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Capacity Development Programmes for School Governing Bodies in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of capacity development programmes in the functioning of school governing bodies in Zimbabwe (statutorily referred to as School Development Committees - SDCs) with the Pafiwa circuit in Mutasa District of Manicaland Province as a study area. It sought to understand the types of capacity development programmes organised for SDCs and explored the effect these programmes had in the opinions of the recipients. The study is underpinned on a conceptual assumption that there is a link between the performance of SDCs and capacity development. The study revealed that SDCs in Pafiwa found capacity building programmes helpful, sustainable and to a large extent adding value to the performance of their SDCs. The findings confirmed that the real outcomes of capacity building are those that appeal to the recipients of such capacity. The study however acknowledges that there were other factors which were equally important in stimulating the effectiveness of SDCs. In Pafiwa, such factors include the use of a credible currency such as the United States Dollar which hedged the schools against high levels of inflation making it easy for schools to get transactional value for their money, an improved operating economic and political environment and most importantly improved school management skills by School Heads and Administrators resulting from multiple distance education programmes available to school managers in Zimbabwe such as the Zimbabwe Open University. The Pafiwa area has been used in this case to argue that capacity building stimulates effectiveness in education decentralisation provided the recipients find value in it.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Capacity Development Programmes for School Governing Bodies in Zimbabwe* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed……..... **…….....**

I. Makanani Date

Student No: 435680

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My wife, Tendai and children Shanah, Shanice, Sean and Shane for their understanding and sacrifices in giving me time and space to pursue my studies

My late mother, Bitiya and late brother, Wilson for giving me a solid foundation for my education

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ACRONYMS

BSPZ:	Better Schools Program of Zimbabwe
BEAM:	Basic Education Assistance Module
CD:	Capacity Development
CFS:	Child Friendly Schools
DEO:	District Education Officer
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
ETF:	Education Transition Fund
GoZ:	Government of Zimbabwe
LAT:	Learning Achievement Tracking
MoESAC:	Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture
MoPSE:	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Child
PED:	Provincial Education Director
SASA:	South African Schools Act, (84 of 1996)
SDA:	School Development Association
SDC:	School Development Committee
SDP:	School Development Plans
SGB:	School Governing Body
SI:	Statutory Instrument
SIG:	School Improvement Grant
SNV:	Netherlands Development Organisation
TLM:	Teaching and Learning Materials
PLAP:	Performance Lag Address Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
ZIMSEC:	Zimbabwe School Examination Council
ZNEAB:	Zimbabwe National Education Advisory Board

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction and background to the study

School Development Committees (SDCs) as school governing bodies in Zimbabwe hold a responsibility to improve the quality of education at schools, oversee the schools' budgets, raise money through school fees and levies as well as other fund-raising activities, administer and control school property, and help in the creation of child friendly school environments for students and staff (Statutory Instrument.87 of 1992 on School Development Committees' Regulation).

While there is willingness amongst parents to play a role in the education received by their children by providing school governance functions, there is a need to develop the skills and capacity amongst SDC members so that they can effectively undertake their statutory tasks (MacGregor, 1997).

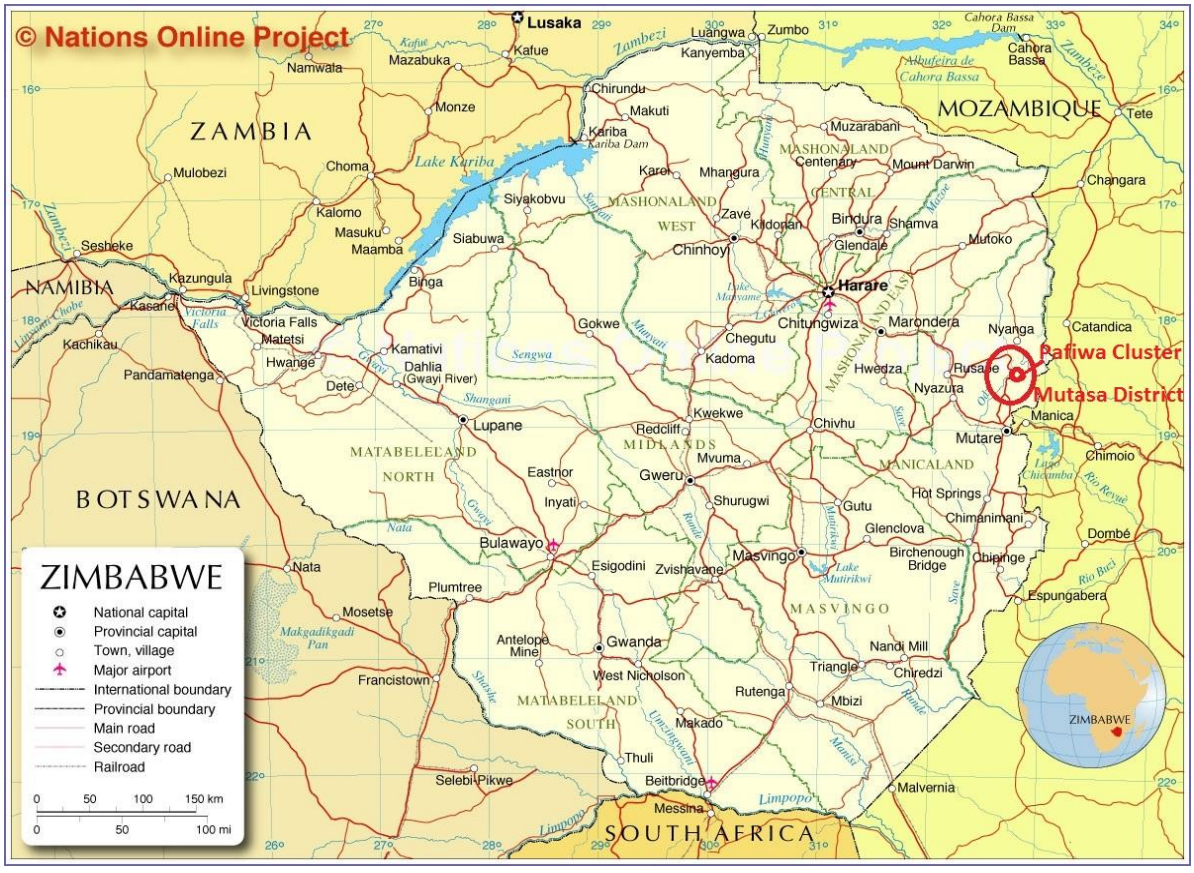
A cross-section of the field of decentralised school governance reveals that very little research has been conducted on the experiences and perceptions of members of School Development Committees on the role of capacity development programmes to the performance of School Development Committees in rural schools.

This research explored the role of capacity development programmes in the functioning of School Development Committees (SDCs) in a rural environment with the Pafiwa circuit in Mutasa District of Zimbabwe as a case study. The research sought to understand the types of capacity development programmes organised for SDCs and explored the value adding effect these programmes had in the opinions of the recipients.

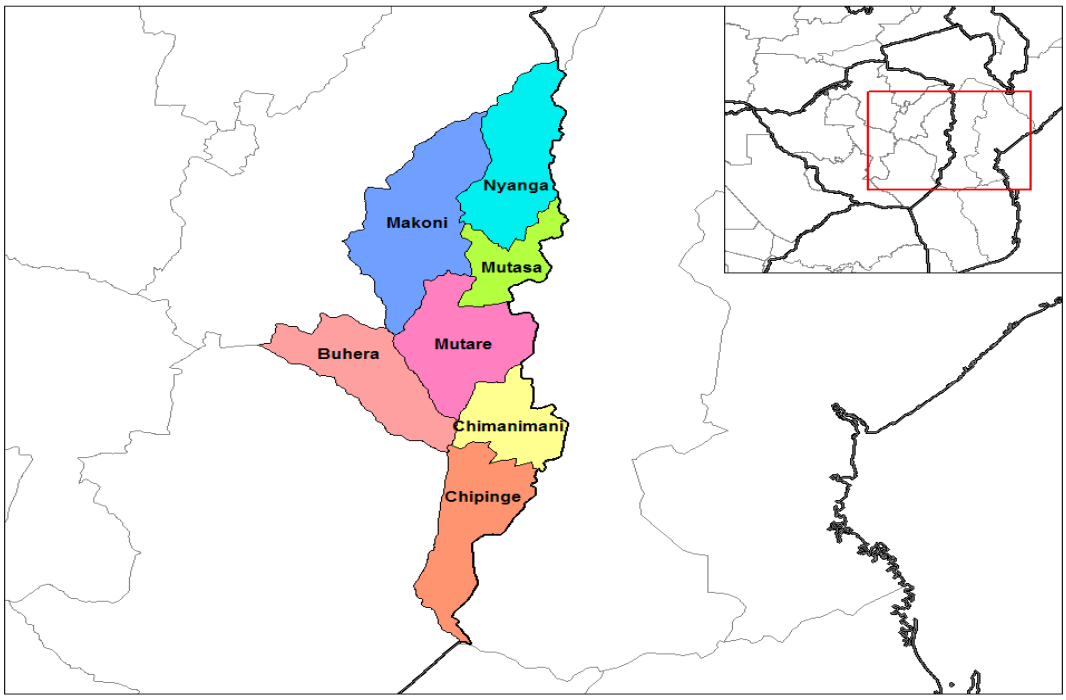
Understanding these perceptions would enable developmental programming in the education sector in the District, and in Zimbabwe generally, to focus their resources and attention to appropriate and specific capacity development issues that are valued by the intended recipients. The Pafiwa area has been used in this case to argue that capacity building stimulates effectiveness in education decentralisation provided the recipients find value in it.

Pafiwa is a circuit of schools in the Mutasa District of Manicaland Province and in the case of this research, it is made up of six schools; four of which are primary and 2 secondary schools. The circuit is about 40 kms north of Mutare, the Provincial capital of Manicaland and the fourth biggest city in Zimbabwe.

Map 1: Zimbabwe Map: Indicative positioning of Pafiwa Circuit in Mutasa District in Manicaland. Source: Google Maps, 2013



Map 2: An abridged Map of Manicaland Province extracted from the Zimbabwe Maps showing the positioning of Mutasa District in the Province. Source: Google maps, 2013



1.1.1. Importance of SDCs in the education system in Zimbabwe

School Development Committees have a significant role in the education system in Zimbabwe as they reflect Government's commitment towards democratising education service delivery, and promotes parental participation in the conduct of their schools. However, Assan and Lumadi, (2013) argue that ensuring good school governance is not a straightforward activity. The argument is based on the opinion that school governance skills and leadership skills are both linked to the organisational performance of a school even though the two are not easy to implement (Assan *et al*, 2013). This confirms the notion that a school is as good as its leadership (Gober, 2001) and therefore the recognition of School Development Committees as the vanguards for educational decentralisation at school level in Zimbabwe is not misplaced. However, while such committees are involved in decentralised school governance activities, many have not been successful in supporting schools to improve the quality of education because they lack what Van Der Westhuizen, (2000) referred as human and institutional

capabilities among their members. This is where capacity building for such committees has become necessary and why it has become necessary to examine views from the recipients of previous capacity interventions and how they have perceived them.

1.1.2. Political and historical background to SDCs in Zimbabwe

Soon after independence in 1980, Zimbabwe reformed its educational systems to align them with new national goals and ideologies. According to Chikoko (2008) the first major reform was the unification of the separate education systems under government direction. Chikoko argued that the highly centralised, top-down system of education governance made critics feel that it was difficult for other stakeholders at various levels of the education system to participate in decision-making in schools. This was further supported by Rukanda and Mukurazhizha (1997) that the post-independence education delivery model alienated other key players including the communities from the entire process, pointing to the need for a change in organisational culture in the delivery of education in Zimbabwe.

As a result, the government shifted from centralised to decentralised governance in education in which the focus was to create a community of collaboration between government, schools themselves, and parents (Lulu, 2010; Rukanda and Mukurazhizha, 1997). In Zimbabwe, this saw the introduction of the School Development Associations (SDAs) in the case of non-government schools and the School Development Committees (SDCs) in the case of government schools in 1998. In 2012, the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture, had considered a merger of the two into one Statutory Instrument but at the time of this research, nothing had been concretised.

The system under which Zimbabwean schools are administered and governed has been described by Chatiza, Dirwai and Mukanganise, (2011) as school-based management. This is because it is guided by a centrally defined and steered system over which the responsible Ministry presides over policy making,

human resource supervision and ensuring adherence to core standards. According to Chatiza, *et al*, (2011), other countries in the region, such as Kenya and Zambia, apply comparable principles. The application of the concept in practice varies depending on context, particularly the operational context (Muwanzi, 2009) and the cultures and values underpinning ideologies of policy makers and practitioners at any given time. However, what has been common has been an increase in school level authority, responsibility and governance resulting from a decentralised school governance system since 1998.

Within this system, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) is mandated with managing the regulatory frameworks pertaining to primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe (Kuiper, & Warinda–Ndanga, 2013; UNICEF, 2013). It operates at four levels: the policy level (Head Office), the policy implementation level (Province), the functional level (District) and the operational level (the School). An important inference in this categorisation is that school leaders and their school development committees should have the capacity to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations as observed by Van Der Westhuizen, (2000) while acknowledging and taking account of the elements in a centrally-determined framework applying to all schools (Chatiza, *et al*, 2011). These frameworks in the case of Zimbabwe are provided in a range of legislation and regulations such as circulars, memos, Legislative Acts and Statutory Instruments.

According to Chatiza *et al*, (2010), a tiered system thus emerges where supply-side (core educational policy, staff supervision, technical/content and administrative) matters are the preserve of the responsible Ministry from national through to an individual school where the School Head is the custodian of the technical standards and the sub accounting officer of the Ministry (Education Act 2006: Chapter 25:04 - Revised Edition). On the other hand, the demand-side issues (access, relevance and agitation for quality), including aspects of resource

mobilisation and education financing becomes a responsibility of stakeholders such as parents through their SDCs and their responsible authorities.

1.1.3. Membership of SDCs

The Zimbabwe Education Act, (2006) Chapter 25:04, stipulates that parents of students be represented in the School Development Committees by elected parents, as well as a teacher representative, and the School Head who become ex-officio members. This is to allow school committees to act as a crucial link between schools, communities, and the Department of Education (Lulu, 2010 & Shumane, 2009).

An SDC is elected by the parents of the school in accordance with relevant statutory instruments, (SI 87 of 1992) and (SI 379 of 1998) for non- government and government schools respectively. The Statutory Instrument provides for the establishment of committees and associations whose members are parents of pupils enrolled and teachers employed at respective schools. Both Committees and Associations are bodies corporate, although there are some differences between the two. Chatiza *et al*, (2011) observed that there is a growing focus on blending the positive aspects of the two Statutory Instruments with SI 87 being considered to have furthered decentralised school governance better than 379. Because of this anticipated merger, this study's focus is the SDCs as the mostly used term and anticipated body for parental representation in schools in future.

The research acknowledges that there may be differences between middle class schools and rural government schools in terms of prior capabilities in decentralised school governance in Zimbabwe. However, this research deliberately looked at the resource constrained rural schools as these have become the targets for capacity development programmes from both state and non-state actors specifically in the area under review.

1.1.4. Regulatory framework governing SDCs in Zimbabwe

All government and non-government schools in Zimbabwe are guided, by the following legislations:

1. The Constitution of Zimbabwe which upholds the universal individual rights to education.
2. The Education Act of 1987 (as amended) which spells out in greater detail how parental involvement in school governance shall be regulated.
3. The Education (School Development Committees) (Non-Government Schools Regulations) Statutory Instrument number 87 of 1992 as amended.
4. The Education (School Development Association) Government Schools Regulations, Statutory Instrument 379 of 1998, as amended.
   The education Tuition and boarding fees (Government schools) regulations, 1991 based on section 62 as read with section 13 of the Education Act 87 as amended).
5. Education (Control of fees) (Government and Non-Government Schools) Statutory Instrument 28A of 2003.

   (Extract from Chigome, Hadebe, Hlabalingene, Thabela and Todd, 2010: pp 5 -10)

The relevant Statutory Instruments (87 of 1992 and 379 of 1998) provided the legal framework that clearly defined the composition of the SDCs/SDAs and their authority and responsibility as regards to the administration of schools. Prior to that, community involvement through Parents Teachers' Associations (PTAs) was largely minimal and according to Chigome *et al,* (2010) confined mainly to raising funds for the school.

The most explicit and elaborate legislative framework for School Development Committees and Associations (SDCs/SDAs) is provided for in terms of the Zimbabwe Education Act of 1996. According to Chikoko, (2008), section 9 (1) of this act, classifies schools either as government schools or non-government schools. Government schools are established and run by the government, through the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC). Non-government schools are government-aided, but established and run by bodies such as local authorities, churches and private companies or individuals.

The Zimbabwe Education Act, (1996) further provides instructions in the establishment of SDCs that:

> Any responsible authority of every registered school shall establish a committee, to be known as a School Development Committee; and that a School Development Committee shall be vested with the control of the financial affairs of the school for which it has been established and that the composition, functions and procedure of every School Development Committee shall be as prescribed, unless the School Parents Assembly has made a constitution satisfactory to the Minister. (Section 36 of the Education Act, 1996)

Prior to this promulgation, Secretary's Circular, Minute No. 3 of 1991 had spelled out some of the key roles of the SDCs as:

> i. To assist as far as possible in the operation, extension and development of the schools
> ii. Assist in the preservation and maintenance of the property and facilities of schools
> iii. Subject to prior consultation with the school head and the approval of the Permanent Secretary of Education, Sports and Culture undertake the construction and installation of new buildings and facilities and carry out alterations, additions, improvements or repairs to existing buildings
> iv. With the approval of the Permanent Secretary of Education, Sports and Culture, charge or impose a levy payable in respect of each child enrolled at the school.
>
> (Secretary's Circular, Minute No. 3 of 1991)

In summary the deliverables by the school development committees therefore include, improving curriculum, teaching and learning through teacher-parent meetings and procurement of teaching and learning materials (TLMs); prudent school finance management (charging of fees and development levies, budgeting and fundraising); employment of non-teaching staff and appraisal of school management.

The above factors are treated as key deliverables of an effective decentralised school system (Mafa and Nyathi, 2013) and therefore in this research, they

constitute proxy indicators towards which capacity development interventions for School Development Committees must result in.

By 2011, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) and other partners had also started upholding the Child-Friendly School (CFS) concept to the many functions that the school development committees needed to play (UNICEF, 2011) resulting in systemic training to SDCs in a bid to improve their understanding of CFSs.

While there are two different Statutory Instruments that govern the SDCs and the SDAs, for the purposes of this research, the two were treated in the same light generally in view of the fact that their instructive roles in enhancing parental and community involvement in the governance of schools are generally treated in the same way in Zimbabwe apart from the fact that one relates to government schools and the other relates to private schools.

In the conceptualisation of this research, the assumption that there is a link between the performance of SDCs and capacity development, (Heystek, 2011) is made apparently visible. The assumption is further solidified by acknowledging Chigome *et al*, (2010) who argue that school governing bodies play a positive role in the school and the community to build democratic foundations that lead towards sustainable high-quality education for all children.

The reference to democratic education foundations in this research does not make the research's focus that of analysing concepts about decentralisation in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Instead, the research sought to understand the perceptions of capacity recipients, in circumstances that would make capacity building programmes to SDCs - themselves products of decentralised education governance - enable better performance of some SDCs in ensuring school improvement in their schools. Therefore, key to this research is an exploration of

the attribution of capacity development programmes on the performance of SDCs with Pafiwa circuit in Mutasa District as a reference point.

1.1.5. The role of SDCs in school improvement in Zimbabwe

The concept of school improvement in Zimbabwe is provided in a number of government circulars and memos. For instance the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture set out in Policy Circular 73 (15 October 1991) the basic infrastructure requirements for schools which have to be adhered to when improving or setting up a school. These basic requirements, also known as minimum school functionality standards are summarised as follows:

Table 1: Consolidated Minimum School Functionality Standards for Zimbabwe

Primary schools	**Secondary schools**
One administration block and toilets	One administration block and toilets
A minimum of seven classrooms	A minimum of six classrooms
A minimum of five teachers' houses	One boys' and one girls' specialist rooms
Adequate toilet facilities*	One laboratory
A source of clean, potable water	At least six teachers' houses and toilets
	Adequate toilet facilities*
	A source of clean, potable water

*as prescribed by official regulation (from the Ministry of Health).

Source: Draft Consolidated Minimum School Functionality Standards for Zimbabwe, MoESAC, 2013

These standards do increase at school level as the schools reach a level of functionality acceptable to be considered basic. School registration in Zimbabwe does depend on meeting these set minimum standards. These standards provides for school improvement benchmarks and involves SDCs supporting their schools to meeting such functionality set out for either primary or secondary schools. However for SDCs to be able to ensure school improvement in their schools, one catalyst necessary for this is the capability of such SDCs to preside over school improvement ventures. This is where capacity development support is critical for SDCs.

Although these standards are contained in multiple regulatory frameworks and memos, school education standards are taken into account during the process of school development or any school improvement attempt. This is done through School Development Planning (SDP), a function always associated with School Development Committees and it too requires considerable capacity among members of SDCs to enforce and manage.

Research conducted by the Centre for British Teachers Trust (CfBT, 2012) on behalf of Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) and UNICEF in Zimbabwe indicated that while linking the concept of school improvement on school functionality standards was the ideal, few schools manage to achieve the set standards save for those categorised as P1 or S1 i.e. low density urban primary schools (P1) and secondary schools (S1) as a result of limited investment in school infrastructure over the past 10 years (as only 3% of the Ministry of Education's budget was available for school improvement (CfBT, 2012). Therefore, most schools and in particular rural schools have suffered years of neglect, normal wear and tear, coupled with little or no maintenance (CfBT, 2012; Muwanzi, 2009). In this regard, rural SDCs are particularly constrained financially and therefore cannot make significant financial contributions towards school improvement planning.

Further to the above, a Rapid Assessment of Primary and Secondary Schools conducted by the Zimbabwe National Education Advisory Board (ZNEAB) in 2009, found that the infrastructure of urban schools while in better shape than rural schools, showed that urban schools also require mainly routine/preventative maintenance while rural schools need much more in terms of rehabilitation and construction of new facilities (ZNEAB, 2009). This they argued called for strong and capacity laden SDCs to preside over school development in a manner expected of them by the schools minimum functionality standards, a call requiring the acquisition of capacity by the SDCs.

The cumulative effect to school infrastructural improvement implies that SDCs are faced with a daunting task to achieve school functionality status in rural schools and that the need for purposeful and appropriate capacity development support would therefore be critical to enable the SDCs perform better. More critical is the value adding effect of such capacity development support in the way the SDCs operate.

1.1.6. SDCs and Capacity Development in Zimbabwe

The CfBT (2012: 37) Situational Report on School Improvement Programme in Zimbabwe observed that there was no doubt SDC capacity would be required to enable schools achieve the minimum functionality standards set out by Government. Related to this is the view that the demand-side issues from parents should be the pillars for which school governance structures and processes to promote reinforced SDC capabilities is understood (Chatiza *et al*, 2011). Observations in this area corroborated Grobler and Mestry's (2007) argument that where the school development bodies are informed, the level of school development is high. This phenomenon is evidenced by the quality of infrastructure, level of staff morale, rate of staff turnover, and the schools' pass rates in school leaving examinations, among other things. This should be done by ensuring complementarity between the supply (Ministry and its structures) and demand sides of education (Parents and their communities). In recognition of this, the Zimbabwe Education Act and associated legislations provides the scope for parent-community involvement in the governance of schools and in the assurance of financial propriety to achieve school improvement. The associated capacity building interventions against the perceptions of the recipients is the interest of this research with a view that the value for money of the programmes to the way SDCs perform will be established.

In 2012, CfBT also reviewed existing SDC strengths and weaknesses and presented wide ranging implications in terms of their capabilities to support school improvement programmes particularly through school development

planning. Their report showed that capacity gaps in SDC management and poor school-community relations were partially to blame for the poor performance of schools in 2008 and 2009 (CfBT, 2012). Due to the economic downturn during that period, government could no longer foot the education bill alone. Schools relied more and more on the local communities for financing the school operations and to some extent incentives for teachers (CfBT, 2012). Naturally, tensions between the school administration and community arose with respect to the handling of resources and prioritisation in usage of the money.

Concurrently, a needs assessment of capacities of the SDCs in Manicaland, Matabeleland South and North Provinces conducted by MoESAC and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV-Zimbabwe) in 2009 revealed a consistent view that many SDCs were not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and in many cases lacked the capacity to carry out their duties. The needs assessment established the following areas of concern: governance, financial management, school-community relations and lower level or standard of education of the majority of their members. The identified capacity gaps were refined and a three-day training programme for each SDC was developed jointly with selected MoESAC Provincial Education Directorates and piloted in response. This was later developed into national programmes funded and supported by MoESAC through UNICEF from 2009 to 2011 aiming at addressing the primary SDCs' inadequate capacity to govern their schools and resources.

It was indeed critical that such capacity building interventions needed to be organised in favour of SDCs in Zimbabwe because, as argued by Boonstopel and Chikohomero (2011), capacity building would help SDCs to understand and interpret correctly the Statutory Instruments which give legal force to the establishment of SDCs, and help them apply appropriate financial management in schools; contribute to quality and access of education; and maintain good relations between the schools and parents.

1.2. Motivation of the research

There are many studies which have been conducted on capacity building programmes for decentralised school governing bodies in Zimbabwe. However, few have focused on the perceptions and impressions created by the recipients on the value emanating from such interventions. While it is important to determine what effect capacity building programmes have on the functioning of School Development Committees, equally important is to explore the extent to which the communities and their SDCs as recipients, acknowledges that value.

Bethke, (UNESCO, 2009) strengthens this need by admitting that capacity development while a fundamental part of the mandates of many international organizations, which aims at strengthening national capacities through training or technical advice, there is she argues, considerable dissatisfaction within the international community regarding the impact of many such interventions. The argument that these activities have usually strengthened the skills of individuals is not disputed, but observations that organisations have not always succeeded in demonstrating evidence of improving the effectiveness of the organizations (Bethke, 2009) makes the motivation for the research more interesting. In this research, the author therefore acknowledges that the discourse on value for money for capacity building in development interventions is increasingly becoming important and that the dissonances highlighted above demand investigation in order to strengthen capacity development policies and strategies for SDCs.

The above thread becomes critical as well against the observations by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD (2009), that providers of capacity development interventions are of late increasingly being made to account for the relevance and usefulness of their interventions. Naturally this requires some form of interrogation to understand the value attributed to capacity interventions particularly through the eyes of recipients of such interventions.

It is therefore hoped that understanding the perceptions and experiences of school Development Committees on capacity development programmes will enable development programming in the education sector in the District, and in Zimbabwe generally, to direct or redirect resources and attention to appropriate and specific capacity development issues that are valued by the intended recipients and communities from where the School Development Committees are situated.

1.3. Problem statement

A cross-section of the field of capacity building for decentralised school governance reveals that very little research has been conducted on the experiences and perceptions of SDCs and their communities to the value addition of capacity development programmes in the functioning of School Development Committees of rural schools.

Since the introduction of parental participation in education in Zimbabwe, it is evident that the concepts and practice of decentralised school governance are still new to most parents and also that democratic governance generally has presented challenges (Zvobgo, 1999) in situations where group participation has been hampered by political polarisation (Global Partnership Agreement for Zimbabwe - GPA, 2009) and a lack of skills among members of the SDCs. As a result, it has become critical for public sector service providers and non-state actors to arrange capacity building programmes in such cases to help enhance understanding of concepts and roles among members of school development committees.

Among a number of official programmes that have been implemented through School Development Committees in Zimbabwe since 2008 are included; the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), The Block Grants Programme under the National Action for the Orphan and the Vulnerable Children, the Better

Schools Programme of Zimbabwe (BSPZ) directly under the Ministry but funded by Dutch Embassy and the Education Transition Fund coordinated by UNICEF and funded by a consortium of donors in a model reminiscent of basket funding (UNICEF, 2012).

Subsequently, a number of other capacity development programmes have also been on-going through the local support networks of the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture at District, Ward and Cluster levels in an effort to improve capacity for School Development Committees (Manicaland Provincial Education Directorate, 2011). To a large extent and with due respect to the immense work carried out by various NGOs, arguments are that in spite of these interventions, there is still evidence of poor performance of School Development Committees in carrying out their mandates (Chatiza, *et all,* 2011). Arising from this observation is the question of whether the capacity development programmes to SDCs are having a positive effect which can be appreciated by the members of the SDCs and their communities.

Chatiza, *et al* (2011) and Mafora, (2013) recognise that many researchers find it difficult to establish whether the proliferation of capacity development programmes to decentralised school committees has led to improved performance of the targeted bodies, noting that while many studies have been conducted on capacity building for decentralised school governing bodies, a few have focused on the perceptions and impressions created by the recipients. In the problem statement above, this researcher subscribes to the arguments by both Chatiza, *et al,* (2011) and Mafora, (2013) and also those put forward by Mothata, (2000:78) that to offer training to school governing bodies is one thing; but to ensure that the training and capacity building programmes produce outcomes is another. Based on the above, it was imperative that an exploration of whether capacity building programmes towards SDCs are yielding concrete outcomes that are appreciated by the recipients be conducted.

As pointed out elsewhere in this report, while it is difficult to dispute the benefits that capacity development has on SDCs, there is evidence that SDCs still lacked expertise in financial management and budgeting (Hadebe *et al*, 2011), they work without school development plans (CfBT, 2012), they lack expertise in constitution making (Nyandoro*, et al*, 2013), they do not have skills to conduct assessments of their school environments and lack proper professional development initiatives for staff and teachers to provide quality education (Chikoko, 2008; Harris, 2010). Relations between school governing bodies and school management is perpetually riddled with conflicts attributed partly to a lack of clarity of roles but mainly lack of skills generally in school governance among SDCs (Kurebwa, Nduna, & Wadesango, 2013; Muwanzi, 2009). The above variables would need interrogation from a point of view of the recipients of the capacity development programmes.

1.4. Purpose statement

The purpose of this research was to explore perceptions and experiences of School Development Committees from the six Pafiwa cluster schools in Mutasa District on the usefulness of capacity building programmes on their performance as SDCs.

While a number of factors have been noted in Zimbabwe that influence the performance of SDCs (Chirume, Dirwai and Maisiri, 2009), understanding the perceptions and experiences of SDCs as recipients of capacity development support would enable development programmes in the education sector to direct or redirect their resources and attention to appropriate and specific capacity development issues that help improve the performance of school development committees, thereby having value addition to school improvement in the area.

1.5. Research questions

This study was undertaken in order to understand the perceptions of the participating communities on the specific value adding effect of capacity building

programmes to the way SDCs perform. Outlined below are the key questions that guided the research:

1. What are the capacity building programmes that were offered to School Development Committees in Pafiwa cluster from 2008 to 2011?
2. What was the value derived from these programmes to the recipient SDCs and their communities' in the cluster
3. What are the perceptions of the participating communities on the indicators of an effective SDC?
4. What were the communities' preferences in skills that make SDCs run effectively?

From these reference questions, the study was able to distil the perceptions of the respective SDCs through their communities on each capacity development programme identified in the research and was able to understand the opinion of cluster representatives on the value of each capacity building programme that have been directed to the school development committees in Pafiwa cluster in the four years from 2008 to 2011.

The research also outlined perceptions of SDC representatives and their communities around ways to improve on the capacity development programmes for future development of their schools.

1.6. Structure of the report

This research report is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research orientation looking at the importance of the school governing bodies to the education system in Zimbabwe, problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions.

Chapter 2 provides a Literature review of recent and pertinent literature on key issues around education decentralisation, capacity development and implications

on school development committees. In this chapter, definition of capacity development and multiple interpretations are explored and benchmarked with other scholarly opinions on the same subject. The chapter also provides literal insights around the rationale for decentralised school governance and parental participation and the challenges associated with this. A comparison of South African experiences with capacity building of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) is presented against experiences of School Development Committees (SDCs) in Zimbabwe

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology applied including sampling and questions framework design

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of data in the form of illustrative methods including written texts, tables, figures and symbols representing the events in the social lives of the Pafiwa cluster community that mark the provision of capacity development for the six schools.

Chapter 5 discusses findings of the study and places them to relate to the research questions and the central thrust of exploring the perceptions and experiences of the recipients of capacity intervention in the study area and analysing these perceptions against the usefulness of capacity development interventions to the performance of School Development Committees in Pafiwa cluster.

Chapter 6 provides recommendations on interventions to strengthen or improve the methods, processes and nature of capacity building to the school governing bodies in the cluster with a view that doing so will improve relevance in programming.

Chapter 7 offers conclusions from the study

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter consults relevant literature on the subject of capacity development of decentralised school governance systems such as School Development Committees with a focus on the opinions of the beneficiaries regarding the value adding effect of such support. This is done in order to provide a critical synthesis of what has already been written on the topic. A literature review is a body of knowledge whose objective is to review the critical points on a particular topic or issue (Badenhorst, 2007). The ultimate goal of the literature review in this research is to bring this writer and the reader up to speed with current views on the subjects of governance, decentralised school governance and capacity building of school development committees. By consulting the literature written previously on these topics, the writer works on the assumption that people learn from and build on what others have done (Neuman, 2011).

Drawing from a wide range of published and unpublished literature sources, this research locates in this chapter, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning the subject of Capacity Development (CD) in relationship to decentralised school governance. It briefly outlines some of the reasons for the emergent interest in capacity development for decentralised education governance and implications for School Development Committees in Zimbabwe.

The chapter also explores the link between capacity building and the functioning of School Development Committees and identifies the value adding effect to the Committees, as documented by other authors based on the reference questions that guided the researcher as spelt out on page 23.

The chapter concludes by providing a constructed concept of capacity development for School Development Committees in Zimbabwe in general and the Pafiwa cluster of Mutasa District in particular.

2.2. Definition of terms and concepts

2.2.1. Education Decentralisation

Various insights have been proffered in explaining education decentralisation and the challenges associated with its implementation on the ground. This section argues that education decentralisation works well in an environment where those mandated for decentralised education governance, are well capacitated to carry out their roles (McCrone, Southcott and George, 2011) and that those to whom capacity building support is provided, find value in it resulting in their effectiveness in running their schools (Duma, Kapueja, and Khanyile, 2011; UNICEF, 2012).

This research shares the view that the move towards decentralised school governance in which inter-relationships and professional working group interactions among parents, and other stakeholders in the schools (Samkange, 2013) is thought to have carried progressive possibilities for education service delivery effectiveness in Zimbabwe. In part, this derives from a critique of the former colonial centralised education systems (Chikoko, 2008; Mncube, Mafora, 2013) in which parents and the community at large, had limited influence in the education of their children. This critique is also shared by Chatiza *et al,* (2011) who observed the importance of the demand side role of parents in education service delivery and the need for their representatives in SDCs to be helped through capability strengthening.

Educational decentralisation is a universal phenomenon. However, others feel the concept is known to have more problems than those it addresses (Muwanzi, 2009). Muwanzi, (2009) defines decentralisation as the process of dispersing decision making power to the people. However for this process to be well

understood, it is critical also to look at the context in which such decision making power is dispersed so that a proper definition of decentralised school governance is appropriately constructed for SDCs in Zimbabwe in general and for the purposes of this research in particular. It has been noted (Gershberg and Winkler, 2003) that African educational decentralisation occurs in the context of severe deficiencies in education access and quality and that decentralisation is therefore often a notion to transfer authority from central or provincial government to schools and communities. Although there is a risk in this argument that undermines the real need for decentralised education governance particularly in post colonial settings, in which educational inequalities have been perpetuated out of centralization of education governance systems (Nziramasanga, 1999), this view is however collaborated by Marishane(1999:78), who writes that the concept of decentralisation in education originates from the belief that the state alone cannot control schools, but should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those closer to the school, on a partnership basis.

It therefore is noteworthy to acknowledge as does Gultig, (2002:5) that by actively involving all members of the school community in the implementation of school development, only then can the education systems hope to generate the kind of parental commitment necessary to foster continuous school improvement. Central to this argument is the idea of partnerships, and the ideal of institutionalising the presence of parents within the school governance system through providing for parental ownership of schools (Bush, Kiggundu, and Moorosi, 2011) and requiring parents to take responsibility, with the state, for issues such as school quality.

In Zimbabwe, the institution to which school governance power has been decentralised i.e. the SDCs have functioned unevenly due to capacity or as observed by Muwanzi, (2009) skill gaps and unequal management expertise. This scenario is also confirmed by Murtin (2013) that these skills gaps are more pronounced for instance between former white schools and those in rural or black

dominated schools. Mtshali, (2012) further put weight on this argument by observing from a study by the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Social Development that looked at the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies in South Africa (SGBs - an equivalent of SDCs in Zimbabwe) in underperforming schools, that the relative contribution of the SGB to the governance of a particular school depends, largely on the demographics and socio-economic context the school finds itself in.

The point being emphasized above is that schools in the more affluent areas have a greater pool of financial and social resources that parents can draw from which can spill over to the way their SDCs perform. This view further supports Murtin's (2013: 21) argument that "decentralisation and the move towards greater school autonomy do not necessarily yield good outcomes when the whole school system is not functioning well." This state is arguably a result of a lack of skills and financial resources among members of the school parent assemblies.

The rationale for capacity building programmes for effective education decentralisation therefore is about improving efficiency, effectiveness and promoting democracy and accountability in schools (Caldwell, 2005), moving towards collaborative decision-making by involving principals, teachers, parents and students (Agbo, 2002), democratising schools by giving more power and control over education to stakeholders (Mafora, 2013), circumventing unresponsive bureaucracies (Lingard *et al*. 2002), and improving communication and planning in schools, (Mafora, 2013).

The World Bank (2012) argued that reasons why some of the developing countries had opted for educational decentralisation policies were fiscal constraints and the opportunity to share the burden of education finance with the intended beneficiaries. This they went on to argue increased the prospects for increased competence; redistribution of political power from provincial to lower levels of district and council; and increased innovation in education service delivery. The above view is important in Zimbabwe given the pressure of

education financing to the fiscus in the country as observed by Nyandoro, Mapfumo and Makoni, (2013). It therefore may be argued that one of the duties of effective School Development Committees is to maintain good relationships with the community in order to gain financial and material support from the same community (Chikoko, 2007; Nyandoro *et al,* 2013). The view therefore that the main drivers for education decentralisation in Zimbabwe were to share the financial burden and to increase local relevance of education in the country may not be farfetched.

It is important to note that while education laws may provide opportunities for school development committees to be more involved in school development activities (Bush, Kiggundu, Moorosi, 2011), SDCs may not necessarily be successful in supporting schools to improve the quality of the education if they lack among their members, the human and institutional capabilities. This is believed by Ranson, (2011: pp 2) to be possible if "a partnership has developed between the governors and the school and, in particular, between the head and the chair…" It is this willingness amongst parents and communities to influence the goings on in schools, which creates a conducive atmosphere necessary for the development of skills and capabilities amongst elected school assemblies such as SDCs so that they can effectively be credible in governing their schools (Bush, Heystek, 2003).

Therefore, in reference to the fundamental importance of capacity and capability in the School Development Committees, there has to be a major shift to the self-governance of schools worldwide. Although this self-governance has been experienced in diverse ways, the assumption has been that greater autonomy improves educational outcomes (Bush *et al*, 2003; James, 2010). However, despite the benefits brought about by the self-regulatory autonomy of education decentralisation, in Zimbabwe, the autonomy that schools have gained is constrained by the lack of skills and expertise and it is that wider system of governance incapacity which creates a market for capacity development service

providers to SDCs. Thus while a large number of other agencies and institutions also play a part in the governance of schools (Mtshali, 2012), the various roles and responsibilities of the different actors, and the interconnections and relationships between them, together is observed by Chatiza, et al, (2011) to create a capacity development market and network of appropriate and sustainable for School Development Committees in the country.

Decentralised school governing therefore can be considered to be complementary and co-governance (Kooiman and Jentoft, 2009:823) where "societal parties join hands with a common purpose in mind" to bring development to schools. However, while School Development Committees are responsible for the conduct of their schools they sometimes delegate powers to their School Heads (James, 2010) and at the same time, are required to call the school head to account. Therefore the idea of school governance being a preserve of only SDCs even in the wake of decentralised authority, may be erroneous and limits other providers of skills outside SDC members to play their role in adding value to capabilities required for effective school governance.

In terms of legal frameworks guiding decentralised school governance, many states have established laws that govern education decentralisation to include the parental involvement in the governance of schools (Dekker, 1994; Duma, 1995; and Motala, 2000). This parental component in school governance is therefore designed to bring about the democratisation of education, which encompasses the idea that parents, as one of the major stakeholders in schools, should be able to participate in the governance of their schools, through School Development Committees in which the numbers of parents must be greater than the total number of other members of such an entity on voting rights (Zimbabwe Education Act of 2006: Chapter 25:04.)

Schools through their SDCs therefore need to provide redress through equitable use of public resources, improve educational quality, and provide for democratic

school-based decision-making (Joubert, 1995). This allows parents and other community members and stakeholders an opportunity to make decisions about the way schools in their localities are governed.

Given the gaps in the expectations of education decentralisation above, it was therefore appropriate to assess the effects of capacity development in the discharge of responsibilities and mandates of SDCs in Zimbabwe in line with beneficiary expectations.

2.2.2. Understanding school governance

This section discusses an understanding of school governance drawing from widely accepted public governance norms. The section also offers a triangulation of various points of view in understanding governance with the generally observed governance trends in School Development Committees in Zimbabwe as membership based institutions.

In an executive guide to the Third King Report on Governance for South Africa 2009, Suresh Kana, Chief Executive Officer of PricewaterhouseCoopers Southern Africa pointed out that “While we understand that achieving good governance is a complex task, we believe that sound governance practices offer numerous practical benefits and that organisations should integrate such practices into their operational processes” (King III Report, 2009: 1). While this view is made in reference to corporate governance in the private sector, the view also points to the importance of enhancing governance capability among public institutions and including those associated with public education service delivery systems such as School Development Committees.

Governance can be viewed to mean the exercise of directing influence over deliverables. The World Book Dictionary (2003:921) puts weight to the above view by looking at the word to govern as synonymous with to rule, control, and to

work with resources to achieve objectives of the organisation "...through planning, organising, leading, and controlling". This opinion is also consistent with Glatter (2002: 227) who defined governance as the means by which "an ensemble of activities are controlled or directed, such that they deliver an acceptable range of outcomes according to established sound standards". In reference to SDCs, this is a role that starts from parents' contributions at meetings and spreads to their contribution in executing the resolutions of their meetings, and thereby increasing parental influence in the management of schools (Shumane, 2009).

The supervisory role in the above views is a key mandate which needs to be assumed by SDCs for effective governance in schools. For example, parents who are members of school development committees must visit schools to see that teaching does take place and that the students or learners are learning within environments that are child friendly. When School Development Committees are doing their task of governing, they have to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure school development is leading to the attainment of minimum school functionality standards (Nyandoro, *et al,* 2013) through their provision of quality leadership and guidance.

Within the above set up, it is therefore prudent to acknowledge that rural School Development Committees with no proper and formal training in education legislations are expected to deal with legally challenging circumstances. This situation makes it difficult for SDCs to be effective in school governance (Mafora, 2013). Therefore training programmes for rural SDCs are often organized with the expectations that they will not only equip them with the tools they require for effective school governance obligations, but also to promote their status as effective school development committees (Nyandoro *et al*, 2013).

Given a visible mismatch between responsibilities and capacity of SDCs in rural schools, the duties of school committees as laid down in various countries'

education statutes requires high levels of literacy and relevant expertise (Potgieter, Bank, Mothaba, 1997). The conclusion is therefore that where school development committees lack the requisite expertise, school governance is inhibited. An example proffered by Potgieter, *et al*, (1997:38) in support of this argument is that while one of the duties of school governing bodies is to raise money for schools and carry out projects to earn income, the challenge of raising money for people without expertise, and often from people living below the subsistence level themselves is indeed a daunting task.

This imbalance arguably leaves the school committees particularly from the previously disadvantaged schools, incapacitated in their efforts to match policies with practice. Accordingly, Duma (1995) observed that well capacitated parent assemblies will in times of need make quick, accurate, and critical decisions regarding the development of their schools. Consequently, the training of rural school parent assemblies (SDCs) provides for more potent and constructive parent representatives.

2.2.3. Challenges associated with decentralised school governance

This section looks at the paradigm of school governance and the challenges of capacity in the system today to exercise the business of decentralised school governance. It also unpacks insights from authors on the relevance of capacity building to those tasked to provide leadership in the governance of schools.

Elmore, (2000) points out that Public Schools and School Systems were simply not being led in ways that enabled them to respond to the increasing demands they faced. He observed that this is because in the main, leaders in all sectors of society are creatures of the organizations they lead and that this is truer in public education, where school heads, principals, district officials and members of school governance structures are recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of practice. The argument proffered here is that one does not get to lead in education without being well socialized to the norms, values, predispositions, and

routines of the sector. This view suggests that if the sector has not been supported with skills for school governance, then the current education apparatus for school governance and leadership are no better equipped than the organizations they lead to meet the challenges posed by the system and demands of parents for how their schools ought to be governed.

School governance is about creating, implementing, supervising and evaluating policies and rules, (Motimele, 2005) which guide and govern the actions of the school and its members. In other words, school governance is concerned with the creation of policies for the school and making sure that the schools are run according to the set policies (Nyandoro, *et al*, 2013). In Zimbabwe, parents or guardians form a majority of members of a school governing body because according to the Statutory Instrument 87 of 1992, they are the ones who have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the schools are run (governed and managed) well and that they are developed in accordance with the Government's set minimum functionality standards.

The difference between school governance and school management is noted by Motimele (2005). School management is about the day to day running of the school. In other words, this refers to the organisation of the teaching and learning in a school and related activities (e.g. managing staff, detailed planning of the curriculum, assessing learners and educators). The School Head together with the School Management Team is responsible for school management. While school governance and school management are not the same, it is important to understand that some of the responsibilities of school governance overlap with those of school management e.g. school development planning, budgeting and upholding child a friendly learning environment (Chigome *et al*, 2010). This has led in many cases to animosity between those whose mandate it is to manage (School Heads) and those whose mandate it is to govern (SDCs). However the animosity points more to issues of capacity and failure in role clarification by each

of these categories leading to encroachment into each other's spaces (Chatiza, *et al*, 2011).

There are cross cutting obligations however where school development committees and school managers are equally responsible for protecting the rights of all learners, for maintaining discipline and for financial management (Brown and Duku, 2008). It is therefore important that school committees and school managers have the requisite skills and capabilities to work together and respect each other's areas of responsibility. This justifies capacity development support given to SDCs through many service providers in the education sector. Naidoo, (2005:78) acknowledges that capacity development programmes do not only make the work of school committees easier, but they also reduce conflicts between the committee members and the school managers (School Heads) leading to beneficial relations in the school.

The essence of the above understanding is that when well capacitated, school committees start to understand their spaces and avoid stepping on the toes of school heads and vise-versa, the usefulness of capacity building interventions on various behaviours, attitudes, values and environments that work against the proper functioning and performance of SDCs is easily demonstrable.

2.2.4. Capacity development

This section provides readers with the philosophy, theory and concepts on and systematic approaches to capacity building and how it is applied to the functioning of School Development Committees. The section starts by building up various definitions and views on the issue of capacity development. It concludes by offering the study's constructed definition of capacity development for School Development Committees in the Pafiwa cluster of Mutasa District.

Capacity building has become central to the sector assistance strategies (Brown, LaFond, and Macintyre, 2001) and experience suggests that achieving better

education delivery services outcomes requires both an injection of resources and adequate local capacity to use those resources effectively. Capacity in the education sector is therefore critical to sustaining outcomes at school level and reducing reliance on external assistance.

There are numerous definitions of capacity building in the education sector, and each of them reflects a particular bias on a continuum between being a ‘process’ on the one hand, and an ‘approach’ on the other (Bolger, 2000; DFID 2013). This continuum exists for a variety of reasons given a diversity of disciplines and bodies of knowledge such as organizational development or political contexts which see capacity issues quite differently (Morgan, 2006).

The debate on capacity development further extends into the realm of international aid for rural development. For instance, in strengthening public institutions in Africa, the World Bank has progressively broadened its capacity building support to include strengthening of community (parental) participation in decision making in education, public financial management, decentralization, and governance, and increased its range of lending towards delivering capacity building support (World Bank, 2010). This is probably out of recognition that capacity building is a long-term process requiring a systemic approach (Morgan, 2006). However, most capacity building support in education has arguably remained fragmented with many programmes founded on inadequate needs assessments and lacking appropriate measures (Bruto, Smith and Skoelv, 2006). The failure to articulate a common ground for capacity building in education service delivery is arguably a manifestation of the general failure to articulate capacity challenges across sectors in deserving countries such as Zimbabwe.

Accordingly, Morgan, (2006) characterises ‘capacity’ amongst other things to be ability, skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions that enable individuals, organizations, networks and broader social systems to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time. Capacity development therefore can be summarised as the contribution of

attributes that enables a human system to create development value (Morgan 2006). This is consistent with the view that capacity is the ability of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations to identify and solve development problems over time. The approaches, strategies and methodologies which seek to improve performance at different social levels may be different (Bolger, 2000) but the end results need to be the same. In other words, there is therefore no single approach that can be prescribed for capacity development let alone at school governance level.

However, one way of understanding capacity development would be through unpacking variables associated with capacity. Ubels, Acquaye-Baddoo and Fowler (2010) observed the following variables about what capacity is and what its development entails: that "Some see capacity development as a central rationale, even a core function, of the development work. Others see it as a means only. Some think of skills training and others of organisational development." (Ubels *et al*, 2010: 1). Drawing from these conclusions, it is easy to identify with the capacity development outputs for School Development Committees as having to do with efficient utilisation of technical assistance, organisational/institutional development, training and or even policy change.

Watson and Qadir Khan, (2005) in their examination of capacity development for decentralised education governance in Pakistan, identified a number of factors that present challenges to capacity development for decentralised school based governance systems, how these differ from one context to another, and why efforts to develop capacity have been more successful in some school governance contexts than in others. They noted a number of factors negatively influencing the development of capacity for education decentralization. These include the bureaucratic characteristics of the education system forged during colonial times; reduced morale among staff at district levels to supervise and conduct capacity development; deterioration of staff management at district level to spearhead capacity development for school governance; a lack of incentives to perform and hold together processes for education decentralization; and the

modest public expectations of the state of education system in developing nations. The report concluded that in Pakistan as in many under developed nations, capacities for capacity development are limited and that those that are in place have to be examined for their value adding effect (Watson and Qadir Khan, 2005).

Acknowledging the diversities of what capacity and its development entails in view of Pakistan and Zimbabwe examples, this study however notes the similarities in the factors affecting capacity development for school development committees. The focus on exploring capacity development that increases empowerment, voice and participation of the SDCs to conduct the school business, is therefore consistent with the view that capacity development is the process by which individuals in the committees increase their abilities to perform functions (Ubels, *et al*, 2010), solve problems and achieve objectives (Muwanzi, 2009) and ultimately to help them understand and deal with their development needs in a broader context and in a sustainable manner (UNDP, 2012).

In the context of SDCs, capacity building becomes about understanding roles and functions that lead to school improvement (Chigome, *et al.* 2010; Morgan, 2006). This encompasses parent school relations, financial accountability, school improvement planning, role clarification, team building and conflict management in schools.

Consequently, OECD, (2012) draw some parallelisms with Bolger, (2000), and Morgan, (2006) in appealing to the importance of conditions that enable individuals in an institution, or networks to carry out functions for which they were formed and achieve their development objectives over time. The same capacity resources and conditions are also appropriate to the running of school development committees as they touch on the legal, social and moral fabric upon which the SDCs are founded.

It would therefore be appropriate to assess the effectiveness of School Development Committees in discharging their responsibilities in the context of the above broad expectations (i.e. skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions) and the extent to which the benefits associated with capacity building are demonstrable in the functioning of the decentralised school governance structures (Mafora, 2013). Another critical area in the trajectory of capacity building is the justification of why capacity building is needed for SDCs and any other membership based institutions. UNICEF (2012) reported that the issue of capacity was critical and the scale of need was also enormous, but appreciation of the problem was low. The argument facing the subject is that the link between needs of capacity development and supply of the same is weak and that there was a lack of systemic realistic funding towards capacity development of SDCs in Zimbabwe (CfBT, 2012).

The process of involving parents in the governance of rural schools has been described by (Duma *et al*, 2011) as difficult to manage because of the high rate of illiteracy among the parent governors. It therefore can be argued that school decentralisation has been conducive only among higher-income schools, which Hanushek and Woessmann (2013) argue have more experience and human capability in designing effective governance, accountability and evaluation systems. Therefore, while the issue of capacity is central to the performance of SDCs, in a country where such capacity has been provided in various ways and through various organisations, it has been necessary that the value addition of such interventions be explored so as to learn from them.

2.3. Lessons from South Africa

In 1994 the South African government recognised that many school governing bodies, particularly those in rural and less advantaged urban areas, did not have the required skills and experience to exercise their new powers and had difficulty fulfilling their functions (Van Wyk, 2004). To deal with this, the South African School Act (SASA), 1996a: section 19, made it an obligation for provincial governments to provide training for school governing bodies. In this way, the

state hoped to build a framework for the governance of schools which according to Van Wyk, (2004) was characterised by power sharing among parents, educators and the community in order to support the core values of democracy and contribute to more effective schools. Thus according to Van Wyk's (2004), broadsheet on governing bodies and effective schools, six features for effectiveness appear: working as a team; good relationships with principals; effective time management and delegation; effective meetings; knowledge of the school; and the training and development of school governors. While there is no doubt that training and development of school governors may lead to all the six features, there is however not enough documentation of the opinions of those to whom capacity building programmes are targeted, regarding the value they get from such programmes.

Advocates of education decentralisation have argued that to ensure improvement in schools, those closest to the learners should be offered the authority to make key decisions (Van Wyk, 2004). The challenge however has been that under education decentralisation, neither parents nor educators have had much experience of "participatory decision making since, in the past, Principals were considered to be the only people with the knowledge and authority to make decisions" (Heysteck & Paquette, 1999:191). Therefore attempts to decentralize have been characterised by acrimony amongst members of the school governing bodies and the school management (Van Wyk, 2004)

As are the cases in Zimbabwe, schools in South Africa are required by law to form School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in which the majority of members are parents, (Mncube *et al* 2011). The argument was that in a country emerging from apartheid induced social injustices (Mncube, *et al* 2011), this would give power and voice to parents in the governance of schools as a way in which issues of democracy and social justice could be advanced in matters concerning education delivery (Duma, 2008).

It therefore has been observed that SGBs in South Africa face many difficulties which threaten their effectiveness and their ability to represent all members of their school community. Motimele, (2005) identifies the following obstacles to South African SGBs which include: SGBs limiting their focus only on budgets and school fees rather than on issues related to teaching, learning, and school moral, decline of state funding leading to SGBs being handed the responsibility of fundraising, resulting in unequal funding for schools, inadequate SGB training resulting in ill prepared SGB members who cannot deal with their complex responsibilities and roles (Motimele, 2005). Despite of all these challenges, SGBs have been known to provide prospects for enhancing the quality of education for all learners in South Africa through democratisation of the school system (Mncube *et al*, 2013), yet in the main they have received fragmented support in the form of capacity development programmes.

The above insights by various authors point to an argument that if SGBs in South Africa like SDCs in Zimbabwe, were to be able to exert any meaningful influence on the schools they preside over, they need to define the basic fundamental expertise and capabilities that relate to their responsibilities (Maluleka, 2008) in governing schools. Therefore, the insights proffered in the South African example above as it is for the Zimbabwe case, while pointing to the need for building capacities among school governing bodies, does elaborate on the importance of understanding the views and opinions of those targeted through capacity development programmes.

Evidence shows that strong SDCs can have a positive impact on school performance (Taylor and Mabogoane, 2012). This research identified the following measurement variables to validate the opinions of those receiving capacity building support; effective conduct of meetings, improved clarification of roles and responsibilities of office bearers, improved management of school finances, improved Teaching & Learning Materials in schools, enhanced school improvement planning, improved school parents relations, improved Teacher

welfare, and an improved child friendly school environment. These variables have been generalized in six themes namely skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions of teaching and learning in schools.

Strategies focusing on enhancing school leadership and school governance are therefore viewed in a very favourable way to improve school outcomes measurable through some of the above variables in disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2012). However, central to this must be to validate if indeed the value adding effect noted in these variables are a function of the capacity development programmes organized for these parental committees.

This view is consistent with Kogan (1984) who argues that parents need to be part and parcel of the training and development choices made towards enhancing education leadership system as they are part of the wider governing managerial structures through which there is participation and representation of all social structures with an interest in education. Because the duty of the parents in school governance is to represent the parent dimension of school governance (Duma, 1995; Van der Bank & Mothaba, 1997), they need to be privileged with the decision to help design capacity building programmes designed to support them to be effective in the conduct of their duties. Parent governors represent the broad community spectrum such as the parents, private sector, the church, and so on in the running of schools and therefore a one size fit all approach to their capacity building may not generate the requisite skills for them to be effective. This attracts the question whether they are getting value in the various support programmes for capacity development programmes which have been designed on their behalf.

The above insights demonstrate a need to pay attention to the capabilities of parents in the running of school affairs, but more so, to determine the perceptions of the recipient on what effect capacity building programmes had on the

functioning of decentralised school governance systems such as SDCs given the capability challenges of SDCs generally in Zimbabwe.

2.4. The conceptual framework

It is widely recognised that there is a mismatch between responsibilities and capacity of School Development Committees in rural schools. For instance, Potgieter, (1997:14) observed that election of parents into school governing bodies is by no means an end in itself. This point to the centrality of capacity development interventions that enable school development committees to become effective and an exploration whether these programmes are adding value in the eyes of the SDC representatives in Zimbabwe.

This conceptual framework however suggests that capacity development programmes for SDCs which are typified by a genuine democratic climate, must be measurable through effective conduct of meetings by SDCs, clarified roles and responsibilities of office bearers, improved management of school finances, provision of Teaching & Learning Materials in schools, enhanced school improvement planning, improved school parents relations, provisions of Teacher welfare, and improved child friendly school environment. These could be generalized to mean improved skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions at school level (Connolly, Chris, and Brammer, 2010) as result of effective SDCs exercising their duties at school level.

In this research, these are the variables which have been used to measure and validate the value adding effect of capacity development programmes to SDCs in the Pafiwa cluster.

2.4.1. Performance of SDCs as a function of capacity building

Measuring performance of School Development Committees through such support as capacity development programmes is not a readily straightforward exercise and as observed by Wadesango, Nduna and Kurebwa (2013), it is not devoid of conceptual and methodological difficulties. One reason for the difficulty associated with this exercise is that the benefits often associated with capacity development may not be conveniently qualifiable or quantifiable and as argued by Ogiogio, (2004), the rate of return to investment in capacity development may not be defined for a number of interventions without a significant margin of error.

This suggests there may not be a single commonly accepted way in which performance measurement of school development committees is undertaken neither is it easy to attribute performance of a school development committee to one factor such as capacity development intervention alone. What to measure and the level at which to undertake the measurement depends on the objectives of the measurement and the main area of interest to the agency conducting it (Ogiogio, 2004).

Differences may occur on where the real location of capacity ought to be (Morgan, 2006). However, in the case of this research, because the unit of analysis was on capacity development interventions designed in favour of SDCs in Pafiwa, the assumption is therefore that capacity development needs to manifest itself within the changes and transformation of these SDCs in light of the aforementioned broad variables on page 36 i.e. improved skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions of teaching and learning at school level.

Another critical factor in this conceptual framework is the question whether capacity development is a panacea to the performance of SDCs. A study by Mabey and Ramirez (2003), found that capacity development is not the sole most important factor in making a good and effective structure or organisation. Other

factors such as inherent ability of members, personality and experience were also important to the performance of SDCs. Mabey and Ramirez (2003) found that the skills most in demand for institutions to be successful included people management skills and an understanding of behavioural issues, leadership, team working and customer focus. They went on to conclude that capacity development training on functional and technical skills is not unimportant, but it is these softer skills that may define success in organisations. This view is consistent with that of Chatiza *et al*, (2011) about the need for relationship skills for School Development Committees in Zimbabwe

For the purposes of this research therefore, capacity development was taken to be synonymous with activities that are designed to improve the performance of SDCs by strengthening their governance, leadership, management, or administration skills based against the yardstick presented in the analytical framework above.

2.5. Conclusion

The significance of the literature review presented in this chapter is that while there have been prior studies conducted in the area of capacity building of School Development Committees, there is an observation that few of these studies have focused on the value adding effect of the programmes based on the perceptions and opinions of the target groups. The sections above have looked at various insights and definitions that have been proffered for education decentralisation and the capacity challenges associated with its implementation on the ground. The sections have also discussed an understanding of school governance by drawing from various authors' purviews of accepted governance norms, and by portraying a trajectory of generally observed governance trends in School Development Committees in Zimbabwe, drawing from lessons in South Africa.

These insights helped to narrow down on the philosophy, theory and concepts and approaches to capacity building of SDCs and conclude by offering below, the study's constructed concept of capacity development for School Development Committees in the area of study.

The research therefore settled on a definition of capacity development constructed around the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. This construction of a working definition for SDCs in Zimbabwe is consistent with the observation from the participants' perceptions of capacity building as well as consistent with that of OECD (2006,) that capacity development is fundamentally about change and transformation, at individual, organisational, institutional or societal levels.

In view of various theories and concepts on capacity development proffered above, the choice for such a working definition is further premised on the understanding that SDCs, which are constituted by members of society with diverse needs, have a duty to ensure that the net effect of capacity development goes beyond the schools they govern but also that it is reflective in societies where they come from. Therefore, from capacity development interventions provided to School Development Committees in Zimbabwe, one ought to establish whether the way SDCs perform, is truly a function of systemic capacity building interventions provided to these SDCs or it is merely a result of existing prior knowledge among SDC members. Most critically, the target audience (SDC members) must be in a position to validate the importance of such interventions to their performance in SDC matters, post capacity development support.

CHAPTER THREE

REASEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The research largely applied a qualitative method in collecting and analysing primary data through focus group discussions complimented by selected interviews of key Ministry Officials at District and Provincial Offices. The qualitative methodology was preferred for the purposes of this research because according to Merriam, (1992:9) qualitative research interviews are characterised by flexible, evolving and emergent features. This has the advantage of anticipating findings of a social phenomenon that are linked to society such as understanding people's perceptions about an intervention. According to Merriam (1992:9), this allows the research findings to be "comprehensive, holistic, expansive and richly descriptive"

The research was therefore designed to be a mix of both descriptive and explanatory type as it sought to describe the perceptions on the usefulness of capacity development programmes in the work of the SDCs in Mutasa District and also to explain the type of capacity development intervention that communities cherish.

3.2. Delimitation of the research

3.2.1. Focus area

The research focused mainly on the six schools in the cluster namely, Pafiwa Primary School, Bonda Primary, Pafiwa Mutasa High School (PMHS), Chirarwe Secondary School, St Mathias Tsonzo High School, and Manunure Primary School. Trust or private schools in the same cluster were not involved in the sampling due to the limited involvement of their parent bodies in school governance emanating from the legislative differences.

The target population was 1 School Development Committee member (Chairperson), 1 Head of schools per each school or their Deputy, 1 Teacher per school, The District Education Officer, and parents selected on the basis of simple random selection. Simple random selection for parents was favoured for its simplicity and unbiased nature (Kumar, 2010) in that each element in this population stood an equal chance of making a contribution as they had a vested interest in the capacity of their SDCs.

The challenges associated with recruiting the samples were in respect of the number of parents per schools. It was difficult to have a uniform number of parents per school as some parents had different children attending different schools in the same cluster so that during the sample, they had dual or multiple representations of schools. This meant that for each school represented, the Chairperson of that SDC would carry the votes and be counted as the representative of the school on variables which needed scoring and quantitative analysis.

Focus group discussions were conducted with the representatives from the six schools in Pafiwa cluster. There were four facilitated sessions which identified capacity interventions that these groups remember from 2008 to 2011. These sessions were arranged in accordance with the following themes: capacity and skills preferences by the SDCs in the area; participants' perceptions on the qualitative value of capacity building programmes to the functioning of SDCs in the area, and the preferred indicators of good performing SDCs.

The sessions also looked at how these groups had experienced each particular capacity development intervention provided to some members of their SDCs with particular reference to the following variables:

- Role clarification
- Finance mobilisation and management

- Development and management of School Development Plans,
- Continuous assessments of school environments for the creation of Child Friendly Schools
- Conflict resolutions between school governing bodies and school management
- Provision of adequate Teaching and Learning Materials

A triangulation of insights from the focus group discussions was done against insights from interviews with the SDC chairpersons and those of District Ministry officials. This was important in that some of these selected persons were direct key representatives of the Ministry and that they were equally interested in the capacity building programmes designed for School Development Associations under their jurisdiction. A triangulation of these qualitative views in this research was preferred because “qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations” (Natasha, 2005: 1). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how different people experience a given research issue (Neuman, 2011). This research therefore drew on the merits outlined by the focus group participants and applied them to enrich the findings of the research.

The validation of this qualitative method was largely based on the rich descriptions of the perceptions that the communities, the SDC Chairpersons and representatives of school development committees made about the usefulness of capacity development programmes to their SDCs. Official checks through ministry officials at District level particularly the District Education Officer at Watsomba Growth Point in Mutasa and his Education Inspectors were also applied as useful validation of capacity development programmes for school development committees in the cluster.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the limitations of identifying performance indicators, this research applied the following attributes as the fundamental analytical framework in the measurement of performance in capacity building intervention for SDCs: relevance of capacity development programmes, effectiveness of the programmes, efficiency utilisation, ownership of interventions, impact, and sustainability of intervention. However it is important to point out that this research did not seek to carry out an impact assessment of capacity development programmes on school governance bodies but sought to explore an understanding of the perceptions of the school development committees about the usefulness of the capacity development programme on their work.

3.2.2. Period of review and analysis

The time covered by this analysis is the period 2008 - 2011. The reason for picking this period was that the more perspective awarded by the passing of time, the greater the opportunity of assessing the value addition effect of the programmes.

In this regard, the writer was cognisant of the observation by UNDP (2013) that the period at which results are measured, after delivery of capacity building support, presents challenges in short periods in that meaningful definition and measurement of outcomes is not easy. The reality that, many experience difficulties in developing realistic, technically sound indicators (UNDP, 2013) for results within short periods of programme implementation was key in deciding the period of review and analysis in this research.

3.3. Data Sources

3.3.1. Primary data used in the research

Primary data from respondents was equally obtained largely through focus group discussions involving the community and interviewing the six School

Development Committee Chairpersons and their School Heads in the cluster. According to (Zikmund, 2003: 175) primary data is “data gathered and assembled for the research project at hand”**.** Therefore, Pafiwa cluster community, the six Chairpersons and their School Heads represented the research population.

The researcher also used Statutory Instruments and the Education Act as primary data to establish the institutional and legal framework governing SDCs and also to help understand the location of SDCs within the school system in Zimbabwe.

Apart from primary data, the research also applied secondary data (see below) to get a comparison with legislation and already processed information. This included analysing evaluation reports from other service providers that have been running capacity development initiatives in the area to ascertaining SDC experiences of whether their performance has been a function of capacity development initiatives provided to them as SDCs.

3.3. 2. Secondary data used in the research

The following is secondary data that was used in the research and the rationale for using such sources is elaborated below

1. Minutes of SDCs:

- These were meant to help understand the quality of engagement within SDC meetings and nature and process of making decisions (which on its own is a validation of performance improvement)

- Minutes of SDCs would also help identify the specific value of the capacity development programmes to the way SDCs perform

2. Ministry Memos:

- Identifying instructions given from MoESAC official and how information was processed and managed by SDCs (validation of performance improvement)

3. NGO Evaluation reports:
   - These helped to identify capacity building programmes that have been directed to SDCs in the schools
   - It also allowed a comparison and validation of programmes of support in capacity development that have been given to the specific SDC by service providers from both state and non state actors and the observations made on their value addition to functioning of SDCs

4. Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) assessments:
   - These provided an in-depth understanding of government position on interventions provided to SDCs and comparing them with the perceptions of the recipients (validation of performance improvement)
   - They helped to describe performance of SDCs prior to and after capacity development initiatives in respect of the selected variables

3.4. Sampling procedures

A sample is a subset of the entire population and representative of the universe Neuman (2010). In this research therefore, sampling was purposeful largely because the research was qualitative. This was inspired by Neuman's (2010: 219) contention that "Qualitative researchers focus less on a sample's representation than on how the sample or small collection of cases, units, or activities illuminates social life." In view of this observation, the choice for a purposeful sampling in this research was important for it was meant to illuminate the processes of social life in the context of school development committees.

While a District can be made up of as many as 15 clusters or more, this research used a sample of only one cluster or circuit in Mutasa District namely Pafiwa. A

cluster or a circuit can be made up of an average of six schools according to Ministry provisions but due to the fact that there have been a number of satellite schools attached to some mother schools due to mobility of families resulting from the Land Reform resettlements, sometimes a cluster could have more than the six prescribed schools and stretch through a wide area in a district. In the case of Pafiwa, while deciding to focus on the legal provision of six schools for a cluster, the writer purposefully selected the schools to give a rich mix of experiences of the area covered by the cluster. The schools, for the purposes of this research, were three secondary schools and three primary schools. These were further broken down as top performing school; middle performing schools and low performing schools. The basis for this categorisation was provided by the District Education Office in Mutasa as per national guidelines and in terms of school functionality standards as previous pointed on pp 16.

The choice of Pafiwa cluster was deliberate in that according to the Manicaland Provincial Office of the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, as according to the Acting Provincial Education Director – Manicaland (2012), “the District attracts a lot of interest from service providers particularly those providing capacity development programmes in the education sector” The author therefore felt the cluster in such a district would arguably provide more interesting insights to the research questions than any other District.

3.5. Data presentation and analysis

One of the weaknesses pointed out by Neuman (2011) about data presentation and analysis in qualitative research is the failure to make data analysis explicit or open to inspection. This is in reference to the use of tables, graphs, charts, indexation and chi squared test statistics that are mostly applied by quantitative researchers. This writer acknowledges such observations but again finds comfort in Neuman’s further argument that much of the best work in social research has been carried out using qualitative methods.

Recognising the above observation, data in this research is therefore presented and analysed in the form of illustrative methods including written texts and simple graphs representing the participants perceptions based on the themes in the analytical framework that mark the capacity development support to SDCs in the Pafiwa Cluster. It is also presented in rich descriptions of pictures and quotes from respondents, interviewees and focus group discussion participants.

3.6. Validity and Reliability

Zikmund (2003) asserts that reliability is the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results overtime while Neuman (2003: 188-189) defines reliability and validity as “dependability and consistency”. Agreeing with these opinions is Nahid (2003: 598) who identified “replicability or repeatability” as key facets for the validity and reliability of research work. The three logics above however confirm the factual importance of validity and reliability of research information. This is why in this research, the data was put to test using proven methods such as making reference to recent and pertinent literature on capacity development and how it relates to the performance of school governing bodies, and comparing these literature insights with sentiments outlined by the focus group participants in quotes.

A comparative analysis of school governance in Zimbabwe, and the effect of capacity development in the education sector in these countries helped to confirm common reliability trends and validating assumptions

Most importantly the findings adopted in this paper were a triangulation of factors including the author’s biases about the implications of capacity development on SDCs. These biases were further triangulated across perceptions from communities, and those from Ministry Officials at District and Provincial levels. This enabled the writer to further understand if the reality was different from his own biases.

3.7. Significance of the study

Understanding the perceptions and experiences of capacity development programmes from the SDCs will enable development programmes and service providers in the education sector, to direct or redirect their resources and attention to appropriate and specific capacity development issues that help improve the performance of school governing bodies, thereby contributing to the performance of schools in the area.

3.8. Limitations of the study

The author is a practitioner in development work particularly in the education sector. That on its own comes with certain biases of capacity development trajectories in that the rationality may be compromised by what the writer already knows. To deal with this, the author adhered to principles of professionalism and that the triangulation of his own biases across primary and secondary data as mentioned above assumedly helped to increase rationality of the findings.

The research assumption and questions are sampled only from one cluster and therefore may not be truly representative of the diverse challenges that many SDCs face throughout Zimbabwe. The writer acknowledges that even with proper sampling and research design, the attribution of capacity development initiatives on SDCs to the improvement of performance of schools may be difficult to establish without considering other factors in the environment that may be attributed to the improved performance of the SDCs. In this research, these factors have been elaborated and their influence acknowledged.

Thirdly, when opinions are based on perceptions, they may be subject to multiple interpretations such that their validity is also going to be subjected to the interpretative skills or stereotypes of the researcher. This is why a robust way of validation included taking back the summary of findings to the respondents particularly Heads and Chairpersons of SDCs where such findings were

subjected to careful scrutiny over and above the triangulations of hypothesis that were made prior to compiling the report.

Finally, validating the opinions of focus group respondents against secondary data, presented challenges in that certain documents that could be used for verification could not be easily accessible. For instance audit reports of schools could not easily be accessed because in the opinion of School Heads, access to these documents had to be sanctioned by the Permanent Secretary of Education, in a process requiring lengthy periods of paper applications and protocols. This risked the research to be heavily biased on opinions of the participants rather than reality. To deal with this challenge, the researcher again had to rely on carefully selected interviews with the District Education Officer and the Acting Provincial Education Director over and above the physical observations of developments at the host school to make credible qualitative conclusions around an opinion by the participants.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations relate to the concerns surrounding the fieldwork process in which views and perceptions of those who contributed directly or indirectly to the process of providing or collecting data are kept confidential and that such information would not be revealed unless prior permission or consent from the respondents is given. Zikmund (2003: 79) provides parameters for such consent as “the expressed or implied acknowledgment waiving an individuals’ right to privacy when he or she agrees to participate in research study”

As a result of such concerns, the author assured the participants at all levels that at no point shall the data or the research findings from this research be shared with any one without the prior approval of the School Development Associations and the Schools which were involved in the research. It is this writers submission that while the research was largely based on focus group discussion and qualitative in nature, anonymity of the interviewees remain guaranteed and

prohibiting any access to the information to any other third parties other than the purpose for which this research was collected i.e. academic purposes for part contribution towards the attainment of a Masters degree in Public and Development Management at the Wits University.

The SDC Chairpersons acknowledged that any other usage beyond this would have to be confirmed in writing by the respective and concerned School Development Committees and their School Heads and that this proviso needed to be explicitly honoured in this research report.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered from the focus group discussions as well as that presented through interviewing key selected informants from SDCs and Education Ministry leadership in answering the research questions namely; (a) what are the capacity building programmes offered to School Development Committees in Pafiwa cluster from 2008 to 2011, (b) what has been the value of each capacity building programme to the recipient SDCs and their communities (c) what were the perceptions of the participating communities on the indicators of an effective SDC and (d) what were the communities' preferences in skills necessary for SDCs to run effectively?

As indicated in chapter three above, the names of the schools and the names of the informants associated with any specific opinion in this study have not been disclosed to ensure confidentiality. However the method of analysis used in this chapter was largely qualitative. Data in this study is presented in the form of descriptive texts, selected quotations from the focus group discussions, use of tables, pictures and quotations and description of themes. The selected quotations were recorded by the writer as notes during focus group discussions therefore due to human error some may not come out precisely as said by the respondents in verbatim. However, the writer guarantees that the essences of all the quotations have been captured.

Focus group discussions and reflection meetings were organised as follows:

i. Setting the tone – 22nd March, 2012
ii. Focus Group 1 – 22nd March, 2012
iii. Focus Group 2 – 22nd March 2012
iv. Focus Group 3 – 23rd March 2012
v. Plenary Reflection Discussion – 23rd March, 2012

vi. DEO Validation Meeting – 25th March, 2012

In Zimbabwe, an education cluster is presumed to be made up of an average of six schools according to Ministry provisions (Acting Provincial Education Director - Manicaland, March 2012) but due to the fact that there have been a number of satellite schools attached to mother schools resulting from mobility of families due to land resettlement programmes, it is not unusual for a cluster to have more than the prescribed six schools. The research chose to focus on the legislated six schools for a cluster. The schools were further prioritised on the basis of a mix of top performing; middle performing and low performing schools. The criteria for this categorisation was provided by the District Education Office in Mutasa as per national guidelines and in terms of school functionality standards as shown on page 14.

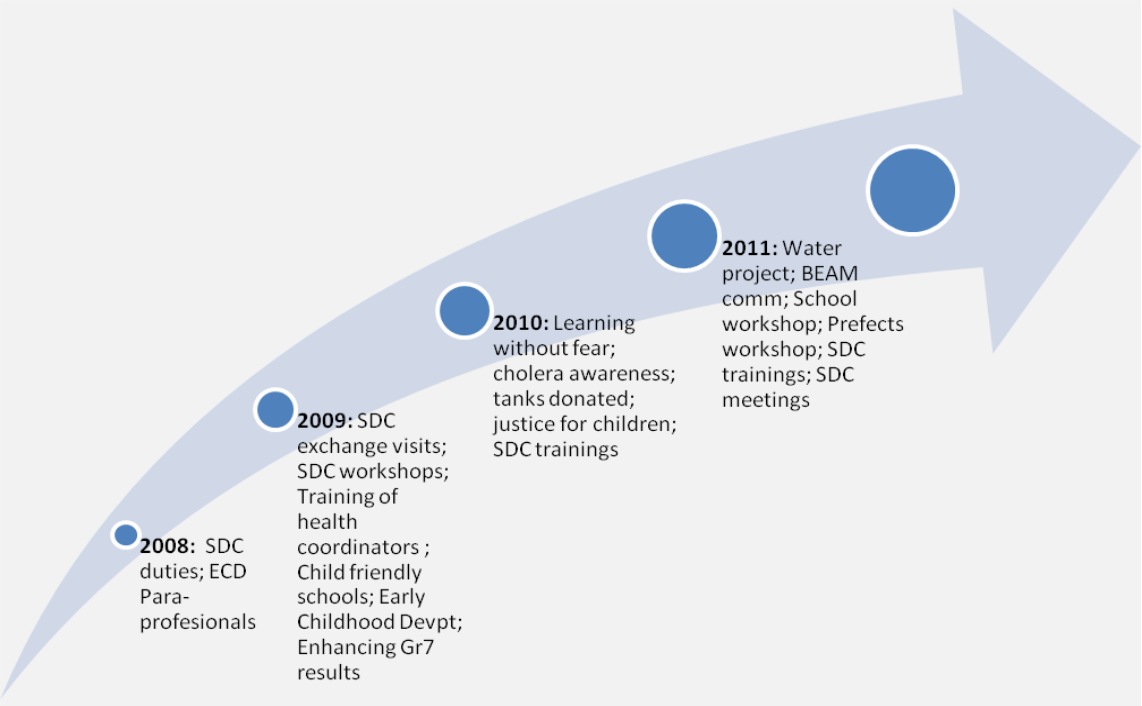
Against the above background, the following sub-sections addresses the data analysis as presented through each question

4.1. Capacity building programmes identified by the cluster (2008 – 2011)

An assessment and analysis of the types of capacity building interventions organised in favour of school development committees in the cluster from 2008 to 2011 indicated that in 2008, there were only 2 programmes that were organised for SDCs according to focus group participants. These were Training on SDC duties and Training on Early Childhood Development (ECD) Para-professionals). This is in comparison to the 6 capacity development programmes provided in 2011 to school development committees. By 2011, the 6 programmes identified by the participants included Training on Water and Sanitation in schools; Basic Education Assistance Module Training for SDCs, School based SDC workshops, SDC Development Workshop for School Prefects, SDC Capacity Reinforcement Training and General SDC orientation meetings by the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture. The following diagram illustrates the distribution of

capacity development programmes designed for school governing bodies in Mutasa district from 2008 to 2011. (Focus Group Discussion 1: 22nd March 2012)

Figure 1: Focus groups' characterisations of capacity building programmes offered to school governing bodies in Mutasa from 2008 to 2011



In the Focus Group Discussions 1, the reasons given by participants for a few programmes for capacity development in 2008 compared to 2009 and beyond were "the difficulties in the economic performance of the country during the period 2007 – 2008 generally" (SDC Chairperson from participating School 1: Focus Group 1: 22nd March, 2012) and also that "there was a general inactivity in most rural schools during the year 2008" (Acting DEO – Mutasa, 2012). As the country lost a significant number of teachers due to poor remuneration and the erosion in value of the Zimbabwe Dollar due to hyperinflation, it was inevitable, according to Focus Group 2 participants (22nd March, 2012) that 2008 had less investment in capacity building programmes for SDCs in schools.

To validate this analysis, the writer consulted a rapid assessment report of the 2008 teaching, learning and examination processes by SNV, UNICEF and Zimbabwe School Examination Council (ZIMSEC) of March 2009 which confirmed that 2008 was indeed an unsuccessful academic year. The report however observed that good school management and governance capacity building programmes were critical in the improvement of educational outcomes. The participants attributed the up-scaling of capacity building programmes for SDCs from 2009 to 2011 to "a promising teaching and learning operating environment during the Government of Transition period" (SDC Chairperson for participating School 2: Focus Group 1: 22nd March, 2012).

The focus group participants also noted that most capacity building programmes that started in 2009 continued up to 2011 and with a few new additional ones as noted in the diagram.

The participants' views of the picture painted by the discussions were that other than general training on SDC duties, "service providers may have packaged training programmes from 2010 to 2011 as back up training support or 'after care support' for those programmes initiated in 2009" (Focus Group 1: 22nd March, 2012), during the beginning of the Government of National Unity as prescribed through the Education Medium Term Plan (EMTP).

4.1.1. Capacity building by year and by service provider

This information was collected by asking participants in the focus group discussions to create a histogram and capacity building story board for the period 2008 to 2011. Participants were asked to characterise a historical mapping of what they still remembered from 2008 to 2011 regarding capacity building programmes that their SDCs received. The intention was to establish the types of programmes by year and by service provider.

The participants captured their notes in flip charts and resulting from those notes is the following table, a consolidated picture of capacity building programmes given to Pafiwa cluster by year and by service provider from 2008 to 2011.

Table 2: Types of SDC capacity building support programmes to Pafiwa by year and by service provider

Type/Name	**Theme**	**Service provider**	**Year**
SDC exchange visits	Look and learn for SDC best practices	SNV - Netherlands	2008 - 9
SDC/ECD Para-professionals mentorship	Child protection in schools	Plan/MoESAC	2008 - 9
AIDS workshop for SDCs	Risk free schools	Chiedza Child Trust	2009
Role of SDCs in Early Childhood Development (ECD)	Early Childhood Development	MoESAC	2009
Learning Achievement Tracking seminars for SDCs	Reduction of 0% pass rates in schools	MoESAC/Plan	2010
Learning without fear concept orientation for SDCs	SDCs roles in creating Child Friendly Schools	Plan International	2010
SDC capacity reinforcement	Improved school governance	SNV	2010 - 12
SDC Cholera awareness training	Mitigation at schools	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	2010
Water and sanitation training	Improved WASH in schools / Donation of tanks to schools	IRC	2010
SDC knowledge of Justice for children	Rights based approach to education	Justice for Children	2010
WASH in schools	Water project	Chikumbu Trust	2011
Child friendly schools	Conditions necessary for learning	MoESAC/SNV	2011 - 12
Finance management	SDC and financial accountability	Plan International	2011
Project planning	School Development Planning	Plan International	2011
BEAM	SDC roles in BEAM (Selection of pupils into the BEAM)	MoESAC	2011 - 12
SDC trainings	Payment and collection of school levies	Mutasa RDC	2011
SDC training	Indicators of a good school	ASAP	2011

SDC training	Presentation of school budgets	Pafiwa/Hauna clusters MoESAC	2011
SDC/Prefects workshop	Leadership development	Plan	2011

Source: A consolidated plenary reflection report on the capacity building Programmes given to Pafiwa cluster by year and by service provider from 2008 to 2011: (Focus Group 1: 22nd March, 2012)

The table above is further described in the next section which characterizes capacity building interventions for SDCs in Mutasa by the nature of period (emergency versus transitional or normal period)

4.1.2. Comparison of capacity building intervention by type of period

The Zimbabwe education sector, just like any other sector in Zimbabwe, experienced diverse pull and push factors (Kuiper, & Warinda – Ndanga, 2013; UNICEF, 2013) emanating from the political scenarios the country faced during the period. Focus Group 3 (23rd March, 2012), unpacked these scenarios as; the emergency scenario (2007 – 2008) and a normal but transitional scenario (2009 – 2012). The diagram below shows the two dimensions of capacity building support organised for SDCs during the two different periods according to the participants in their order of importance;

Table 3: Participants' views of capacity building intervention by type of period in order of importance (1 – 8)

Emergency period (2008)	Transitional Period (2009 – 2011)
1. Teacher welfare	**1.** SDC roles clarification
2. Asset keeping and management (facilities)	**2.** Budgeting, planning and finance management
3. Understanding of child friendly school concepts	**3.** Sourcing funds
4. School budgets and finances	**4.** Creating Child Friendly School environments
5. Supervision of teacher student contact hours	**5.** Teacher welfare

6. SDC roles clarification	**6.** Asset Management
7. School enrolments	**7.** Teacher student learning contact time
	8. Enrolment

Focus Group Discussion 3: 23rd March, 2012

UNICEF, (2013 Report) confirmed that 2008 is classified in the education sector in Zimbabwe as the emergency years and that the period is characterised by loss of learning time in schools with teachers leaving to other countries. Ostensibly during this period and the years immediately before it, the focus group participants (Focus Group 3: 23rd March, 2012) felt that school governing bodies were preoccupied with the motivation and incentivisation of teachers in an attempt to persuade and stop them from leaving their schools.

For example the table above, has a visibly strong capacity development focus on teacher motivation and incentives in 2008 while the period 2009 to 2011, is largely concerned with capacity building programmes to build SDC skills around issues of budgeting, finance management and resource mobilisation. The period 2009 – 2012 has been the period in which the country was under a Government of National Unity (GNU) and some focus group participants (Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012) arguably credited the GNU with bringing back normalcy to the sector a position validated by Biti, 2012 in the Mid Term Fiscal Review (GNU Minister of Finance, Biti in Daily News, February 2013).

However, based on the discussions in chapter four above, others also characterised this period as the period when Zimbabwe had started using the United States Dollar as a medium of transaction arguably resulting in the stability in schools and a spillover effect on utility and value for money from the use of a credible currency. According to SDC Chairperson 2:

> The dollarisation of the economy was a factor to the stabilisation of education service delivery by school governing bodies in Zimbabwe - (School Head 2: Plenary Reflection Discussion, 23rd March, 2012).

In summary, it is clear that according to the Pafiwa cluster, a number of capacity building programmes were organised in their favour from the period 2008 to 2011 and by a mix of service providers both state and non-state actors. It is also clear from the respondents that the programmes were more intense in the period 2009 and 2010 and this was attributed to what the participants perceived to be a conducive supportive environment during the period of the Government of National Unity (Reflection Meeting: 23rd March 2012). In this section, the researcher also acknowledges that while capacity building programmes had a positive attribution to the performance of SDCs, there are other factors noted by the research which might have led to improved performance of the committees. These include the use of a currency which had real value i.e. the United States Dollar compared to the Zimbabwe Dollar and the increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads which arguably resulted in improved administration and management at schools' level.

4.2. The value of capacity building to the SDCs in the cluster

The research also analysed changes in the performance of the SDCs and how these could be attributed to capacity building programmes and to highlight which specific factor this relates to in the day to day roles and functions of SDCs in Pafiwa Cluster. The summary below is based on the participants' identified area of review, an enquiry based on participants' self-introspections of the pre-capacity building situation and triangulation of assessment after the capacity building programme had taken place. The following summarizes the analysis and responses by parents' assemblies (communities) and SDC representatives who took part in the focus group discussions

4.2.1. Improved conduct of meetings

Prior to capacity building five of the six (83 %) schools said “they did not have updated records of meeting proceedings at the school” (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012). However, they were all aware that if they had these records, the Committee Secretaries would be responsible for keeping them.

All the schools who did not keep records of meeting proceedings (83%) said prior to capacity building, “meetings were conducted with no agenda items and as a result ad-hoc issues were brought up in the middle of meetings making it difficult to progress with action points” (Plenary Reflection Discussion Meeting: 23rd March, 2012)

In the post capacity building situation, four out of the six (67 %) SDCs felt that “capacity building workshops helped members to know that all meetings should have minutes which are recorded against action points and that each meeting needed to have an agreed agenda” (Focus Group 2: 22 March 2012).

In all six schools (100%), attitudes were reported to have changed within the SDCs because “they now knew the format for conducting business-like meetings after SDC training programmes” (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012)

According to the SDC Chairpersons (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012), frequency of meetings had also increased with an average per school being about 2-3 times per term. Participants attributed this to “workshops which further helped attendance at parent assemblies as SDCs now knew how to mobilise parents and prepare for meetings in time”. (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012). An elected councilor for the area had this to say about the conduct of meetings prior to training:

> *Anhu angaakuite ‘politics’ ngema mitin’i ezvikoro. Pano-ngepapo, uyo obhuya, amweni wechioshaishidza. Kwaiwa kukwesa kusaziwaba. Zvino zvechioshandika* (People were now practicing politics with the school meetings - with one saying this and the other that. It was ignorance, people

> did not know. Now it's easy to do our job) (Councilor: Plenary Reflection Meeting 23 March, 2012)

4.2.2. Enhanced clarity on roles and responsibilities of office bearers

During focus group discussions participants pointed out that before training, role conflicts which disrupted school operations all together with accusations between school management, SDCs and parents because of lack of understanding of segregation of duties characterised the pre-capacity building situation. A School Head from one of the participating schools equated this to "the battle of the titans" (Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012) in reference to infighting among SDC members and the School Management over the control of school resources. On the other hand the parents felt:

> The conflicts were exacerbated by a lack of accountability to parents as there were no records to show transparency to the parents (Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012).

It was also reported that even after the training, some SDC Chairpersons and School Heads were still at loggerheads because of conflicts in responsibilities and segregation of duties

However, most SDC Chairpersons and School Heads were in agreement that during capacity building programmes, roles were clarified through Capacity Reinforcement Trainings for SDCs with effect that by and large, school and parent relations improved or were set to improve.

> I can safely say that I am now able to articulate some of the provisions of the legal framework governing roles of SDCs members and this has been a result of SDC Capacity reinforcement programmes in the cluster
> (SDC Chairman 1: Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012)

4.2.3. Improved management of school finances

In three of the schools (50%) which reported their pre-capacity building situation, school funds were kept in teachers' houses contrary to Ministry regulations particularly during the 2008 period when the Banking systems was in a shambles. This was confirmed by one chairperson who had this to say:

> Teachers where given the responsibility of handling money for the schools because schools felt no reason to travel to bank the little amounts they received during inflationary circumstances (SDC Chairperson 4: Focus Group 3; 23 March, 2012).

It was also reported by SDC representatives (Respondents in Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012) that there was a lot of irregular use of school funds from one cost centre to the other with no due regard to procedures. Proper procedures of recording money were not followed. "Budgeting and school development planning has not been given due attention as key ingredient for school development, which on its own is a function for the SDCs" according to SDC Chairperson 1 (Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012).

The same schools however felt that in post capacity building period, the situation was different. In about 5 (83%) of the schools interviewed, the respondents believed there was evidence of proper composition of finance subcommittees, regular supervision of books of accounts, use of proper financial records and registers. According to respondents, "this has brought transparency to the way school finances were managed" (SDC Chairperson 4: Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012).

There was also a notation by SDC Chairpersons of a decrease in qualified audits from schools (SDC Chairpersons 1 and 2 in Focus group 2: 22 March, 2012). However, this research could not validate this assertion as there were no audits reports which were made available to the researcher due to the fact that the process of getting authority to look into audit reports of schools "has to be

sanctioned by the Permanent Secretary of Education, a process requiring lengthy periods of paper applications and protocols". (School Head 1: Reflection Meeting: 25 March 2012)

4.2.4. Enhanced provision of Teaching & Learning Material (TLMs)

Another variable that this research looked at was the role and capacity of SDCs in delivering teaching and learning materials (TLMs). The focus group discussions revealed that during the pre capacity building intervention period, there was inadequate teaching and learning materials with all schools that took part in the focus group discussions (100%) claiming book/pupil ratios of 1:10 and sometimes 1:11.

The focus groups established that in post capacity building situation, while TLMs were still inadequate;

> …there was improvement due to the UNICEF and Government of Zimbabwe distribution of books for core subjects under the Education Transition Fund for both primary and secondary schools between 2009 and 2011 (DEO Mutasa, 25 March 2012).

As a result, all schools recorded that by the time of this research, the book/pupil ratio for the core subjects had improved significantly to 1:1 (SDC Chairpersons in Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012)

However, through other ancillary programmes such as School Governance Programme under the SNV organised Capacity Reinforcement Programmes for SDCs, the SDCs in focus group discussions claimed to have gained knowledge on how to source for Teaching and Learning Materials "as a result of the exposures during sensitisation programmes on enhancing TLMs and on how to write proposals." (Chairpersons: Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012). They therefore attributed availability of TLMs outside the core subjects to the trainings after the distribution of the books.

On the other hand, participants maintained that asset management courses which were embedded in many of the capacity intervention programmes “led to improved safeguarding and storage of the TLMs” as SDCs could now value installation of new doors for classrooms and lockable cupboards. (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012)

It has to be noted that at the point of conducting this research, UNICEF had just distributed Teaching and Learning Materials for all core subjects to primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe in a project funded by the Education Transition Fund (DEO Validation Meeting: 25 March, 2012). Therefore any attribution to improved performance associated with availability of Teaching and Learning Material has also to take this into consideration

4.2.5. Enhanced capacity to initiate school projects

All schools (100%) maintained that prior to capacity building; school development planning had been haphazard and not following any guidelines. The situation was still the same in post capacity building phase for many schools although in 3 out of 6 [50%]), “they have started applying knowledge of planning and budgeting and that they now have new teachers’ houses under construction as a result of sustained school development planning” (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012).

While there was no school under construction witnessed by the researcher at the host school, the researcher took it to mean that some of the schools which were participating in the focus group discussions may have embarked on school improvement projects after capacity building on projects and school improvement and that they attributed this to their new knowledge and capacity in managing School Development Plans (SDPs)

At the time of this study, only two schools (33%) among the participating schools claimed to have viable and credible School Development Plans for use to guide the improvement of their schools. To avoid subjectivity, this writer wanted to know if there was an agreed principle for assessing the features of a credible School Development Plan and it was confirmed that the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture was following a checklist drawn from the SDP Guidelines.

> Once an SDP has been subjected to this checklist and it has achieved almost 80% of compliance with the checklist, that SDP is considered to be credible (DEO Mutasa: Follow up validation meeting 25 March 2012)

4.2.6. Improved maintenance of School environment

Critical to the role played by SDCs is the capacity to create an enabling environment for teaching and learning in schools. The research premised this role in the context that an SDC with capacity and skills should be able to create such a positive environment for its learners and educators. Against this background, one SDC Chairperson had this to say about the school environment before capacity building;

> *"Zvikoro zvedu zvakange zvavakunge mabharaki emasoja"* (our schools were like military barracks for soldiers) (Reflection Meeting: SDC Chairperson 4: 23 March 2012)

This was in reference to school management authorities' tendencies of shouting orders and instructions to teachers, learners and sometimes parents

A follow up with the Ministry's Provincial Education Director (March 2012) showed that in 2010, the Provincial Education Directorate in Manicaland instituted a pilot training on Child Friendly Schools (CFS) to address such negative teaching and learning environment in schools. Although at that point the concept of CFS environments had not been easily understood particularly by SDC representatives because it was confused with a Rights Based Approach (RBA) which communities felt was politically controversial, according to

Manicaland PED (May 2012), the immediate outcomes of the CFS training were that parents and teachers were agreed on the importance of the child friendly environments in schools.

> The Child Friendly School environments are school environments in which a good learning atmosphere is created for both students and staff and that every learner is not ashamed of coming to school for whatever reason as a result of the environment created by the management of such a school. (Directors' Circular Number 41 of 2006 -MoESAC)

To make sure that this was realized, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture commissioned nationwide training for School Heads and their SDCs on CFS after which participants reaction to the training was the following:

> Schools have become places were learners look forward to going. (Focus Group Discussion 3:23 March, 2012)

This they said was also complemented through training on Learning without Fear Project, a Plan International Zimbabwe capacity development support to Child SDCs' in the district. They added that in accordance with the Child Friendly Schools training,

> Child SDCs have become more pronounced and responsible and are now given a chance to participate in decision making processes attributed to the Junior or Child SDC training (SDC Chairperson 1 in Focus Group 3: 23 March, 2012).

4.2.7. Improved school parents relations

All respondents pointed out that schools had come to a standstill in 2008 and that

> …..people did not have much relationship skills a result of lack of trust emanating from a period of stagnation in schools, there was lack of clarity of roles and lots of fighting and generally parent assemblies lacked confidence in the financial accountability by school management authorities (Chairperson 5: Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012).

In the post capacity building situation, parents from all the six schools (100%), noted parents' contributions having increased in cash and in kind due to improved school parents relations (Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March 2012). It was reported that parents were now evidently making financial contributions to their schools and in some cases volunteering their labour to schools. This was said to be a result of "training on parents' participation and involvement in schools and through the Capacity Reinforcement of SDCs programmes that was organised nationally by the Ministry and its partners and funded by UNICEF" (Plenary Discussion: 23 March, 2012). In the case of Pafiwa, this had a direct bearing on school community relations.

It was also reported by about 50% of the participating SDCs (Focus Group 1: 22 March, 2012) that they now knew their responsibilities and could use skills of resource mobilisation to attract money. More to this is that:

> Attitudes have changed positively by parents because SDCs and school authorities have improved transparency in their meetings and dealings (Focus Group 1: 22 March, 2012).

Focus Group discussion 3 (23 March, 2012) also observed that SDC training programmes on Risk Free Schools had improved acceptance of children infected or affected by HIV and Aids in schools. A comment by one of the SDC chairpersons was that such programmes were:

> An eye opener in that they allowed the community through their SDCs to advocate for social inclusion of the marginalised learners in schools (Chairperson 2: 23 March, 2012)

4.2.8. Improved management of school facilities and infrastructure

Prior to capacity building programmes, five schools' (83%) reported that they lacked adequate classrooms, with some pupils taking lessons from outside and a

few teachers' houses sometimes with teachers sharing a room for two teachers (Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012)

During the period before capacity building support, three (50%) of the SDCs reported that they did not know about the school assets and if it was their responsibility to look into and supervise the management of assets (Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012). Under these circumstances, it was reported that school property was lost and no one could make themselves accountable to the goings on at the school regarding school facilities and infrastructure.

After training on School Improvement planning, classroom and teacher house construction is now part of many schools' annual project plans (Plenary Reflection Discussion: 23 March, 2012). All of the SDCs who participated in this study reported that they now have Asset Registers which are checked at the opening and close of term.

> We now have a Loss and Damage Asset Policy to guard against loss and instituting means of recovery. This has gone a long way in safeguarding SDC asserts (Chairperson 5: Plenary Reflection Discussions: 23 March, 2012)

4.2.9. Improved profiling and marketing of schools

All schools indicated they did not have knowledge at all that schools could be marketed prior to capacity building support in 2010. One school reported having refused guidance from alumni (old students) on how to market their school and it led to teachers running away from the school as it had lost its attractiveness in 2008 (Parent in Focus Group 2: 22 March, 2012).

After capacity building programmes targeting SDC members as custodians of school development, schools have reportedly improved their areas,

> ….by putting up sign posts, repainting and refurbishing buildings, and buying school sports uniforms. This has been attributed in many cases to various concentrated interventions targeted to improve the performance of SDCs in our school (Plenary Reflection Discussions: 23 March, 2012)

4.2.10. Enhanced awareness of Teacher welfare

SDCs and teachers always had disputes over issues of incentives over the years with teachers refusing to teach and parents refusing to pay the incentives. (Focus Group 1: 22 March, 2012)

Through training and capacity building, all 6 SDCs understood the importance of teacher motivation and teacher retention.

> In most schools the incentives issue had been resolved amicably although in many cases schools are breaking a Ministry regulation instructing a less than 10% allocation of school income to teacher incentives in consented efforts to retain their teachers (DEO Validation Meeting: 25 March, 2012)

The ability to make resolutions on teacher incentives have been attributed to a series of training by both the Ministry and non state actors operating in the district through various streams of influence and capacity building programmes. What is critical to note however is that while at school level issues of incentives seem to have been addressed, generally conditions of employment in the education sector remain contentious as government still finds this a challenge across all the sectors of government (Minister Biti, Newsday, 2012).

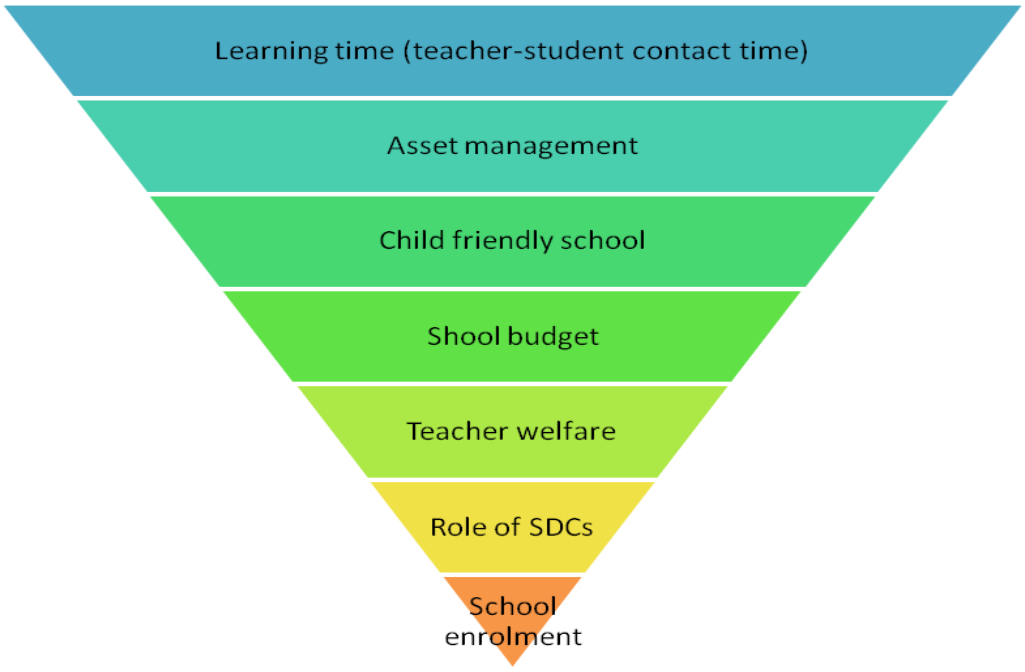
In summary, the sub sessions above provided an analysis of data presented by participants in response to the question which looked at the value of capacity building programmes to the recipient SDCs and their communities' in the Pafiwa cluster. There are about 10 issues which came up as evidence of the value of the programmes for capacity building to the Pafiwa cluster. It is clear that judging from the participants opinions, capacity building programmes in Pafiwa cluster resulted in; improved conduct of meetings by SDCs, enhanced clarity on roles and responsibilities of office bearers, improved management of school finances

and accountability, enhanced provision of Teaching & Learning Material (TLMs), enhanced capacity to initiate projects and school improvement planning by SDCs, improved maintenance of School environment by the SDCs, improved school parents relations leading to improved management of school facilities and infrastructure, improved profiling and marketing of schools, and enhanced awareness of Teacher welfare. These were sighted as key in running the affairs of schools given that they bordered on crucial components of the roles of SDCs generally and in Pafiwa in particular. Linked to the analysis of values of capacity building is the assessment of preferred indicators of an effective SDC based on the opinions of the Pafiwa participants and the next sub-section addresses the data from the question.

4.3. Preferred indicators of good performing SDCs

This section assessed the aspirations of parents from Pafiwa on outcomes indicators that their SDCs would rather thrive to achieve. These outcomes are those considered to be important in determining the effectiveness of SDCs. This was in response to the question -'What were the perceptions of the participating communities on indicators of an effective SDC?' The diagram below illustrates perceptions drawn from the respondents in Pafiwa as indicators of good performing SDCs in priority order. This analysis is a result of issues consistently getting greatest number in head counting of issues emerging from participating individuals who had been asked to name their key preferences of outcome indicators of a good performing SDC

Figure 2: Preferences of Pafiwa SDC performance outcome indicators in priority order



Source: Focus Group 3 Discussion: 23 March, 2012

From the diagram above, clearly, improved learning time (or teacher-student contact time) was rated highly as the key outcome indicator that SDCs should thrive to achieve. One parent said:

> Results of students are at the heart of parents' interest and that therefore their SDCs must be seen to be making meaningful contribution to this outcome as an index of capacity (Focus Group 3: 23 March, 2012).

Subsequently, the DEO (25 March, 2012) confirmed that there is a symbiotic relationship between teacher-student contact time and the results achieved by a school as the latter can arguably be a function of the former. This seemed to suggest that student performance is a function of teacher contact time with the learners and therefore, not surprising that it is among the top key outcome indicators most valued by participants in the cluster

Asked on why the focus group discussants felt that school enrolment was less important out of all the factors highlighted by participants, Chairperson 1 and 6

(Plenary Reflection Discussions of 23 March 2012) felt that enrolment was no longer a problem in the cluster during the period under review as concerted efforts through traditional leadership and many government programmes had been made to ensure that all children of school going age were mobilized and were supported to be in schools. Programmes such as Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and the National Action Programmes for OVCs (NAP/OVC) were mentioned in this category including the Girl Child Education Programmes for CAMFED and the Girl Child Network. That there could be outliers among children who have been left out in enrolment could not be disputed, but according to the SDC Chairpersons, this problem was not well pronounced in the Pafiwa cluster (Plenary Reflection Discussions: 23 March 2012).

The conclusion according to the Plenary Reflection Discussions (23 March 2012), is that for capacity building programmes particularly those that deal with empowerment of parents through their SDCs to be judged as effective, then the outcomes/indexes highlighted in the above diagram in their order must be used to demonstrate that capacity indeed has taken place among members of the SDCs (Reflection Discussion: 23 March, 2012).

In summary, this section has looked at outcome indicators considered to be important in determining the effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa and the research data suggest that in order of priority; enhanced student learning time, improved asset management, child friendly school environment, and improved school budget oversight were regarded highly in the cluster. While such indicators like teacher welfare, knowledge of SDC roles and school enrolment were critical, but these were not as critical as the first four.

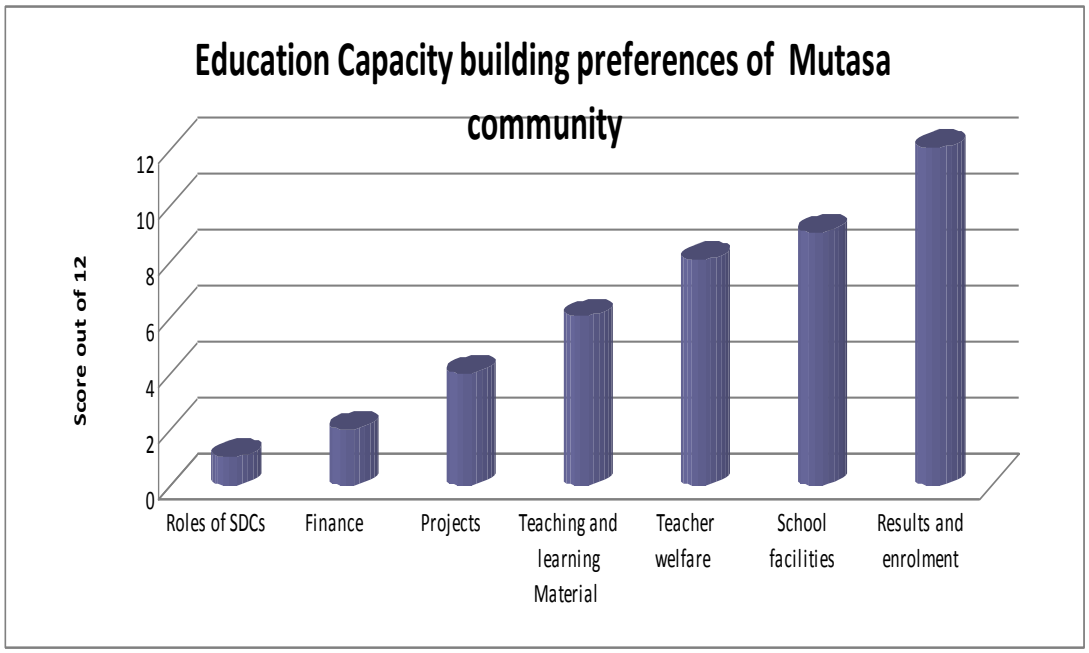
The next subsection looks at the analysis of preferred skills for SDCs to achieve the stated outcomes indicators in the cluster.

4.4. Capacity building skills preferences for SDCs in Pafiwa

This section is linked to the immediate previous sub-section that looked at the analysis of outcome indicators considered to be important in determining the effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa in that this current subsection tries to create a thread at analysing the preferred skills for SDCs to achieve the stated outcomes indicators highlighted in 4.3.

An assessment of skills preferences of SDCs in the Pafiwa cluster was conducted through the focus group discussions based on 12 respondents who were selected from the 6 participating schools. In this exercise, each school was represented by the SDC Chairperson and one selected parent making the number of participants per school two. Through participatory focus group consultations, the group was asked to list the skills variables that were important to the functioning of their SDC. Each participating member was then asked to vote by ticking on any of those variables which they thought were important for further capacity development of its members. The ranking was based on simple ranking (popular acclaim) by participants ticking where they felt they had a preference for further development of capacity of their SDCs. The following diagram shows the outcome from scoring chart captured in the Plenary Reflections of 23rd March, 2012

Figure 3: Capacity building skills preferences of the Pafiwa SDCs in Mutasa



From the Scoring chart outcome of the Plenary Discussions of 23rd March, 2012 in the graph above, results and enrolment, school facilities and Teacher welfare were considered crucial by the participating communities and in that respect, had a higher preference as a critical area for skills development interventions through capacity building in Pafiwa cluster. The further opinions of the parents who participated were that:

> …parents were now paying school fees and levies in US dollars, therefore the ultimate expectations for better results of their children required that they start holding the schools to account for the monetary investments parents were making (Chairperson 1: Plenary Reflection Discussions: 23rd March, 2012).

According to another parent, the ranking demonstrated that "parental preference had clearly shifted from just the provision of teacher incentives to holding teachers accountable for what they do in class". Another parent put weight to this on the ranking outcome by observing that:

> *"vabereki vasvinura, vaakukoshesa kupasa kwevana kwete kungotivhunza nezvema insentivhi*" (parents are now smarter; they now want their kids to

> pass exams not just being asked to give out incentives) (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012).

This was in reference to the observation that while capacity building programmes for SDCs to create incentives for teachers is important, parents now preferred their SDCs to be helped to develop skills that will help them to hold schools to account for results attained by students.

On being asked about the apparent high preference of skills that improve enrolment while this was ranking lowly under the preferred indicators of effective SDCs in the previous section, the Chairpersons (in Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23rd March 2012) argued that the use of school enrolment as an indicator for measuring SDC effectiveness would be misleading as enrolment is subject to many things including the background of the children, as well as the social economic status of the children. This makes it difficult to pin the outcome of enrolment on SDCs alone given many of the factors that are enablers to it, are not directly linked to what the SDCs do independent of other stakeholders and other supportive environments.

The information presented in the Figure above also shows that there was low preference of skills that enhance the SDCs understanding of their roles and responsibilities. One participating SDC Chairperson explained that “there was too much training received in this thematic area over the years” (Plenary Reflection Discussion Meeting: 23 March 2012). This was a possible demonstration of training fatigue among the SDC members and their communities in the subject area.

In summary, this section looked at participants’ engagement with the question that asked them what their preferred skills for SDC effectiveness were. The section went on to link the dialogues to capacity building preferences for SDCs in Pafiwa. From the responses given by the participants, the communities in Pafiwa were keener on their SDCs to have skills which delivered good pass-rate

(results), skills that enabled schools to improve facilities and Teacher welfare. These are skills which enables the SDCs to hold teachers accountable for what they do in class by way of good learning results but at the same time creating a good learning and teaching environment in their schools. The section also concludes that it is in the 'demand side' of educational outcomes, where parents' wish for skills that guarantee good results in schools is more pronounced.

The above synopsis and summary speaks to the next section – an analysis of other factors deemed crucial to the effectiveness of SDCs. The section is a result of qualitative analysis of the presentation of data and opinions during the focus group discussions which seem to indicate that while capacity building was critical, the data presented in the cluster's focus groups suggest that there were other factors equally important and difficult to ignore, that helped in the functioning of SDCs in the area

4.5. Other factors contributing to effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa

Plenary Reflection meeting (23rd March, 2012) showed that in Pafiwa cluster, there were other factors that were equally important in stimulating the performance of SDCs. According to focus group participants, these included the "Dollarization of the economy" (i.e. Plenary Reflection Group terminology referring to the use of US$ hard currency for transactions) which made budgeting and planning easy leading to improved transactional value for money in schools (Plenary Reflection: 23 March, 2012).

The Box below provides other factors noted as contributing to the effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa. It is presented here to give a balanced view of the participants' opinions about how they viewed capacity building of SDCs in their area, recognizing of course that there are other factors which equally made significant contributions to the way SDCs perform or operate.

Box 1: Other factors contributing to effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa

Box 2: **Other factors contributing to effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa**

i. "Dollarization" of the economy - benefits accruing from the use of US$ hard currency for transactions
ii. increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads and the teaching staff
iii. Government of National Unity (GNU) which created an enabling environment and improved community relations spilling to SDC school community relations
iv. Knowledge from people from the Diaspora - it made positive contributions in the communities they grew up in
v. Better rainfall during the years 2010 - 2011 leading to increased income for parents leading to improved contributions to school levies
vi. UNICEF's provision of Teaching and Learning Materials in 2010 and 2011 accounting for improved availability of Teaching and Learning Materials in schools in the cluster
More distance learning opportunities for education management and thus improving school management.

Source: Focus Group Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012

Confirming that other factors and not just SDC capacity building programmes were equally important in improved service delivery in schools, the then Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai was quoted by UNICEF, in a 2011 evaluation of progress made by the Inclusive Government during the two years since the implementation of the Global Political Agreement, that "the largest single investment in the education sector since independence saw the distribution of 13 million textbooks to all the 5,575 primary schools, ensuring that every primary pupil will have access to textbooks" (UNICEF, 2011). The above suggest that views that there were other factors which led to improved service delivery in schools than just capacity building and training cannot be challenged.

In summary, the sub-section reverts to the central research question that seeks to explore the opinions of the participants over the value of capacity building programmes for SDCs in Pafiwa. The data indicate that capacity building programmes for SDCs were crucial in the way SDCs performed in Pafiwa.

However, the primary data backed up by the secondary data all seem to suggest that the significance of these programmes need to be looked at not in isolation but must take into consideration other supportive environments such as those highlighted in Box 2 above and most importantly, the value of the transitional currency at that given time as well as the improved management in schools by school administrators resulting from an increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads and the teaching staff.

4.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, an analysis of data regarding the participants' responses to the four research questions has been presented. The chapter has examined the capacity building programmes offered to School Development Committees from 2008 to 2011 in the cluster; synchronised the value attached to each capacity building programme by the recipient School Development Committee in the area; extracted the perceptions of the SDCs regarding outcome indicators associated with an effective SDC; and pointed out the skills preferences for capacity building of members of SDCs in the cluster.

The analysis of the research data in this chapter indicates that a number of capacity building programmes were organised for SDCs in Pafiwa cluster from the period 2008 to 2011 and these were provided by a mix of service providers both state and non - state actors. It is also clear that the programmes were more intense in the period 2009 and 2010.

The analysis also showed that in terms of the participants opinions on the value of capacity building programmes to the SDCs and their communities' in the cluster, about 10 issues stand out as value addition pointers associated with capacity building programmes to the cluster. These include; improved conduct of meetings by SDCs, enhanced clarity on roles and responsibilities of office bearers, improved management of school finances and accountability, enhanced provision of Teaching & Learning Material (TLMs), enhanced capacity to initiate

projects and school improvement planning by SDCs, improved maintenance of School environment by the SDCs, improved school parents relations leading to improved management of school facilities and infrastructure, improved profiling and marketing of schools, and enhanced awareness of Teacher welfare.

In engaging with the question about the preferred skills that are linked to SDC effectiveness, the data presented in this chapter suggest that in the Pafiwa cluster, the community were eager to see their SDCs having skills which enabled them to deliver good results or pass-rates, skills that enabled schools to improve facilities and Teacher welfare. These are skills which enable the SDCs to hold teachers to account for what they do in class, and is evidenced through good learning results as well as a good learning and teaching environment in their schools.

The data analysis presentation seem to suggest that while capacity building programmes had a positive attribution to the performance of SDCs, there are other factors which might have led to improved performance of the committees. These include the use of a currency which had real value i.e. the United States Dollar compared to the Zimbabwe Dollar (Z$) and the increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads which arguably resulted in improved administration and management at schools' level.

The next chapter tries to unpack and address these responses in a clearer way in the Chapter on Findings.

CHAPTER 5:

FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore perceptions and experiences of communities from the Pafiwa cluster in Mutasa District on the usefulness of capacity building programmes to their School Development Committees. The research asked four research questions namely; (a) what were the capacity building programmes offered to School Development Committees in Pafiwa cluster from 2008 to 2011, (b) what was the value derived from these programmes to the recipient SDCs and their communities' in the cluster, (c) what were the perceptions of the participating communities on the indicators of an effective SDC and (d) What were the communities' preferences in skills that would make SDCs run effectively?

This chapter presents the research findings in relationship to the four questions and also provides a qualitative view of these findings in the context of the research purpose and whether improved performance of SDCs is a function of capacity building programmes offered to the SDCs.

5.2. Capacity building programmes offered to SDCs in Pafiwa

The research found out that there were indeed a number of capacity building support programmes organised for SDCs in the cluster from 2008 – 2011. These programmes ranged from training on Early Childhood Development (ECD) Para-professionals, training on Water and Sanitation in schools; Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) training for SDCs, School based SDC workshops, SDC Development Workshop for School Prefects, SDC Capacity Reinforcement Training and General SDC orientation meetings by the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC).

The distribution of capacity development programmes designed for school development committees in the cluster from 2008 to 2011 was also interesting in that 2008 experienced limited programmes of support in capacity building compared to the period 2009 to 2011, a situation officials (SDC Chairpersons in Focus Group 3: 23rd March 2012) attributed to an improved operating environment in schools due to the opportunities created through the Government of National Unity, as contrasted to the period up to 2008 were officials pointed out there was a general inactivity in most rural schools as the country lost a significant number of teachers due to poor remuneration and the erosion in the value of the Zimbabwe Dollar due to hyper-inflation. (Acting DEO, Mutasa: Reflection Meeting 23rd March 2012)

The research also found that communities do appreciate that the education sector, just like any other sector in Zimbabwe, experienced diverse pull and push factors emanating from the political scenarios the country faced during the period. Regarding their opinion on capacity building therefore, two scenarios emerged that informed the packaging or modeling of capacity building. The findings suggest that during emergency scenario (2007 to 2008), service providers of capacity building were cautious about how much they could invest into capacity building of SDCs when the education system was faced with an unpredictable environment. This is contrasted to an almost normal but transitional scenario (2009 – 2011) which gave hope to the communities in the cluster (SDC Chairperson 1: Focus Group 2, 22 March, 2012). This view is further confirmed by Kuiper, *et al,* (2013) who wrote that the transitional period gave hope and more support could be deployed towards SDCs to strengthen their influence in schools

In this regard, the study has highlighted that there were more attempts towards the enhancement for SDCs skills by 2011 compared to 2008 a situation attributed to the view that 2008 was largely an unsuccessful academic year in Zimbabwe

(Kuiper, *et al,* 2013). As a result, capacity building for SDCs was targeted towards enabling SDCs to retain the few teachers who were available and who had remained in the school systems. However, as the situation increasingly improved, and from 2009 to 2011, service providers were largely concerned with capacity building programmes that helped to stabilize the SDCs skills in budgeting, finance management and resource mobilisation.

5.3. The value of capacity building programmes to the SDCs

Regarding the engagement of the communities on the value their SDCs get from capacity building programmes, the research found that outcomes from the value of capacity building interventions for SDCs in Pafiwa cluster are encouraging and clearly show value for money in terms of the investment put into them. It was also evident that for those SDCs that received capacity building, they have gained knowledge on specific thematic subject areas that relates to school governance.

Specifically, there was acknowledgement by the recipients of capacity building programmes that it resulted in many positive outcomes including: improved conduct of meetings by SDCs; improved understanding in roles and responsibilities of office bearers; improved management of school finances; improved provision and access to teaching and learning materials in schools; improved projects and school development planning (including facilities and infrastructure); improved school parent relations, and improved teacher welfare. This is consistent with assumptions initially raised in the conceptual framework that capacity development programmes for SDCs which are typified by a genuine democratic climate, must result in building of skills, understandings, attitudes, values, behaviours, resources and conditions necessary for the performance of SDCs (Chatiza, *et al,* 2011). There is no doubt that capacity building was deemed to have resulted in knowledge of conditions that affect the performance of SDCs in Pafiwa cluster and that this has been a catalyst to good relations between the SDCs and their stakeholders in the community. These conditions as

highlighted in Reflection Meeting of 25th March 2012 include knowledge of the political context, parental support, and group consensus on deliverables. From the outcomes identified above, an inference is therefore made that capacity building support was valued by communities of the respective SDCs in the area under review.

The research however established that while capacity building programmes for SDCs in Pafiwa had a positive effect to the functioning of the SDCs, there were other factors which also contributed positively to the performance of the respective SDCs and their schools. These factors have been pointed out in Chapter four but the study finds the following two factors (coming out of a combination of focus group discussions) interesting as key factors that may have played equally significant roles to the positive dispensation in the performance of schools: for example, the "dollarization of the economy" (i.e. focus group terminology referring to the use of US$ hard currency for transactions) which made budgeting and planning easy leading to improved transactional value for money in schools, and Distance Learning (e.g. Zimbabwe Open University) which most School Heads pointed had led to more and more education managers and staff advancing in learning, making them more knowledgeable in education management thus improving school management, parent relations and an operating environment in schools

In summary, the above factors suggest that there may not be a single commonly accepted variable to which performance of school development committees may be attributed, considering that a number of other factors play equally important roles.

5.4. Indicators associated with effective SDCs

The research looked at factors or indicators considered to be important in determining the effectiveness of SDCs in Pafiwa and the data analysis established that in order of priority; improved student learning time, improved

asset management, creation of child friendly school environments, and enhanced school budget oversight were regarded highly by the Pafiwa cluster while teacher welfare, knowledge of SDC roles and school enrolment were also important but not as critical as the first four.

It is the submission of this research that school enrolment was not a problem in the cluster during the period under review because efforts have been made through traditional leadership and many programmes of support from government and NGOs to ensure that all children of school going age were mobilized and were supported in schools. There were programmes such as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and the National Action Programmes for OVCs (NAP/OVC) which were mentioned in this category including the works of the Girl Child Education Programmes for CAMFED and the Girl Child Network. These support measures ensured that issues of enrolment are dealt with.

5.5. Preferred skills for SDCs effectiveness

The research found that participants could not easily pin-point the skills preferences other than highlighting these in the form of 'preferred outcomes' leaving the researcher to establish a link between the identified 'preferred outcomes' and skills necessarily to achieve these outcomes. For instance skills that enhanced good results, school facilities and teacher welfare were considered crucial by the participating communities and in that respect had a higher preference as critical areas for capacity building interventions for the SDCs in the cluster. According to the Chairpersons (Reflection Meeting: 23, March 2012), these are skills which helps SDCs to hold teachers accountable for what they do in class, to achieve good learning results while at the same time, creating a good learning and teaching environment in their schools. Interestingly, parental preference had clearly shifted from just the provision of teacher incentives to holding teachers accountable for what they do in class.

A key observation made in this research was that there was too much training received in the thematic subject of 'Roles and Responsibilities of SDCs' over the years up to 2008 and that a lot of SDCs were developing possible "training fatigue" in this thematic area during the period under review (SDC Chairperson, Plenary Reflection Discussion Meeting: 23 March 2012). Interestingly, data presented during the focus group discussions confirmed that this was the least preferred of all the skills that members wanted their SDCs to have in the period under review. Questions arose on whether the avoidance of training on role clarification for SDCs could not be an expression of the SDCs wanting to avoid accountability by avoiding necessary skills that enables them to be accountable. At face value, there indeed is merit in the oversupply of such a thematic topic in the area given that data supplied and focus group opinions suggested that capacity building focus in the period before 2008 was predominantly about clarifying roles and responsibilities for SDC members. However it was difficult to ascertain whether there was bad intention and malice in the SDCs suggestions that there was 'training fatigue' in this particular thematic area.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated the research findings based on the four research questions requiring participants (a) to identify the capacity building programmes offered to School Development Committees from 2008 to 2011 in Pafiwa cluster; (b) analyse the value attached to each capacity building programme by the recipient School Development Committee in the area; (c) extract the perceptions of the SDCs concerned regarding indicators of an effective SDC; and (d) point out the skills preferences for capacity building of members of SDCs in the cluster.

Accordingly, the findings presented above suggest that the four questions were answered in this research.

Participants in the cluster had positive opinions about the value of capacity building programmes offered to their SDCs. However, this chapter submitted that capacity building programmes alone may not have been the panacea that contributed to the positive outcomes and improved performance by the SDCs. In fact this chapter concludes that there were other factors that were equally important in stimulating the performance of SDCs to effectiveness. Such factors include the use of a credible currency in the country making it easy for schools to get transactional value for their money, an improved operating political environment, and most importantly improved school management by School Heads and Administrators resulting from multiple distance education programmes available to school managers in Zimbabwe

On the other hand, the findings re-affirmed the observations by Bolger (2000) that the real outcomes of capacity building must appeal to the recipients of such capacity and must speak to the importance of skills, understandings, attitudes, and values that enable school development committees, to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time. In this regard, this chapter demonstrated that in terms of parental preferences in skills that SDCs should posses, the preferred ones were those that enhanced access and quality compared to just training in roles and responsibilities of SDCs, a phenomenon most likely associated with the oversupply of trainings designed to orient SDCs in roles and responsibilities over time.

This chapter has also highlighted that capacity building and skills preferences for SDCs may be influenced by the circumstances prevailing at a given time. For instance based on the submissions by the Pafiwa participants, (Focus Group Reflection Meeting 23rd March, 2012) during times of crisis, capacity building priorities in Pafiwa differed from capacity building priorities in transitional times under the Government of National Unity and that under each condition, the way service providers, schools and communities shaped their requirements for skills

development for SDCs, was to a large extent based on the conditions prevailing at that given time. This is in reference to the types of capacity building programmes for Pafiwa cluster during the emergency period in 2007/8 against those in transitional period from 2009/11 period (also refer to Figure 1: Focus groups' characterisations of capacity building programmes offered to school governing bodies in Mutasa from 2008 to 2011).

In summary the purpose of the research which required exploring perceptions and experiences of School Development Committees from Pafiwa cluster in Mutasa District on the usefulness of capacity building programmes on their performance as SDCs have been addressed through these findings. The research has engaged successfully with the questions as will be demonstrated in the last chapter on 'Conclusions'. The next chapter makes recommendations based on the findings established above.

As pointed out in this research, there is no doubt that capacity building was deemed to have resulted in knowledge of conditions that affect the performance of SDCs in Pafiwa cluster and that this has been a catalyst to good relations between the SDCs and their stakeholders in the community. The fact that the SDCs were undergoing capacity building at the time resulted in them having a better grasp of their context while at the same time taking opportunities being offered by a changing environment. Resultantly, there has been improvement in the SDCs knowledge of their political context, parental support, and group consensus on deliverables. From the outcomes identified above, an inference is therefore made that capacity building support was valuable to the communities of the respective SDCs in the area under review.

However, from the foregoing, it is safe to say that the good results mentioned above, may not be so much about capacity building support alone but all seem to suggest that the significance of these capacity programmes need to take into consideration other supportive environments most importantly, the Government

of National Unity (GNU) which created an enabling environment and improved community relations spilling to SDC and school community relations, the value of the transitional monetary currency at that given time as well as the improved management in schools by school administrators resulting from an increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads and the teaching staff.

All these seem to point to the fact that capacity building programmes for SDCs play critical roles in the performance of the school committees but an operating environment is equally important to ensure delivery effectiveness among SDCs.

CHAPTER 6:

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter synchronizes the research findings against the research purpose and makes recommendations based on the identified opportunities and challenges presented in the findings to improve capacity building programming for SDCs. The recommendations in this chapter are therefore a result of the qualitative analysis and the triangulation of events and inferences of findings associated with the provision of capacity building interventions to SDCs in the cluster as presented in the previous chapters. The Chapter begins from the premise that for capacity building programmes to be proclaimed effective, the outcome indicators must appeal to the members of the parent assemblies from where the SDC members are drawn.

Pursuant to the above position, there is need to link the value of the SDC capacity building programmes with evident improvements in academic performance of the students through enhanced monitoring. This is in view of the fact that parents (as demonstrated by the Pafiwa representatives) expect to see schools delivering good pass rates and good school results (from examinations). It is therefore recommended that parents should participate in developing the nature of skills that need addressing in SDCs. This would lead to appropriate packaging of capacity building programmes that address the needs of the parents. If the research has observed that there is a symbiotic relationship between teacher-student contact time and the results achieved by a school, it follows therefore hypothetically, that immediate capacity building support needs to address the deficiencies within SDCs, which affect appropriate management of school systems to create an enabling environment that allows improved learning time for students.

On the other hand, while acknowledging the view that school governing is complicated and demanding (Nyandoro *et al*, 2013) and that any form of capacity building needs to be packaged appropriately to deal with the different types of contexts, this research recommends that a 'one size fits all' approach to capacity building of SDCs may be retrogressive let alone undermines the real benefit expected of capacity building by parents and communities. This is in respect to a positive trajectory that has been observed throughout the research discussions that capacity building preferences for SDCs in Pafiwa was always defined by the circumstances prevailing at a given time. For instance in times of crisis capacity building priorities differed from capacity building priorities in normal and transitional times and that under each condition, the way a school community shaped its desires for capacity skills, was more often than not, determined by conditions prevailing in that community's environment at that given time. This suggests therefore that there can never be 'a straight jacket' approach to capacity building of SDCs

Granted the above assumption is correct, the study therefore upholds Ubels, *at el,* (2010) view that capacity building is a process and it does not necessarily end with just a once-off training. Therefore, further training and retraining of SDCs to deal with a multiple of issues is key to addressing the aspirations of the parents that constitute such SDCs

Consequently, the research recommends robust quality control of capacity building programmes that are delivered to SDCs. This is in view of the observation that, while the Ministry is mandated to provide primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe and has a strategic role of providing capacity development services to improve the quality, relevance and accessibility of education (CfBT, 2012), the research concluded that limited funding for core deliverables made it difficult for the Ministry to set aside a budget for capacity building of SDCs. While this may have created a market for non-state actors in the provision of capacity building programmes, it is recommended that the

Ministry up-scales its quality assurance and due diligence roles to make sure that the quality, the extent and the scope of capacity building programmes being channeled out to SDCs, and that the content and value of the material used for training, is in keeping with what the Ministry expects on the ground. This way the Ministry is able to regularize the practice of capacity building for SDCs.

Observing that some of the enablers to effective running of SDCs have been identified as those activities outside the parameters of SDC capacity building frameworks such as an increased uptake of distance learning by School Heads for example, the research further recommends a measure to improve the operating environment within the designs of capacity development programmes. An enabling operating environment like that presented by the Government of National Unity is considered important in regularizing the political and social dynamics relevant for school governance.

Linked to the above, a second point can be made that calls for taking advantage of this opportunity to bring the right relational balance between school management and school governance. Since School Development Committees were established to decentralise the education sector (Zimbabwe Education Act, (2006), this placed parents and school administrators together in charge of schools. A lack of formal induction for SDCs members into office would always be retrogressive and counter - productive as this seemingly sets the two centers of power into conflicts. It is therefore appropriate that each time a new SDC assumes its term of office, proper induction by the Ministry officials is quickly conducted to balance such relational powers between school administrators and school governors (SDCs).

The points made above also relate to important conditions that affect the performance of SDCs. In Pafiwa cluster, these were pointed out to be; political context, parental support, and group consensus on deliverables. Some among these conditions are ‘pull and push’ factors requiring that parents tread with

caution. The belief in Pafiwa was that most of those SDCs which failed to manage these conditions carefully are the ones that failed to achieve their goals. Therefore knowledge of these conditions and an understanding of how to 'navigate' through them is a key requisite among SDC capabilities and skills.

Finally, this research recommends SDC skills that foster robust monitoring and evaluation systems in the education sector which do not only emphasis the teaching and learning system but also looks at the whole school evaluation approaches that embrace everything that takes place at a school including how parents engage with their schools. In the case of Pafiwa, this presents an opportunity for district officials of MoESAC and stakeholders in the education sector, to create a combined strength with the School Heads and the parents in the SDCs as an important determinant of monitoring quality in the education delivery system. An enabling environment for this to be successful is already in place were Government of Zimbabwe has mandated all government institutions to implement an Integrated Result Based Management (IRBM) (Madhekeni, 2012) and it is hoped that with this approach, a series of steps for management in the education sector at district level to plan and monitor the progress of programmes, track the effectiveness of approaches and learn through the outcomes, will be provided to safeguard the gains resulting from the capacity building programmes organised for SDCs. Ultimately, it is hoped this can be measurable through improved academic performance of the students.

In summary, this chapter has synchronized the research findings against the research purpose and made recommendations based on the identified opportunities and challenges presented in the findings. The intention is to improve capacity building programming for SDCs. The Chapter consolidated the view that for capacity building programmes to be proclaimed effective, the outcome indicators must appeal to the members of the parent assemblies from where the SDC members are drawn.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore perceptions and experiences of School Development Committees from the six Pafiwa cluster schools in Mutasa District on the usefulness of capacity building programmes on their performance as SDCs. On the basis of four key questions, this research has (a) identified the capacity building programmes offered to School Development Committees from 2008 to 2011 in Pafiwa cluster; (b) analysed the value attached to each capacity building programme by the recipient School Development Committee in the area; (c) extracted the perceptions of the SDCs concerned regarding indicators of an effective SDC; and (d) pointed out the skills preferences for capacity building of members of SDCs in the cluster

Overall, the questions were answered amid challenging circumstances related to balancing data presentation from focus group discussions with the researchers own experiences in the provision of capacity building support to School Development Committees in Zimbabwe. However, based on the general feelings from participants in the focus group discussions, there is no doubt that communities of Pafiwa found capacity building programmes for SDCs in their areas quite helpful, sustainable and that to a large extent adding value to the performance of their SDCs

Pursuant to the above, it is concluded that the positive perceptions on the value attached to capacity building programmes to the governance of schools in the cluster should be encouraged. As pointed out in this research, the picture painted by the scenarios is that once you provide relevant customised and timely capacity building support, using appropriate structures such as Ministry structures in the districts, things start to fall in place in the governance of schools.

The researcher however admits that the assumption may not be fully conclusive without acknowledging the importance of creating an enabling environment under which SDCs perform and allowing the SDCs to take advantage of opportunities presented by such an environment.

Having said this, the research concludes that there were three conditions affecting the performance of SDCs in Pafiwa cluster. These are political context, parental support, and group consensus on deliverables. Most of the participating SDCs believed they failed to achieve their goals because they did not meet or navigate through one or any of these conditions carefully. As a result, capacity building programmes generally would arguably not generate the required results if the three conditions are not in place. The above conclusion resonates with the opinions proffered by Morgan, (2006) and Murtin's (2013) that capacity building may not be a straight forward process but requires a systemic approach. Parental school autonomy does not necessarily yield good outcomes when the accountability system of SDCs is not functioning well and lacks requisite skills.

The study also corroborated Chatiza, *et al*, (2011) suggestions in the literature that democratisation of education systems is best achieved by enhancing the demand side of education through capacity building and training of parent assemblies. This arguably enables parents to warm up to the sophistications associated with dealing with school managers (School Heads). The perceptions drawn from participants in this research are that they all appreciated opportunities where they are brought under one roof together with the School Heads. This was important in striking the right code for school management and school governance capacity balance.

To a large extent the research has confirmed that while a number of factors have been noted in Zimbabwe that influence the performance of SDCs (Chirume, *et al*, 2009), understanding the perceptions and experiences of SDCs as recipients of capacity development support would enable development programmes in the

education sector to direct or redirect their resources and attention to appropriate and specific capacity development issues that help improve the performance of school development committees, thereby having value addition to school improvement in the area.

The research however, noted that there are contradictions with literature review inferences by Khan, *at el*, (2005) that among factors negatively influencing the development of capacity for education decentralization includes reduced morale among staff at district levels to supervise and conduct capacity development as well as a deterioration of staff management at district level to spearhead capacity development for school governance. This is not true of Pafiwa given that in many of the situations experienced by the cluster, the conduct and provision of capacity building programmes, be it through training or in any other form, was carried out by Ministry personnel who showed signs that they were comfortable to continue with the support to SDCs long after the sponsoring organisations have gone. It is no wonder therefore that SDC Chairpersons (Focus Group 3: 23 March, 2012) would ask for the Ministry to take complete control of some of these programmes at the District Education Office level to guarantee sustainability of programmes.

In summary, there is no doubt that communities in Pafiwa found capacity building programmes for SDCs helpful, sustainable and that to a large extent the programmes added value to the performance of their SDCs. The conclusion is that overall, exploring perceptions and experiences of School Development Committees from the six Pafiwa cluster schools in Mutasa District on the usefulness of capacity building programmes on their performance, has been fully engaged and that the purpose of the research has been addressed in this report. It is the submission of the researcher that in addition to the external influences alluded to in this research write-up, the performance of SDCs can indeed be seen as a function of capacity building.

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APENDIXES

Appendix 1: Focus group discussion question guide

This focus group guide is not to be treated as a questionnaire but a tool to enable the conducting of a research within a group perspective. Its aim is to help understand community perceptions and experiences of various types of capacity development interventions targeted towards School Development Committees the Pafiwa circuit in Mutasa District. The questions highlighted in this guide borders around identifying the usefulness of capacity development interventions in the running of SDCs.

The participants are expected to reflect on each question thoroughly and answer to the best of their knowledge in groups. Presentations will be conducted in plenary sessions. Their answers will be kept confidential and they will never be identified to anyone without their prior permission as a community. Responses to these questions will be used for this research purpose only.

General questions	**Enumerator to verify**
1. Definitions of capacity & capacity development	Participants' understanding of the subject
2. In groups, identify the types of capacity development intervention rendered to your SDC in the past three (3) years	Who provided it and in what form(s), themes, scope and context
3. Describe the performance of your SDC prior to the said capacity development intervention?	The commonly emerging descriptive
4. In your view, what has been the specific value of the identifiable capacity development programmes to the way SDCs perform?	i. School assert management ii. Teacher retention iii. Supervision of Learner teacher contact hours iv. Control of School budget v. Finance mobilisation and management vi. Enrolment vii. etc
5. What would you rather your SDCs have in terms of expertise?	The commonly emerging descriptive
6. Identify other factors that have led to better performance of SDCs in the area?	Credibility and attribution levels

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for selected members of the SDCs on roles and expertise of SDCs

1. What is your post in the SDC? ……..
2. What is the length of your term of office in the SDC? ……
3. What are your core duties? ……
4. Have you been availed the time to read the Statutory Instrument (SI) 87 of 1992?
5. How often do you meet as a committee? ……..
6. Who advises or has advised your SDC in the past four years (with capacity support or skills to run as an SDC?) ……
7. What has been the nature of the advice or capacity building support?…….
8. Give any specific examples of the importance of the capacity building programmes that you have received to the way your SDC is performing…….?
9. Who else besides the head of the school attends your meetings and capacity building programmes or trainings?
10. Does your school have a School Development Plan? If yes how was it formulated……If no why...?

Appendix 3: Focus Group Diary Guidelines and Responses

DIARY OF FIELD NOTES ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Research work towards part fulfillment of the MM-PDM at Wits University for Isaac Makanani

Field Work and Focus Group Discussions Meeting Dates

Setting the tone – 22nd March, 2012
Focus Group 1 – 22nd March, 2012
Focus Group 2 – 22nd March 2012
Focus Group 3 – 23rd March 2012
Plenary Reflection Discussion – 23rd March, 2012
DEO Validation Meeting – 25th March, 2012

Session 1: Setting the tone – 22nd March, 2012

Objective: To unpack participants' perspective of capacity building (What in their own terms do they call capacity building?)

As evidence of understanding the meaning of capacity, participants were asked to give definitions of their understanding of the term capacity

i. Capacity is expertise that is given to a person (*hunyanzvi hunopihwa munhu*)
ii. Empowerment
iii. Training programmes for office bearers, workshops
iv. Skills enhancement
v. Ability, skills, understandings
vi. Types of capacity building you have received

Capacity –

- *Chikwanisiro "kupiwa **njere** dzokuzvibatsira nekuzadzisa **chinangwa chako**"* (ability- to be given the intelligence to help yourself and your organisation to achieve your goals.

- "*Kupiwa unyanzvi hwebasa maringe ne tarisiro yako"* - Being given knowledge and expertise, to be able to organise, understanding capacity building – teaching on skills and knowledge about leading school programmes"
- *"Kuva munhu arakarongeka anoshandika naye"* – (being organised and easy to work with)

Focus Group 1: (Second session responses): 22nd March, 2012

Objective: Examine participants' understanding of capacity development programmes in relationship to operations of SDCs

(Responses)

i. Programmes that enhance knowledge of school management and SDC operations
ii. Support that builds capability to carry out successful development projects in schools
iii. Capacity – *chikwanisiro* (ability) to be given the intelligence to help yourself to achieve your goals in the functioning of schools *(kupiwa **njere** dzokuzvibatsira kuzadzisa **chinangwa chako*)**
iv. Knowledge, expertise, to be able to organise, and understanding of school business
v. Capacity building – teaching on skills and knowledge about leading school programmes
vi. Programmes that builds people to be an organised persons who are team workers in groups such as SDCs *(Kuva vanhu vakarongeka vanoshandika navo)*

Focus Group 2: (Third session responses): 22nd March 2012

Objective: To identify types of capacity building programmes given to SDCs in Pafiwa circuit by year and service provider:

Question: What capacity building sessions did you have? Who conducted them? And what was the theme (what was it on)?

Type/Name	by	when	Theme
Learning without fear	Plan	2008	Conditions necessary for learning of children
SDC exchange visits	SNV/Cluster	2009	SDC Capacity reinforcement training
SDC workshops	SNV	2009	SDC peer learning
AIDS workshop	Chiedza	2008	Aids awareness
Cholera awareness	IRC	2008/9	Cholera awareness

Tanks donated	IRC	2010	WASH
Child rights	Justice for Children	2010	Child rights
Early Childhood Devpt	MoESAC	2009	ECD
Enhancing Grade 7 results	MoESAC/Plan	2009	Learning Achievement Tracking
Water project	Chikumbu	2011	WASH
Child friendly schools	MoESAC/SNV/Plan	2009	Child Friendly Schools skills understanding attitudes and implementation
Finance & Project planning	Plan/CTB	2008	Ability to do projects Understanding resources
Teacher welfare	SNV/MoESAC	2009	Attitude behaviour resources mobilisation
SDC workshop	School	2009	SDC duties
SDC trainings	SNV	2010	Running of schools, duties of SDCs, management of Finances, CFS, budgeting,
BEAM	MoESAC	2011	Selection of pupils into the BEAM
SDC trainings	Mutasa RDC	2011	Payment and collection of school levies
SDC training	ASAP	2011	Indicators of a good school
SDC training	Hauna cluster	2011	Presentation of school budget
Prefects workshop	Plan	2011	Leadership
School workshop	MoESAC2011	2010	Training in teaching & reading
Child protection	Plan/MoESAC	2011	Child safety in schools
Para professional	Plan/MoESAC	2008	ECD Para-professionals
Training of health coordinators	Plan	2009	WASH in schools

FOCUS GROUP 3: 23rd March 2012 (First session responses)

Objective: To understand the value attached to each capacity building programme by the recipient school development committee in the area under review

Question: From the capacity development programmes you mentioned above, explain how they helped to enhance your performance as SDCs)

Responses ranged from:

- Improved conducting of SDC meetings- meeting minutes/ quality (agenda and capturing of agreed points) frequency as per stipulations
- Finance- on finance management/signatories/book keeping/budgeting
- Teaching& learning- Inventory/ storage/availability of materials
- School facilities – availability/up keep
- Projects – Plans/implantation
- Results improvements

Area	Situation before training	Results (of the action)
Meetings Roles and responsibilities of	Few meetings (Manunure primary "we did not	Training workshops helped us as SDCs to know that any meeting

office bearers	have an updated record of meeting proceedings at our school Most of the times we just held meetings and brought up things as we discussed this made it difficult to progress" Role conflicts which disrupted school operations all together accusations between school authorities, SDCs and parents because of lack of understanding and no records to show transparency to the parents SDC chair and heads where always at logger heads because of conflicts in responsibilities "I can safely say that I am now able to articulate some of the provisions of the legal framework governing roles of SDCs members and this has been a result of SDC Capacity reinforcement programmes in the cluster" (SDC Chairman 1: Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012)	should have minutes which we record whatever we would have discussed. (St David) attitudes have changed within the SDCs because we now know what we should do Minutes are written clearly and orderly is done Frequency 2-3 times per term Workshops helped attendance as SDCs now knew how to mobilise parents and prepare for meetings in time (Mutasa primary) Roles have been clarified school relations and work has improved *"vabereki vasvinura, vaakukoshesa Kupasa kwevana kwete ungotivhunza nezvema insentivhi*" (parents are now smarter; they now want their kids to pass exams not just being asked to give out incentives) (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012).
Finance	Problem was largely due to inflation in ZimDollar (Zim$) time "In some schools the school funds were kept in teachers' houses" SDC Chairperson. 'There was a lot of viramenting in schools" SDC Chair "Teachers where given the responsibility of handling money" SDC Chair. Proper procedures of recording money were not followed Budgeting was not done due to the inflationary condition of the period	Proper composition of finance subcommittee, regular supervision of books, use of proper financial records and registers has brought transparency in the manner school finances are managed. (SDC Chair) There is still room for improvement as relations between School Heads and SDCs in many cases are still bad.
Teaching & learning materials	Inadequate teaching and learning material and were there was some, the storage of it was poor	Inadequate but there is improvement We got knowledge on how to source for these and safeguard them from an SDC capacity reinforcement training programme by SNV and UNICEF We also received training on how to write proposals for Teaching and Learning Materials New doors for classrooms and lockable cupboards have been put in place as a condition for receiving the Education

		Transition Fund text books in the area (Pafiwa High)
Projects		We are using the knowledge of planning and budgeting we now have a new teachers' house under construction (Bonda primary)
School environment	The concept of child friendly schools had been introduced by the Ministry in 2006 but our schools had done little to implement it due to lack of further knowledge and finances. *"Zvikoro zvedu zvakange vavakunge mabharaki masoja"* (our schools were like military barracks for soldiers) (Reflection Meeting: SDC Chairperson 4: 23 March 2012).	Schools have become friendly to pupils from the teachings on Learning Without Fear by Plan, and the Child Friendly Schools programme by MoESAC and UNICEF. In some schools (4/6) in the cluster, Child SDCs have become more involved and we now give them a chance to participate in decision making process (Plan's Child SDC training)
Improved School relations & governance	Schools had come to a stand still in 2008 and in 2009 people did not have much skills, lack of clarity of roles and lots of fighting -("*Anhu angaakuite 'politics' ngema mitin'i ezvikoro. Pano-ngepapo, uyo obhuya, amweni wechioshaishidza. Kwaiwa kukwesa kusaziwaba. Zvino zvechioshandika")* (People were now practicing politics with the school meetings - with one saying this and the other that. It was ignorance, people did not know. Now it's easy to do our job) (Councilor: Plenary Reflection Meeting 23 March, 2012) The conflicts were exacerbated by a lack of accountability to parents as there were no records to show transparency to the parents (Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012). "People did not have much relationship skills a result of lack of trust emanating from a period of stagnation in schools, there was lack of clarity of roles and lots of fighting and generally parent assemblies	Parents contribution have increased (financial + work) resulting from courses by SNV and Plan parents SDC all now know their responsibilities and now use skills of transparency to attract money. Attitudes have changed in the positive by parents because SDCs have improved transparency in their meetings and finances (Pafiwa secondary) Chiedza courses improved acceptance of children infected or affected by HIV/Ads in schools because of the exposures received by SDC members. Comment by one participant in the focus group discussion was that "Capacity building *inokuvhura pfungwa nemaziso"* (Capacity building is an eye opener) "Schools have become places were learners look forward to going" (Focus Group Discussion 3:23 March, 2012) "Child SDCs have become more pronounced and responsible and are now given a chance to participate in decision

	lacked confidence in the financial accountability by school management authorities"(Chairperson 5: Plenary Reflection Meeting: 23 March, 2012).	making processes attributed to the Junior or Child SDC training" (SDC Chairperson 1 in Focus Group 3: 23 March, 2012).
Improved School facilities	Lack of classrooms pupils learnt outside and few teachers houses teachers had to share two per room Many SDCs did not know about the school assets and if it was their place to look into the assets School property was lost and no one could make themselves accountable	Classroom and teachers house construction is now part of many schools annual project plans SDCs have now developed assets registers which are checked at the opening and close of term Some have loss and damage asset policies to guard against loss and means of recovery
How to market a school	We did not have knowledge at all that schools could be marketed At our school we refused guidance from external people and old students association and it lead to teachers running away from our school	Schools have improved the areas like the sign posts, buying school sports uniforms. The old student associations have taken it upon themselves to market the school in areas where they work although with limited results yet.
Teacher welfare	SDCs parents and teachers fought over issues of incentives over the years with teachers refusing to teach and parents refusing to pay	SDCs understood the importance of teacher motivation and keeping teachers and in most schools in the cluster, "the incentives issues has been resolved amicably due to the exposure from trainings on how to fund raise for teacher incentives

FOCUS GROUP 3: 23rd March 2012 (Second session responses)

Objective: To investigate SDC capacity and proficiency preferences by the communities and characterise them on how they have led to better performance of SDCs in the area

Priority areas for capacity building according to the focus group discussions

Point of interest the participants noted was that there are capacity building priorities in times of crisis situations which maybe different from capacity development prioritise that schools may have in normal times. According to the focus group, these have been indicated separately below

Community preferences of their SDC capacity building skills required during Crisis/emergency times

1. Supervision of teacher student contact hours
2. Asset keeping and management (facilities)
3. Child friendly schools
4. School budget and finance
5. Teacher welfare
6. Roles of SDCs
7. School enrolment

Capacity needs in normal/transitional times

1. Roles of SDCs
2. Budget, planning and finance management
3. Sourcing funds
4. CFS
5. Teacher welfare
6. Asset management
7. Teacher student contact hours
8. Enrolment

Notes on emergency (2008) and normal times (2011)

(Focus Group 3: 23rd March, 2012) felt that school governing bodies were preoccupied with the motivation and incentivisation of teachers in an attempt to persuade and stop them from leaving their schools during the emergency times (2008)

This was a period characterised by loss of learning time in schools with teachers leaving to other countries.

The normal times:

According to this group (Plenary Reflection Discussion: 23rd March, 2012), 'dollarisation' of the economy led to the stabilisation of education service delivery in schools. It made the work of the school governing bodies in Zimbabwe easier. According to the respondents, the use of credible currency had a spill over effect on value for money in services to the schools

Subsequently parents interests had shifted from incentives to good pass marks for learners. E.g *"vabereki vasvinura, vaakukoshesa kupasa kwevana kwete kungotivhunza nezvema insentivhi*" (parents are now smarter; they now want their kids to pass exams not just being asked to give out incentives) (Focus Group 3: 23 March 2012).

Through focus group discussions, an assessment of school performance preferences of the Mutasa community was conducted and the following shows the outcome in priority order of a score out of 12. This information is based on focus group questions regarding the education delivery preferences of the Pafiwa cluster community for their students and what commensurate skills the SDCs in the area needed to posses to promote these.

a. Student's results and enrolment: 11
b. School facilities: 8
c. Teacher Welfare: 7
d. Teaching and learning materials: 5
e. School Projects: 3
f. Finance: 1
g. Roles of SDCs: 1

23rd March 2012

Sub – Objective 2: To Identify indicators of a good performing SDC

This session was used in the focus group discussions 3 to assess aspirations of parents from Pafiwa around outcomes they considered to be important in assessing effectiveness of SDCs and indicators of good performing SDCs in priority order

The following results were noted from the plenary session in priority order:

1. Learning time (teacher student contact time)
2. Asset management
3. Creation of child friendly school environment
4. School budget
5. Teacher welfare
6. Roles of SDCs
7. School enrolment

PLENARY REFLECTION DISCUSSIONS: 23rd March 2012 (Third session responses)

Objective: To summarise and identify other factors contributing to efficiency in running the schools in Pafiwa cluster:

The session brainstormed in plenary session other factors that may have contributed to performance of schools in the Pafiwa cluster. The following factors were highlighted:

- Dollarization of the economy made budgeting and planning easy. *("The dollarisation of the economy was a factor to the stabilisation of education service delivery by school governing bodies in Zimbabwe "*- (School Head 2: Plenary Reflection Discussion, 23rd March, 2012).

- "Diaspora effect" new knowledge from the people *who left the country and are now coming back from the Diaspora*.

- *Weather patterns better rainfall in 2010 gave better scope for garden proj*ects in schools and hence improved incomes.

- UNICEF's assistance in the provision of resources to all schools in 2010.
- Reduction of political tensions (GNU) improved community relations spilling to SDC school community relations.
- ICT improved networking communication and information dissemination (not clarified)
- Improvement in national political environment more partners coming in to participate in the education sector in the area
- Distance learning (ZOU) more and more education managers in the area and staff are advancing in learning which makes them more knowledgeable thus improving school management and operating environment for the schools in the area