide affordable quality education to the African populace and that these schools are jointly owned by the church and local communities, as the latter labored towards the building of infrastructure.

It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the relevance of mission boarding schools by interrogating the perceptions of parents who are a significant component of the continued existence of these institutions.

Mutasa district is one of the seven districts of the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe, covering an area of 2, 548 square kilometers, with the population largely engaged in semi-commercial agricultural activities, particularly banana and tea plantations (Central Statistical Office, 1992). Manicaland is generally perceived as one of the academic giants of the country, with renowned mission schools such as Saint Faith's, Saint Augustine's, and Saint David's high schools, amongst other preferred schools in the country.

Vygotsky's theory on parental involvement

This study was hinged on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which postulates that humans are social beings that rely on the society for growth, and development. In the same vein, learning is an essentially social process that involves the family, peers, society, and the nation, at large. (Ntekane, 2018) explains that parents play a significant role in their children's education, specifically as they are the first port of socialization, and that they provide financially and emotionally for their children. (SAGE, 2019) explain that parents provide crucial information on children's strengths and weaknesses, family history and factors which are crucial to the learning process. Studies by Havard University also concluded on the high academic

achievement that is associated with parents' involvement in the education process (Kreider, 2022).

Zimbabwe's Competency Based Curriculum (2015-2022) also acknowledges the role of parents in education, as the Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALAs) heavily rely on their cooperation to not only provide financial resources but also to assist with research for the assignments. According to (SAGE, 2019), parents participate in school decision-making when they become part of the school governance structures. In particular, the Zimbabwean education system mandates for schools to have School Development Committees (SDCs) that include parents and school authorities, as part of the governance structures. (Llamas, 2016) concurs, explaining that parents feel comfortable when they are involved in school activities. This level of involvement and participation provides ownership and assurance that their children are well taken care of and that the best interests of their children, as provided for in Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989) are at the forefront.

It is the submission of this paper that parents and guardians are an indispensable part of children's lives, and that they have the final power to decide on what school to send or not to send their children to. With this understanding, schools must acknowledge that parents are vital stakeholders and that their views, perceptions, and contributions must be taken seriously by school authorities. It is against this background that this paper was written.

III. METHODOLOGY

The population for the study were all parents of learners at 6 secondary mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district. The schools are: Nyakatsapa, Saint Columbas, Saint Matthias, Saint David's Bonda, Saint Augustine's, and Hartzell High schools. Based on the large enrolment at the schools, it was difficult to ascertain the actual population for the study; however, the approximate average enrolment of 600 learners per school was used.

Considering the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the vast expanse of the target population of parents, the study used an online questionnaire to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the perceptions of parents of the secondary mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland province. The link to the questionnaire was shared through parents' and church WhatsApp platforms, and through contacts known to the researchers, who then also shared the link to their contacts. Henceforth, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used (Murairwa, 2016).

Permission to collect data was sought from key personnel in the education sector, and Diocesan Secretaries for different churches. The questionnaire also had a section on ethical considerations, which included informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, do not harm, the option to withdraw from the study, and how results would be disseminated. The data that was collected into the Kobo toolbox was then cleaned and analyzed to produce results for the study.

Although there are 6 mission secondary boarding schools in the Mutasa district of Manicaland, the study covered 4 schools, which constitute 66.67% of all mission secondary schools in Mutasa district in Manicaland, Zimbabwe, as constituting a representative sample of the study population. A total of 31 parents and or caregivers responded to the online questionnaire, and this was taken as an acceptable sample size, based on (Creswell, 2018)’s recommendation of a range between 20 and 30 respondents as the minimum sample size.

IV. RESULTS

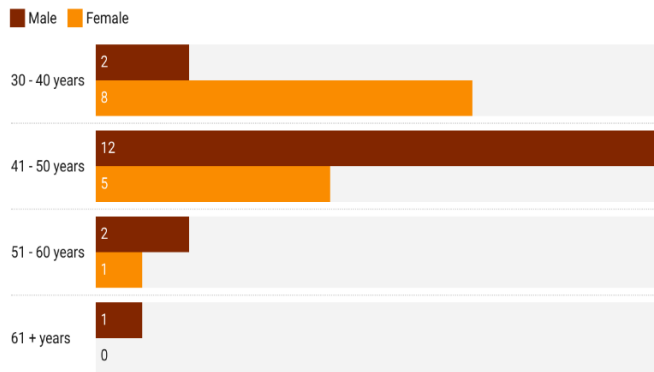


Figure 1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

To understand the demographic characteristics of participants, the study disaggregated data by age and sex. The results had it that 31 parents, comprised of 17 males and 14 females, responded to the survey. The majority (12 of 17) males were in the 41-50 years category, whilst women dominated (8 of 14) the 30 to 40 years category.

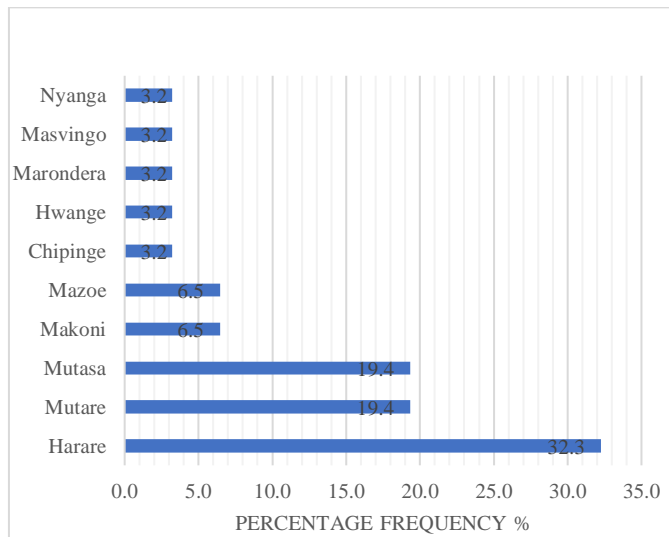


Figure 2: Districts of origin of learners at Mutasa district mission secondary boarding schools.

The data findings were that the majority, representing 32.3% of learners at Mutasa mission secondary boarding schools are from the Harare district, followed by Mutare and Mutasa districts with 19.4% each, Mazowe and Makoni, with 6.5% each, and Nyanga, Masvingo, Hwange, Marondera and

Masvingo, with 3,2% each; showing that only a marginal percentage of students from Mutasa district are enrolled at secondary mission boarding schools in their district.

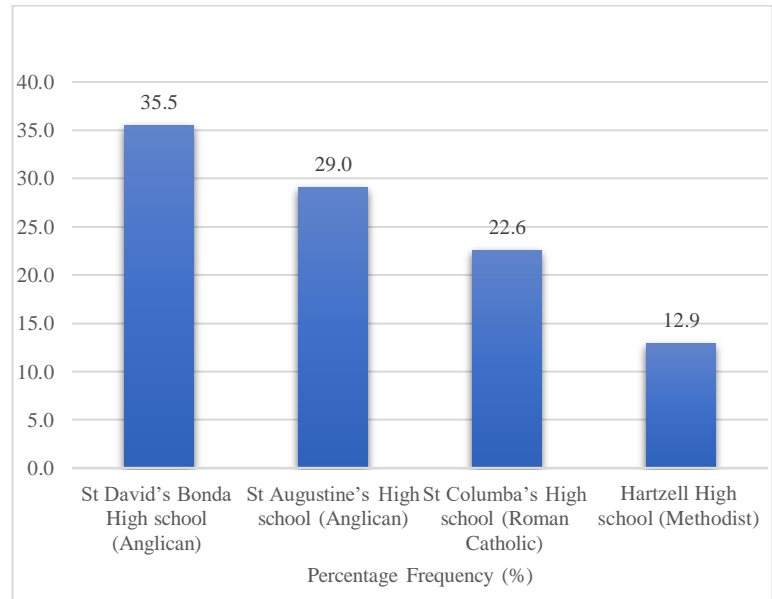


Figure 3: School where their child learns.

The results unearthed that, of the respondents, 35,5% were parents of children at Saint David's Bonda High School, followed by 29% being parents of children at Saint Augustine's High School, 22,6% being parents of children at Saint Columba's High school, and 12,9% being Hartzell High school parents.

To explore parents' motivation towards sending their children to mission secondary boarding schools in Mutasa district.

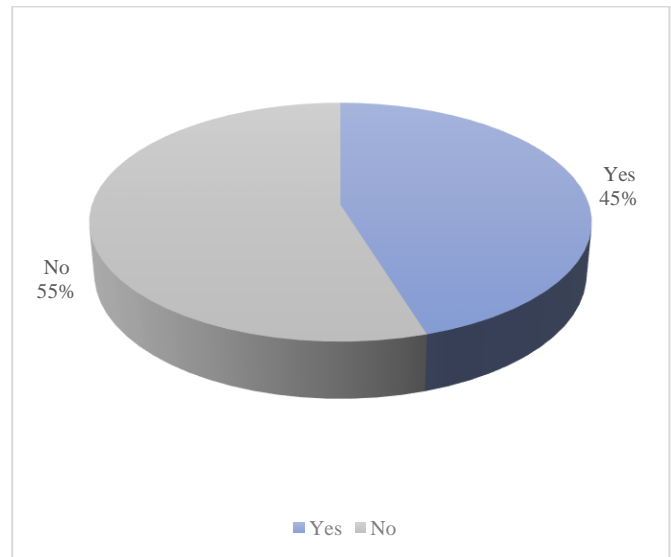


Figure 4: Are you a member of the church where your child attends school?

Data findings indicated that 55% of parents are not a member of the church where their child learns, whilst 45% are a member of the church where their child learns; reflecting that

mission boarding schools accommodate non-church affiliated members.

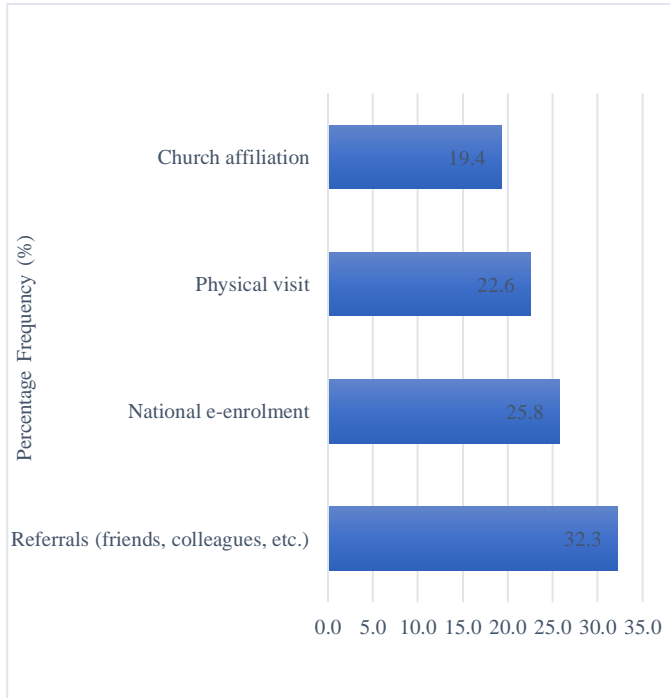


Figure 5: How did their child get a place at the school?

The results have it that the majority, representing 32,3% of respondents, sent their children to mission boarding schools in the Mutasa district through referrals; 25, 6% used the national electronic enrolment system; 22,6% visited the school physically, and 19,4% said that they got a place through church affiliation; being reflective of the diverse channels used by parents to enroll their children at the schools.

Was this your first school of choice?

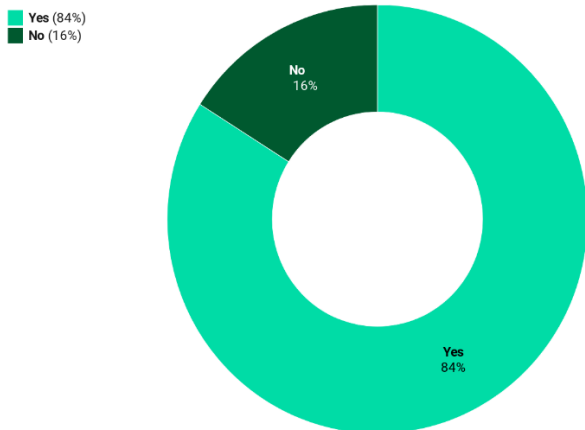


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Figure 6: Was this your school of choice?

The data findings were that 26 (84%) of respondents said that the school was of their choice, whilst 5 (16%) said that it was not.

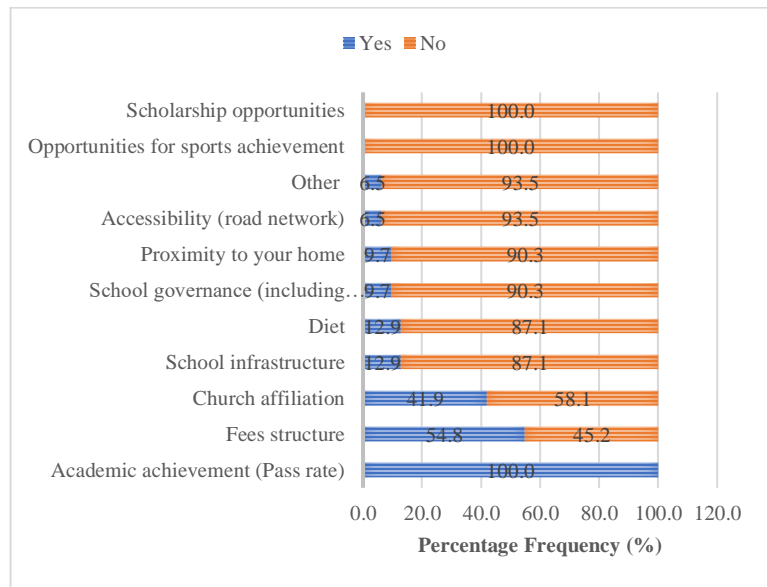


Figure 7: Factors considered to send a child to this school.

All the 31 (100%) respondents said that they considered academic achievement (pass rate) of the school that they sent their child to; 17 (54,8%) considered a flexible and affordable fees structure; 13 (41,9%) considered affiliation to the church; 4 (12,9%) considered infrastructure and diet; 3 (9,7%) considered school governance and proximity to their home; 2 (6,5%) considered accessibility (road network) and other factors, including that they are products of the same school; whilst none (0%) considered scholarship opportunities. These results point toward academic excellence as the major driving force towards enrolment at mission schools.

To evaluate parents' satisfaction versus their expectations of service delivery from mission secondary boarding schools in Mutasa.

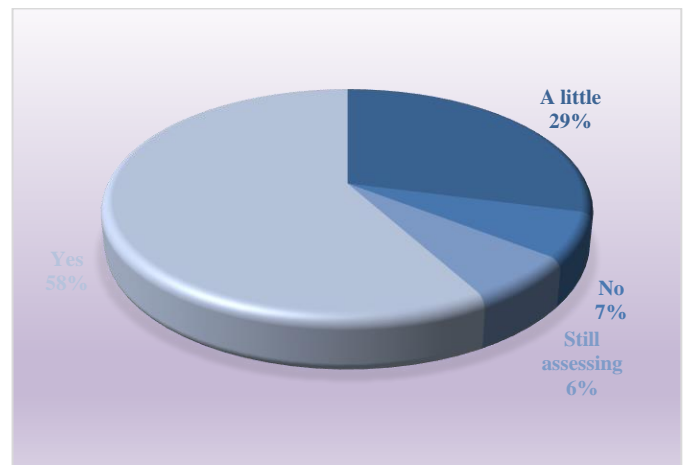


Figure 8: Have expectations been met?

The majority of respondents, representing 58%, said that their expectations had been met; 29% said that their expectations had been met minimally; 7% said that their expectations had not been met; whilst 6% said that they were still assessing.

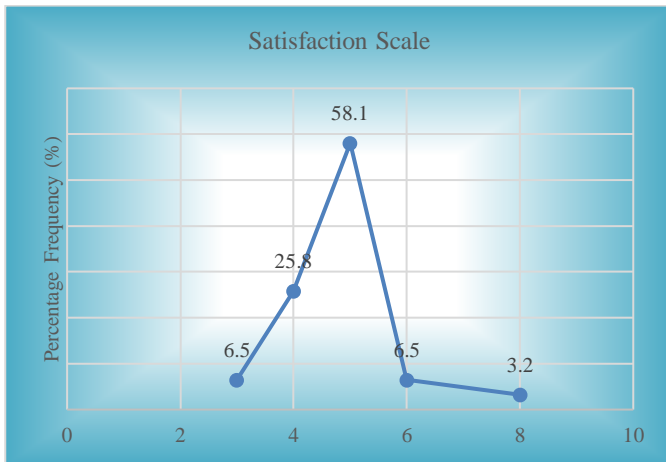


Figure 9: Parents' Satisfaction levels

According to the results, 58.1% of the parents said that their satisfaction levels were at 0.5; 25,8% were at 0.4; 6,5% were at 0.3 and 0.6 respectively, and only 3,2% registered satisfaction levels of 0.6 on a scale of 1. The results had it that satisfaction levels were generally spread across the graph, but skewed to the left.

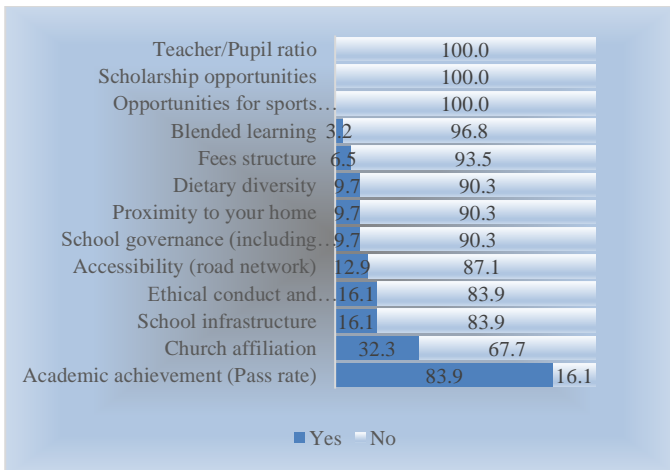


Figure 10: Factors of satisfaction

The results were indicative that 83.9% of the parents were satisfied with academic achievement; 32,3% were bent on church affiliation; 16,1% valued school infrastructure, ethical conduct, and development of their children; 9,7% were satisfied with school governance, proximity to their homes, and dietary diversity; 6,5% mentioned fees structure; whilst only 3,2% were satisfied with blended learning at the schools. None of the parents were satisfied with opportunities for sports achievement, scholarship, or teacher-pupil ratio, translating these as areas for improvement.

Factors considered by parents to send their children to a certain mission secondary school versus Factors that satisfied them after sending them

A test was run on whether there is an association between two variables that are factors considered by parents to send their children to certain secondary schools and factors that satisfied

them after sending their children, assuming that the categories occur with equal frequency. The hypotheses were as follows:

H0: There is no sufficient evidence to prove that factors considered by parents on sending their children to a respective mission secondary school are more likely to be the factors that satisfied them after they send them to these schools.

H1: There is sufficient evidence to prove that factors considered by parents on sending their children to a respective mission secondary school are more likely to be the factors that satisfied them after they send them to these schools.

Table 1: Hypotheses testing

Observed	Expected		Total
	No	Yes	
No	24	0	24
Yes	2	5	7
Total	26	5	31

Pearson chi2(1) = 20.4396 Pr = 0.000
likelihood-ratio chi2(1) = 19.0160 Pr = 0.000

The results above show that the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 (which is 0.000 in this case), thereby rejecting H0 at a 5% significance level. We conclude that there is sufficient evidence to prove that factors considered by parents on sending their children to a respective mission secondary school are more likely to be the factors that satisfied them after they send them to these schools.

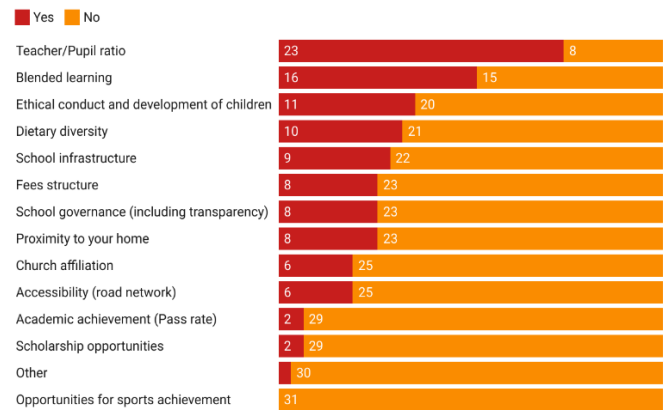


Figure 11: Factors that bring satisfaction

Of the 31 parents that participated in the study, 23 were least satisfied with the teacher-pupil ratio; 16 were not satisfied with blended learning; 11 were least satisfied with their children's ethical conduct and development; 10 were not satisfied with dietary diversity; 9 were not satisfied with the school infrastructure; 8 were least satisfied with the fees structure, school governance, and proximity to their homes; 6

were least satisfied with church affiliation and road network accessibility; 2 were least satisfied with academic achievement and scholarship opportunities, whilst only 1 mentioned other reasons. It follows that parents are concerned with the large classes which are characteristic of mission secondary boarding schools.

Would you still select the school?

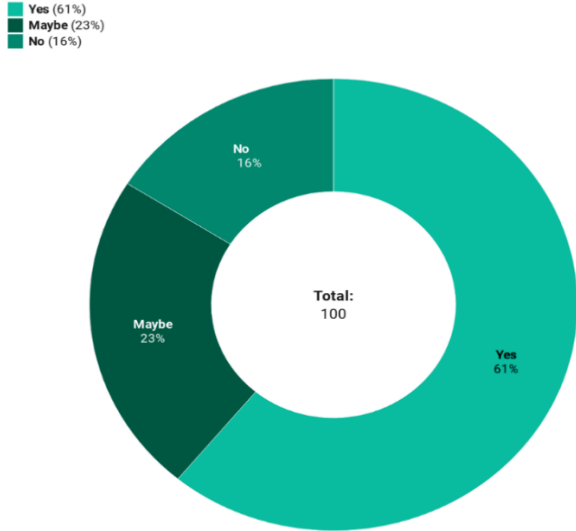


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Figure 12: Would you still select this school?

Given a chance to re-enroll their children, 61% of the parents said that they would still choose their child’s school; 23% said they might still choose it; whilst 16% said that they would not choose their child’s school again, translating that the factors that pushed parents to select these schools were still of high importance to them.

To investigate the relationship between schools and stakeholders.

Communication Channels

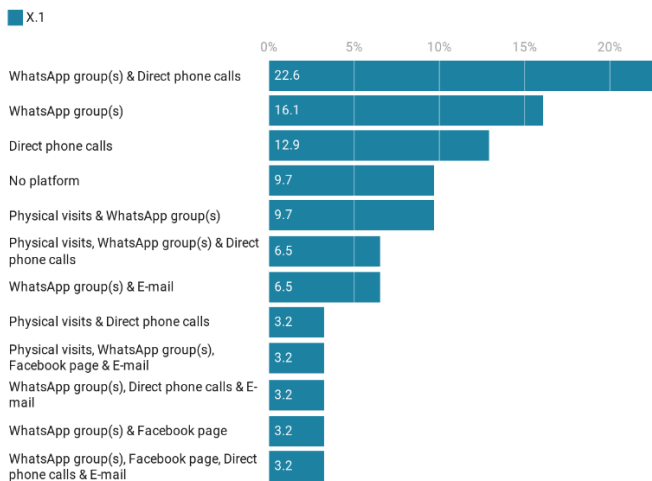


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Figure 13: Feedback mechanisms at the school

Parents said that they communicated with the school through WhatsApp, direct phone calls, Facebook pages, e-mails, and physical visits. However, 9,7% of the parents said that they had no means to communicate with the school. The results, therefore, have it that means of communication with schools are generally available.

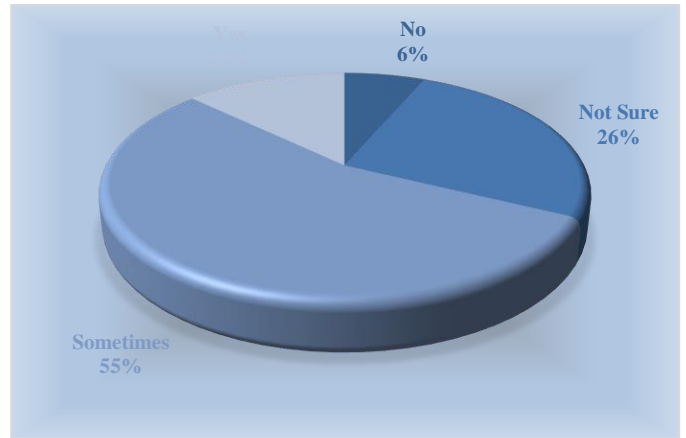


Figure 14: Is it necessary for parents to be consulted all the time?

The majority, representing 55% of parents, said that it is sometimes important; 26% were unsure; 13% said it was very important; whilst 6% said that it was not important for parents to be consulted on school business. Parents are of the general opinion that they must be consulted by the school.

In your opinion, what is the role of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) at church-related schools?

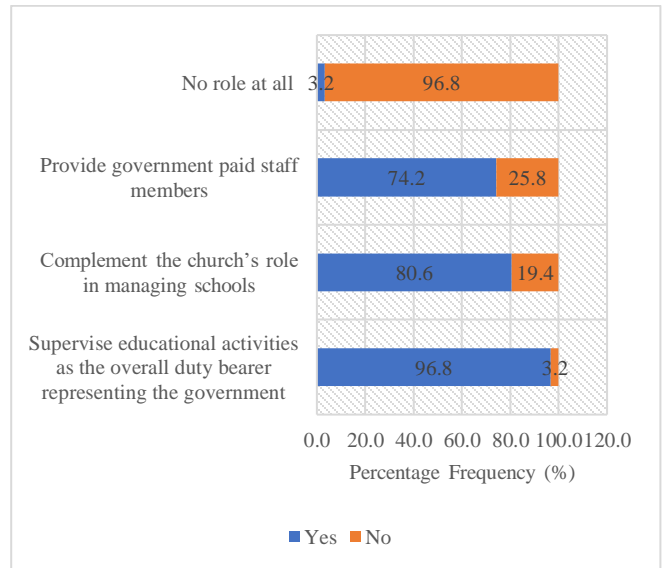


Figure 15: What is the role of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) at church-related schools?

When asked about the role of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education at mission boarding schools, the majority, representing 96,8% of parents, said that it was to supervise educational activities as the overall duty bearer; 80,6% said it was to complement the church’s role in managing schools; 74,2% said to provide government-paid staff members, whilst

3,2% said that there was no role that the ministry plays at the schools. These results are indicative of the important role that the ministry must assume at these schools.

To unearth accountability of schools to parents as key stakeholders to the institutions

Are there synergies amongst stakeholders?

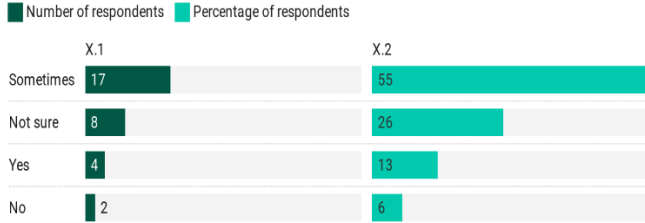


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Figure 17: Synergies amongst stakeholders

Of the 31 participants, 17 (55%) said that sometimes, 8 (26%) were not sure, 4 said yes (13%), whilst 2 (6%) said there were no synergies amongst stakeholders to the school. The results show that though there is some level of consultation, synergies with stakeholders must be strengthened.

Do parents participate in the running of the school?

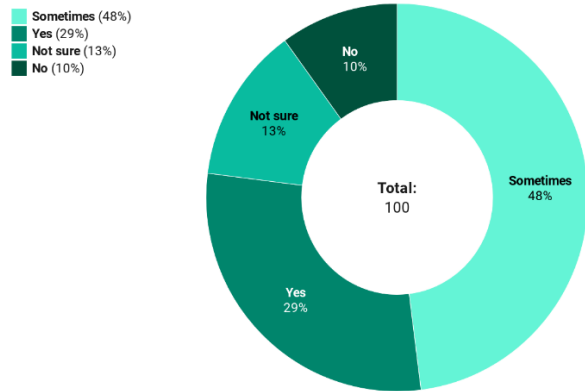


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Figure 18: The role of parents in running the school.

Asked about the part that parents play in running the school, 48% said that they were sometimes involved, 29% were not sure, 13% said yes, whilst 10% said that they were not involved.

Stakeholders Comparison: Ministry of Education versus Parents' involvement in the running of the mission schools

An inquiry was made on whether MoPSE is equally involved in the running of the school against parents. Hypotheses were made as follows:

H0: MoPSE is not equally treated in running the school against parents.

H1: MoPSE is equally treated in running the school against parents

Table 2: Hypothesis testing

MoPSE	Parents				Total
	No	Not sure	Sometimes	Yes	
No	2	0	0	0	2
Not sure	0	2	4	2	8
Sometimes	1	1	11	4	17
Yes	0	1	0	3	4
Total	3	4	15	9	31

Pearson chi2 (9) = 28.1001 Pr = 0.001
likelihood-ratio chi2 (9) = 20.8142 Pr = 0.014

The results above show that the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 (which is 0.001 in this case), which means H0 was rejected at a 5% significance level. Therefore, we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to prove that MoPSE is equally treated in the running of the respective schools as compared to parents.

Opinion towards child's general well-being at school

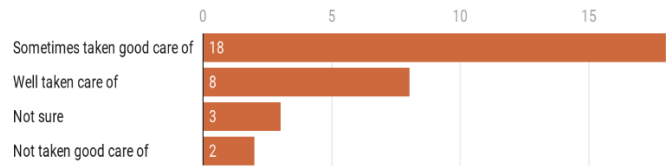


Chart: Memory Mandikiana • Source: Memory Mandikiana • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 19: Opinion on the general well-being of children at school.

18 of the 31 parents said that children were sometimes taken good care of, 8 mentioned that they were well taken care of, 3 were not sure, whilst 2 said that their children were not taken good care of by mission boarding schools; giving the general impression that children are well taken care of at mission boarding schools.

How do you rank mission boarding schools versus other schools in the district towards mentoring learners to become all-rounder empowered beings in life?

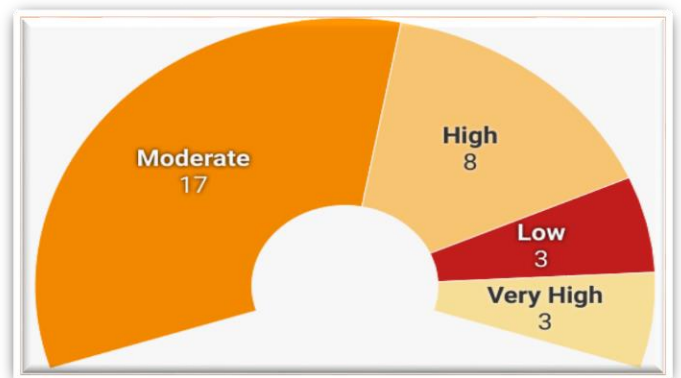


Figure 20: Ranking of mission secondary boarding schools

Parents Role

"Giving support to teachers and paying fees".
"Stay informed and provide suggestions".
"They must propose and help in a school project, they must work towards motivation of the teachers of their children".
"They must be consulted and listened to. For a long time, I have requested to be added to the parents' group but for a year now there has been no action".
"The SDC's role is mostly ceremonial. The responsible and school authorities use them to rubber-stamp their propositions. Parents' views must be independent and respected because they are the ones that bring children to the school".
"They should be consulted through meetings".
"We must be consulted on matters, and not to be used to rubber-stamp a decision".
"They are represented by the SDC".
"The SDC must be well informed, and involved in school activities. Once elected, the SDC has the mandate to report back to and consult parents".
"Avoid using the SDC to play a ceremonial role. We need to be heard as parents. These are our children and we must be allowed to have a say in their education. We also do appreciate that the school may know better, so let us work together".
"We must be consulted genuinely, and not approached to rubber-stamp the decisions of the church".
"More involvement in decision making".
"Pay fees in time to allow for the school to function well".
"Parents must be consulted".
"We must be consulted and well informed".
"Consult us fully, not asking us to rubber-stamp decisions made on our behalf".
"Consult us fully and involve us, not arm-twisting us to rubber-stamp your resolves".
"Consult us adequately".
"The SDC must be more visible in defending parents' investment".
"Consulted through SDC. Fees and levies help to develop the school".
"Through consultative meetings".
"We must be consulted fully".
"Consultation with parents by the diocese".

Major findings

Based on the research objectives, the major findings were as follows:

1. To explore parents' motivation towards sending their children to mission secondary boarding schools in the Mutasa district.

The majority of parents send their children to mission boarding schools based on a record of high academic achievements and moral standards that are informed by Christian values and ethos.

2. To evaluate parents' satisfaction versus their expectations of service delivery from mission secondary boarding schools in Mutasa.

Parents expressed that they are generally satisfied with the education that their children receive at mission secondary

boarding schools in the Mutasa district of the Manicaland province in Zimbabwe.

3. To investigate the relationship between schools and stakeholders.

The study unearthed that there is a need for secondary mission boarding school authorities to strengthen synergies with key stakeholders if they are to succeed.

4. To unearth accountability of schools to parents as key stakeholders to the institutions.

Parents bemoaned that they are sometimes excluded from the activities of the school and that other key stakeholders suffer a similar fate.

V. CONCLUSION

Parents continue to be attracted to secondary mission boarding schools by the high academic achievements, and somewhat moral ethical standards. It emerged, however, that mission schools must invest in infrastructure development and adopt good corporate governance, inclusive of accountability to key stakeholders such as the local community, parents, and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Parents also showed concern over overcrowding at schools, and more, with the advent of COVID-19 and other pandemics. They greatly bemoaned the high teacher-pupil ratio, as they fear that this would compromise the major reason that they selected the school in the first place: high academic achievement.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study unearthed that parents value the tradition of excellent academic achievement of their children over the years. With this in mind, it is recommended that schools invest in improving the pass rates and the learners' acquisition of knowledge for a greater impact on society. As COVID-19 has disrupted the traditional way of physical learning, mission secondary boarding schools must transition towards adopting new technologies for the provision of blended learning. Schools must also purchase adequate learning material in the form of physical and electronic textbooks, and create synergies with digital and online learning platforms.

In addition to the provision of excellent academic performance, parents are concerned with the holistic molding of their children. This calls for mission schools to pay cognizance to the intellectual, emotional, social, economic, physical, and spiritual development of learners. Guidance and Counselling sessions on life skills orientation, spiritual upbringing through discussions and sessions with clergymen and women, and physical and economic upbringing through supervised projects and activities, without taking advantage of children to provide cheap labor, are recommended.

Based on the feedback that there is very little commitment to infrastructural development, there must be a dimensional shift towards infrastructural reclamation and development. The responsible authorities, parents, old students associations, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education,

and the local communities and authorities, must all create synergies towards improving buildings, road infrastructure, and service delivery at the schools.

The responsible authorities must acknowledge the collaborative role that local communities and the church played and continue to play, towards the establishment and success of mission boarding schools. Mission boarding schools are henceforth, jointly owned by both the church and the local communities and the latter must desist from monopolizing these institutions, especially in light of talk of privatization, without full consent from and consultation of key stakeholders. With the current state of dilapidated infrastructure, poor governance structures, and a silo-based approach, privatization of mission schools could have serious consequences:

- a) That government-paid highly skilled and experienced teachers will opt to pull out of such institutions,
- b) That middle-income parents will no longer afford to send their children to these schools,
- c) That parents would opt for fully-fledged and established private schools where there is no more competitive advantage.

With such considerations in mind, privatization of mission boarding schools could lead to catastrophic results. Additionally, this venture is a departure from the original purpose of establishing these institutions to provide affordable and quality education to local communities in Zimbabwe.

We also recommend that the schools consider enrolling local residents first. From the results, it emerged that the majority (80.6%) of students at the mission boarding schools are not from within the Mutasa district, a finding which is a cause for concern. By default, schools must have quotas for the local communities and people from within the district. This reduces exclusionary errors wherein children from the local communities are overtaken by children from well-off families who have the financial means to get places in these institutions. Ironically, this takes away the ownership and legacy of the schools from the local communities that labored towards the establishment of these schools.

The study also recommends segregation of duties through an organogram for stakeholders, with a detailed description of jurisdiction. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should take charge of schools, as it is within its mandate to ensure quality control, and attain the mission and vision of the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe. Regardless of the ownership of the school, the government must protect its citizens, and this includes children at mission boarding schools.

There is a need for schools to adopt a range of feedback mechanisms. These can be in the form of suggestion boxes, a toll-free number, or dedicated contact number, electronic mail, social media platforms, and other related mechanisms. Without fear or favor, parents' and guardians' views must be recorded, acknowledged, and taken into consideration in the governance of schools. This is mainly because parents finance school operations and are also responsible for bringing children to the

learning institutions, therefore, the school must be accountable to them. Mission schools must henceforth, desist from a habit of making parents rubber-stamp decisions made on their behalf, and in their absence. The School Development Committees must never be ceremonial but should represent the parents: all in the best interest of the children.

Following generalized complaints from parents over the conduct of ancillary staff, the latter must be properly managed, with a water-tight monitoring system on key deliverables versus a specific time frame. Clear-cut reporting procedures through organograms must be set in place, and school administrations must issue performance-based contracts that are renewable upon delivery of satisfactory results. Where members are no longer performing according to their expected standards, they must be retired or have their contracts terminated. As a matter of principle, at least 50 % of casual laborers and ancillary staff must be from the local community, with amenities such as vegetables, maize grain, and other local products supplied from the local communities. For all ancillary staff, recruitment procedures must be followed, calling for the adoption of safe recruitment and other related policies at the school. By all means necessary, the school administration must foster synergies and sound working relations between the ancillary and the teaching staff, who were perceived by parents as warring.

To ensure the safety of children at the schools, safeguarding protocols and proper accounting policies must be adopted and enforced, with feedback and reporting mechanisms being adopted. These could include suggestion boxes, help desks, call numbers, social media platforms, and walk-in customers. The schools must also appoint dedicated personnel as focal Safeguarding Officers, preferably male and female staff members, as well as Child Safeguarding Officers, through an election process, with the students, ancillary, and teaching staff involved in the process.

Policies that govern standard operational procedures and keep the school procedures in check must be adopted. These include anti-harassment, gender, safeguarding, recruitment, anti-corruption, and environmental policies. As all employees that work at mission schools are in close contact with children and young adolescents, proper vetting and reference checks must be implemented, including police clearance, to ensure the safety of learners and everyone at the schools.

Schools must also consider revising the students' diet, as well as create synergies for scholarship opportunities, as provided for in other schools. These can be achieved through church contacts, and old student associations, amongst other means.

Research gap and further research avenues

Although it is clear that parents have reservations about some aspects of mission boarding schools, the study unearthed the willingness of parents to continue to send their children to these schools. Whereas there is talk of privatization of mission boarding schools, particularly by the Anglican

church, it is imperative to inquire about the implications of concretizing such plans, for the church, learners, and parents alike.

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