Effectiveness of School Vision and Mission in Aiding Conflict Prevention in Bindura Urban Primary Schools- Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe

By

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Abstract

Few studies have directly examined the effectiveness of a school vision and mission in aiding the prevention of conflict in the primary school settings. In this study, 50 Zimbabwean primary school teachers from five schools in the City of Bindura in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe were conveniently sampled and surveyed. They responded to a questionnaire based on Likert's measurement scales to explore and describe how a school vision and mission could aid conflict prevention. The study revealed that a clear and a shared school vision and mission that is inclusive of conflict prevention. It also highlighted that staff development and communication were important in effective conflict prevention. It further pointed out that school heads lacked relevant skills to manage conflict situations. The study recommended the need for tolerance of different views, collective crafting of school vision and mission and mounting of regular staff development workshops on the use of a vision and mission to manage conflict. It further recommended the need to situationally vary type of climate, leadership and management styles in a bid to aid conflict prevention in the primary schools under study.

1. Introduction

The concepts of a school vision, mission, conflict and conflict prevention, have assumed a high profile at organizational, national, regional and international levels. Lives have been lost, property has been destroyed, development projects have been derailed, productivity has declined and socio-economic progress has been stalled as a result of conflict inherent in many spheres of people's lives.

Kreitner (1995) and Robbins (2003) observe that no matter how clear an organization's vision and mission are and how well conflict may be managed, conflict is unavoidable. This is echoed by Hall (1996) who argues that conflict is an inherent organizational process.

An organizational vision and mission can be unclear and disliked (Forthsyth, 2002; Huczynsi and Buchanan, 2001). Also conflict could be destructive or constructive depending on how it is managed. Kreitner (1995) notes that as long as a conflict trigger appears to stimulate constructive conflict, it should be allowed to continue but as symptoms of destructive conflict appear, steps must be taken to remove the destructive trigger.

This seems to suggest the need for school personnel to have relevant skills to articulate and craft a school vision and mission that allow prediction of destructive conflict triggers. This study sought to explore the degree to which primary school administrators in Bindura, Zimbabwe have relevant skills to prevent conflict. In the light of the preceding observations, it became compelling for the researchers to investigate how a school mission and vision can aid in preventing conflict in primary schools.

Statement of the Problem
Human beings by their nature are very unpredictable, and this complicates the idea of a conflict trigger with a high degree of uncertainty. In the wake of unavoidable conflict, primary schools in Zimbabwe appeared to craft visions and missions that hardly entailed conflict preventive aspects. According to York

Region District School Board (YRDSB) (2009) a school vision that has potential to avoid conflict entails the following attributes: First, it focuses on public education. It understands the public's gifts and challenges. It is crafted in such a way that it seeks to fulfill the public good. Second, it respects and celebrates their differences. Third, it invites and values the spirit of community creativity and individual as well as social growth. Fourth, school stakeholders support each other. Finally, it has joy in who school stakeholders are and who they are becoming. According to the YRDSB's (2009), a school mission that has potential to prevent conflict unites school stakeholders in their purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in an ever changing world community. Whether school vision and mission entail conflict prevention remained an empirical question to be investigated.   This study sought to answer this question:

> How effective are a school vision and a school mission in aiding the prevention
> of conflict?

Objectives of the Study

The study intended to explore the effectiveness of a school vision and mission in aiding prevention of conflict. It also sought to highlight limitations of using a school vision and mission in facilitating conflict prevention.

Research Questions

From the background given above, two questions this study seeks to answer are:
- How do a school vision and a school mission aid in preventing conflict?
- What are the limitations of using a school mission and vision to aid in preventing conflict?

Significance of the Study

The study was of immense value to primary schools of a developing country context like Zimbabwe. It was bound to equip school heads with relevant conceptual, technical and human skills regarding articulating and crafting of a school vision and mission that could aid in preventing conflict. The study intended to shed light on how best school heads could craft school missions and visions that might help in conflict prevention practices at their workplaces. Also school heads and their teachers would be conversant with their schools' visions and missions in the light of destructive conflict triggers which warrant the need for prevention. Furthermore, this study was a ground breaking one in the area of conflict prevention using a school mission and vision as it was the first of its kind in the field of primary education in Zimbabwe. As a result, it opened fertile ground for further research in the same area in other sectors of education such as secondary, tertiary and university education.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual reflections

Vision

A vision according to Bateman (2002:119) is "a long term desired direction and strategic intent of a company". Mintzberg (1990) views a vision from a strategic management process in which the vision is referred to as the design of the school which proposes a simple model that views the process as one design to achieve an essential fit between external and internal threats and opportunities and internal distinctive competence. Ian (1995) contends that a vision can be expressed well in the form of a vision statement. One such example he gives is:

> During the next five years the college will be regarded as one of the leading land-based
> colleges offering comprehensive range of course to enable practical skills to maximum
> potential, studying at the centre with modern resources. This will result in land-based
> industries with a well qualified disciplined workforce, (Ian 1995:71).

It was in the interests of this study to find out how well the concept of a vision fits with conflict prevention in the selected primary schools in Bindura.

Mission

A mission as perceived by Tweed (1992:28) refers to "an organization's basic purpose and its scope of operation". Mintzberg (1990) points out that it specifies a vision. Moore (1996), Kasambira (1998) and Mitchell (1999) concur that a mission has to serve several purposes such as:

- It characterises the school to its community.
- It provides a sense of direction and purpose.
- It serves as a criterion for policy making.
- It sets the school culture.
- It generates consistency of action.
- It identifies clients.
- It serves to motivate and challenge.

A mission is specified by a mission statement. Ian (1995:71) gives one noteworthy example, "to establish a free-standing specialized land-based college; a regional centre of excellence that will provide a range of opportunities through investment and training". Implicit in the definition of a mission is the fact that it defines an organization's fundamental purpose for existence. An important dimension missing from this definition of a mission is that it helps in the prevention of conflict between and amongst the different stakeholders of a school.

Conflict

The concept of conflict is viewed differently by different scholars. Robbins (2003:445) views conflict as "…a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about". This appears to suggest that conflict is an ongoing activity and encompasses incompatibility of goals, differences over interpretations of facts and differences in expectations. Kreitner (1995) says conflict involves incompatible behaviours, one person interfering, disrupting or making the actions of another's actions less effective. Also, Rashid and Archer (1989) observe that conflict involves personality clashes, different values, threats to status and contrasting perceptions. Morton Deutsch cited in Owens (1995:145) aptly concluded that, "conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur". Griffin (2002:603) gives a more comprehensive definition of conflict as:

> Conflict is a disagreement between two or more individuals, groups or organizations. This disagreement may be superficial or very strong, short lived or it can exist for months or even years and it may be work related or personal.

In brief, the ensuing views of conflict denote that conflict is a clash, a dispute or a strong disagreement over beliefs, values, ideas and perceptions and this happens between individuals and groups. In this study, conflict is viewed as disagreements between the school head and school stakeholders such as teachers, pupils, parents and the community at large over how well the school should be run.

How a School Vision and Mission may Aid the Prevention of Conflict

The prevention of conflict in a school should be driven by a vision and a mission statement. An effective leader should have a vision, skills, knowledge, and ability to encourage teachers and inspire them to greater performance (Cole, 2000). Similarly, Chakanyuka (1995:130) argues, "the leader's responsibility involves creation of human conditions through which society can be fully capacitated to live self-fulfilling lives and providing services needed by others". Where a leader owns a vision and a mission, teachers are divorced from that ownership; hence, conflict is bound to occur.

In addition to effective leadership, the school's value system and culture are manifested in the school's policies and strategic plans. In support of this view, Kaufman and Herman (1991:30) contend, "beliefs, values and wishes all affect people working in an organization". In a school, teachers and parents have different values and perceptions which may be a source of conflict.

Mitchell (1999:122) points out that, "vision and ideas are critical in leadership and conflict prevention". Ideas mobilize people and influence them to join in an action of shared benefits. Where there are shared benefits, workers collectively own the vision and mission. They also collaboratively commit themselves to the attainment of the organizational vision and mission's activities, goals, targets and objectives. Mitchell's (1999) observations did not zero in on how vision and mission can aid in preventing conflict in the primary schools he studied. Hence, the need to carry out this particular study using selected Bindura Primary Schools of Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe.

Climate is one other critical factor in conflict prevention (Robbins, 2003). A school with an open climate may aid the prevention of conflict. Davis and Thomas (1989:96) explained, "The head's vision logically ties with academic school climate which is built through goals on internal and external sources". This may mean that effectiveness of the school in conflict prevention largely depends on its supportiveness of organizational members. This emergent discourse sought to investigate the degree to which a school climate might aid in the prevention of conflict in the primary school situation.

Conflict can be minimized in organizations with clear visions and missions if staff members are developed to meet their roles (Mitchell, 1999; Robbins, 2003). In a school situation, perhaps conflict may be prevented through the use of a clear school vision and mission.

In practice, the vision of a school is translated into a mission statement. This may be done through staff development and in-service programmes. In that regard, there may be appropriate strategies and methods of preventing conflict disturbances. This motion which underpins the above concept is that knowledge empowers teachers and eradicates role ambiguity. Teachers and other stakeholders of the school might become well informed on daily core business of the school through a clear vision and mission statement. To this end, Drucker (1997:147) argues, "any organisation develops people, it has no choice. It either helps them grow or stunts them".

Above all, a school whose vision and mission are clear is bound to realize the profit that accrues from practising a fair distribution of school resources – in its quest for conflict prevention. In essence, Owens (1995:157) gives the perception that, "organizations have always limited resources and these must be fairly allocated". Owens' (1995) observation missed out the issue of conflict prevention in relation to a school's vision and mission. Consequently, the co-researchers were inspired to assess the degree to which the practice of sharing resources fairly could aid in conflict prevention in the primary schools under study through the use of a vision and mission.

Limitations to the use of a School Vision and Mission to Aid the Prevention of Conflict
Despite the afore-mentioned laudable reasons for using a school vision and mission to aid the prevention of conflict in schools, writers (Drucker, 1997; Robbins, 2003; Kasambira, 1999) advance a three-fold limitation of using an organizational vision and mission to aid the prevention of conflict in organizations. First, a vision that has been translated into a business mission can only prevent conflict to a certain extent. Although many people view conflict as avoidable, conflict in practice is inevitable, normal and is not necessarily a negative aspect of an institution. Therefore, conflict cannot be completely prevented but it can only be minimized. Second, members in an organization have multiple perspectives of conflict; they continue to view things differently despite having one vision and one mission. Third, controversies are an integral part of human life and therefore can not be prevented. Last, conflict prevention in real life situation is hard to implement. To that end, Deutsch (1991:141) confirms, "conflict is the root of personal and social change".

The forgoing paragraphs have highlighted key discourses regarding organizational missions and visions. The reviewed literature does not particularize how a school vision and mission can aid the prevention of conflict in primary schools. Also the literature largely lacks local content flavour since the sources were

of foreign origin, save for Kasambira (1999) and Chakanyuka (1995). Above all, some of these findings could as well be out of date since they were generated in the nineties.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a survey research design to gather data. Best and Khan (1994) and Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) describe a survey as a research design which specifically describes what a researcher/reader sees over and beyond. The choice of this design for this study is supported by various research writers (Baker, 1994; Leedy, 1997; Fowler, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) for the following reasons. First, the purpose of this survey was to produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about how a vision and mission could aid the prevention of conflict in selected primary schools in Bindura, Zimbabwe. Second, a survey is useful in collecting quantitative data from a large group of subjects, especially when they are geographically dispersed. In this study a survey was used to investigate the effectiveness of a school vision and mission in aiding conflict prevention in five dispersed schools in a district.

Fifty qualified primary school teachers were conveniently sampled from a population of teachers from five schools because random sampling was not possible to employ since most teachers were on strike while others were leaving the country in 2008 to date. Ghosh (2000) rightly argues that convenient sampling is a valid sampling technique that researchers can use. A population of 150 teachers with desirable characteristics for this study was available in the studied schools because most of their colleagues had left the profession for greener pastures during 2008 and the years before. No pre-planning was needed for the selection of the research participants. As a result, each of the five schools provided 10 teachers to respond to the questionnaires, thereby constituting 50 teachers, that is ,33% of the sample frame (population) of 150 teachers recommended.

The research instrument for this study was a questionnaire based on Likert method of scales of measurement. The questionnaire contained four opinion measurement scales namely, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SDA) and Disagree (DA). For the purposes of this study, (SA) and (A) scales would be positive, while (SDA) and (DA) scales would be negative as far as analyzing, presenting and interpreting data were concerned.

Pilot Study
In order to ensure that the data gathered met validity and reliability criteria, a pilot test of five teachers from a peri-urban primary school (not part of the Bindura City schools) was carried out using the instrument. The pilot was meant to improve the questionnaire. Validation of research instruments before using them for data collection is a key aspect of the research process. Scholars like Baker (1994) and Pearce (2005) underscore the importance of using reliable research instruments that yield consistent data from the field. In the practice of research, the best way of ensuring such reliability of instruments is through piloting the instruments.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis Procedures

The co-researchers subscribed to Baker's (1998) idea of presenting and analyzing data using logical themes drawn from the two research questions of this study. Therefore, demographic data of research subjects and actual research findings would be presented before interpreting them. Frequencies and percentages were generated in order to show obtaining trends. The data were then interpreted in order to provide answers to the research questions (Fowler, 2002).

Management of the Survey
The co-researchers approached the Provincial Education Director of Mashonaland Central Province with the intent to apply for permission to carry out this study between June 2009 and July 2009. Permission to carry out the study was granted on 25 June 2009. Five primary schools in Bindura were visited during

the week ending Friday 3 July 2009. Each of the five school heads was given 10 questionnaires to distribute among teachers with the desirable characteristics for this study. The co-researchers collected completed questionnaires a week after the administration. This enabled the research respondents to complete the questionnaires in the comfort of their privacy, whilst at the same time a short return time maximized the return rate of the questionnaires, which was approximately 95 per cent. Thus, all the data were gathered by week ending Friday 10 July 2009.

The sample constituted 33% of the available 150 research participants in the selected primary schools in the City of Bindura. The following aspects were noted, coded and recorded on a spreadsheet:
- Themes that were coded using letters A to C to stand for conceptual reflections of conflict vision and mission; factors that influence prevention of conflict through a school vision and mission and limitations of using a school vision and mission to prevent conflict.
- Negative responses which were coded using dual codes of SDA for strongly disagree and DA for Disagree.
- Positive responses which were coded using dual codes of A for Agree and SA for Strongly Agree.

Coding of research data using numbers SA, A, SDA and DA to represent Likert's measurement scales of Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree enabled the co-researchers to quantify research data for manageable presentation in the form of tables and figures. Such coding enabled ease analysis and interpretation of data as it enabled the researchers to work with numbers (Gay, 1996; Leedy, 1997). Table I below illustrates the analysis of data in terms of the frequencies of positive and negative responses, as well as the three identified themes.

Table 1: Analysis of the Actual Research Data by Question (N = 50)

Theme	Question	Positive responses		Negative responses		Total
		SA	A	SDA	DA	
A	1	0	50	0	0	50
	2	30	15	5	0	50
	3	28	10	12	0	50
B	4	20	15	0	15	50
	5	20	10	15	5	50
	6	0	10	30	10	50
	7	18	7	0	25	50
	8	26	0	0	24	50
	9	35	11	4	0	50
	10	38	0	12	0	50
C	11	3	27	15	5	50
	12	7	18	13	12	50
	13	19	6	5	20	50

Towards the end of the study, the identity numbers shown in Table 1 enabled the co-researchers to summarise and present the actual research data in the form of tables and figures, following Gay's (1996) advice. Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) responses were combined to generate positive responses' frequencies. Similarly, Strongly Disagree (SDA) and Disagree (DA) responses were put together in order to come up with negative responses frequencies. The generated frequencies resulted in the computation of positive relative frequency and negative relative frequency. Table 2 below is a spreadsheet that is indicative of frequencies and relative frequencies of the respondents' opinions on how a school vision and mission could aid conflict prevention in the studied primary schools.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Actual Research Data (N = 50)

Question	Positive Response Frequency	Relative positive response frequency (%)	Negative response frequency	Relative negative response frequency (%)
1	50	100	0	0
2	45	90	5	10
3	38	76	12	24
4	35	70	15	30
5	30	60	20	40
6	10	20	40	80
7	25	50	25	50
8	26	52	24	48
9	46	92	4	8
10	38	76	12	24
11	30	60	20	40
12	25	50	25	50
13	25	50	25	50

Eventually, conclusions and generalisations were drawn from the above research findings.

5. Findings

The presentation of findings started with demographic data of 50 research participants by means of tables. Description and interpretation of such data would immediately follow each table. Actual findings would be presented using tables and figures. Description and interpretation of data would follow two themes namely, how a school vision and mission can aid conflict prevention – and limitations of a school vision and mission in aiding conflict prevention.

Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 3: Respondents by Gender. (N=50)

Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Male	22	44
Female	28	56
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 3 shows that 56 percent of the respondents are females, while 44 percent of the respondents are males. These findings do not denote a balanced gender group of respondents in the schools under study.

Table 4: Respondents by Age. (N=50)

Age	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
20-29	20	40
30-39	10	20
40-49	8	16
50-59	10	20
60-69	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 4 shows that the respondents consisted of relatively young teachers. Forty percent of the respondents were aged below 30, while 20 percent were aged between 30 and 39, 16 percent were aged

between 40 and 49, 20 percent were aged between 50 and 59 and only four percent were aged between 60 and 65. The youthful respondents are bound to be exposed to a lot of information regarding the concepts of school vision, mission and conflict prevention through the internet since we are living in a global world if ever they are determined to read around issues of school management. Therefore, their contributions to this study, coupled with those of their more mature counterparts would generate worthwhile knowledge about the utility of a school mission and vision in aiding conflict prevention in the primary school situation.

Table 5: Respondents by Academic Qualification. (N=50)

Academic Qualification	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
O' level	42	84
A' level	6	12
Standard VI	1	2
Junior Certificate	1	2
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 5 reveals that the majority, that is, 84 percent of the respondents are holders of an 'O' Level qualification. This is followed by 12 percent of the respondents who hold an 'A' Level qualification. Interestingly, only two percent of the respondents hold a Standard VI and Junior Certificate as academic qualifications. Such findings indicate that most respondents in the study area might be analytical and conscious enough of the extent to which a school vision and mission could aid in conflict prevention in the primary schools under study.

Table 6: Respondents by Professional Qualifications. (N=50)

Professional Qualification	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Primary Teachers High (PTH)	1	2
Certificate in Education (CE)	9	18
Diploma in Education (DE)	10	20
Bachelor of Education, Primary (BEP)	3	6
Bachelor of Education, Management (BEM)	15	30
Bachelor of Education, Early Childhood Development (BECD)	2	4
Master of Education, Management (MEM)	10	20
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 6 summarizes professional qualifications of the studied respondents. Only two percent holds a non-standard teaching qualification, that is, Primary Teachers High (PTH). Such a qualification is not recognized internationally. Eighteen percent of the teachers are holders of a Certificate in Education which was phased out in 1993. Twenty percent of the respondents are holders of a Diploma in Education. Six percent hold a Bachelor of Education Degree with specialization in the primary sector. Thirty percent are holders of a Bachelor of Education with specialization in Management. Four percent hold a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Development. Lastly, 20 percent of the respondents hold a Master of Education Degree in Management. These findings show that 60 percent of the respondents are degree holders in the field of education. They imply that most of them might possess functional knowledge to enable them to deal with how conflict in the primary schools could be prevented using a school vision and mission.

Table 7: Respondents by Length of Teaching Experience. (N=50)

Length of Teaching Experience	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
0-5 years	2	4
6-10 years	8	16
11-15 years	16	32
16-20 years	18	36
21-25 years	6	12
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 7 is indicative of the length of teaching experience of the respondents who took part in this study. Only four percent of the respondents had teaching experience of less than five years. Sixteen percent had teaching experience ranging from six to ten years. Thirty-two percent had a length of teaching service ranging between 11 and 15 years. Thirty-six percent had worked between 16 and 20 years, while 12 percent had teaching experience ranging between 21 and 25 years. These findings show that 96 percent of the respondents cumulatively tend to be experienced enough to be conversant with sources of conflict in a school set up. Furthermore, they might be able to make decisions, proposals or even action research to make suggestions and recommendations regarding the effectiveness of a school vision and mission in aiding conflict prevention in the primary school context.

6. Actual Findings

The following section presents data on the actual research findings

Table 8: The Concepts of Conflict, Vision and Mission. (N=50)

Question	Opinion	SA		A		SDA		DA	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Conflict results from differences in a school vision and mission.	50	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	A school vision provides a desired direction inclusive of conflict management	30	60	15	30	5	10	0	0
3	A school mission spells out the clear purpose of a school with conflict prevention in mind.	28	56	10	20	12	24	0	0

Table 8 portrays a compound presentation of three opinions that the study's respondents gave. All (100 percent), of the respondents agreed that conflict results from differences in a school vision and mission – in their answers to Question 1. These findings are consistent with what Robbins (2003:445) found out about conflict: "a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about". Implicit in these findings is the notion that the three concepts appear to be closely knit together if ever any primary school entertains any hopes of pursuing a conflict free environment.

Also in Table 8, ninety percent of the respondents were of the view that a school vision provides a desired direction inclusive of conflict management. Only ten percent disputed this view. In essence, vision is what the school wants to be like in future. It spells out the values, beliefs, goals and objectives of the school. One respondent gave an example of a school vision as:

   To be the best primary school in producing excellent Grade 7 results in Zimbabwe.

The findings tend to compare favourably to Bateman's (2002) view of a vision as a long term desired direction and strategic intent of a company. However, it may be deduced that such a long term desire would be elusive if potential conflict is not taken care of in the articulation and crafting of the school's vision. Hence, the need for a school head to take on board all the suggestions in this way, there will be shared ownership of the school's vision by the school head and the school's stakeholders. Shared ownership of a school's vision breeds satisfaction among the stakeholders. That way, potential conflict might be prevented in advance, thereby, promoting school progress and development.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents in Table 8 were in agreement with Question 3's item that a school mission spells out the clear purpose of the school with conflict prevention in mind. Of the 24 percent who disputed the preceding view one respondent had this to say:

>   It is rare for a school head to explicitly show how potential conflict may be
>   prevented by means of a mission statement. Usually, heads view acceptance
>   of inevitable conflict as one of their observed weaknesses whenever teachers
>   voice their concerns.

It is against the backdrop of such findings, that the co-researchers deduced that a school mission should never be implicit of conflict prevention. By implication, a school mission that is collectively crafted is bound to win the support of all the school's stakeholders. They would try to collaboratively commit themselves to the attainment of the school goals. This is because they would have better buy-in to the collectively crafted mission.
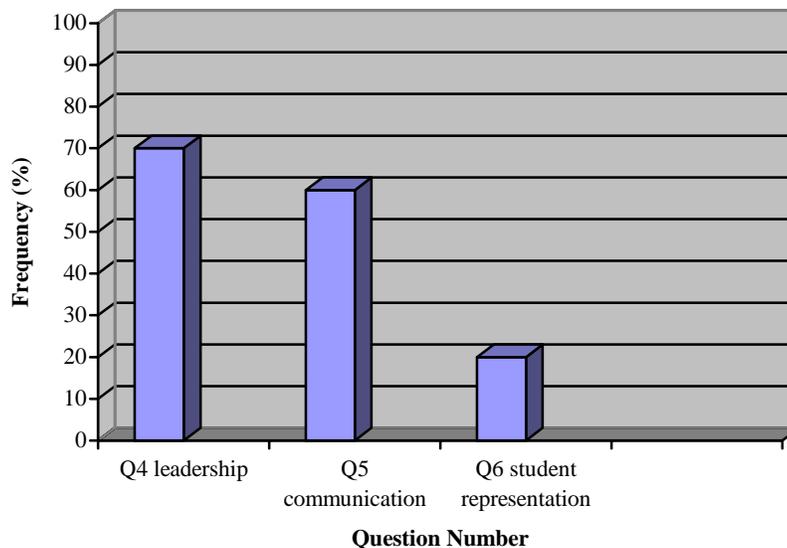
Figure 1 Respondents' Opinions on how Leadership, Communication and Student Representation as Aspects of a School's Vision and Mission Aid Conflict Prevention. (N=50)

Question 4 in Figure 1 depicts a scenario in which 70 percent of the respondents perceive that effective leadership cascaded through a school vision and mission as one of the critical factors for effective conflict prevention in the primary schools. Inherent in this observation is the idea that the school head's role often leads to a vision of what the school can be. In essence, the effectiveness of the school may be determined by the school's vision and mission statement. Once the school head, teachers, parents and pupils share the image of what is to be achieved, they are likely to work together to achieve common goals. In a bid to prevent conflict, it is advisable that the school head involves all stakeholders in developing or formulating the school vision and mission statements. This would breed shared consensus and ownership of the school's business by all. It is also worthwhile for the school head to explain clearly his/her philosophy behind a proposed school vision and mission to stakeholders. Collective participation in decision making is necessary as well. For example, teachers may be involved in deciding the practice of multi-shift system (hot sitting) of their classes, sharing of text books and furniture, and scarce financial resources. Such an arrangement truly empowers teachers to take up ownership of decisions.

Figure 1 Question 5 is also reflective of 60 percent of the respondents who affirmatively viewed effective communication through the school vision and mission as one other critical factor for leadership to avert conflict. In practice, views, goals and values must be communicated well in the school so as to prevent conflict. Therefore, the school head needs to provide information, technical knowledge, relevant facts and work-related issues. Effective communication enables teachers, heads, parents and communities to jointly give direction on work performance and devise methods of achieving goals. Furthermore, channels of communication ought to be open, down and across the hierarchy of a school so as to encourage effective information flow. Such a mutual exchange of school vision and mission ideas may effectively prevent the eruption of potential conflict in the primary schools.

The last item presented in Figure 1 for Question 6 concerns involvement of students in conflict prevention through a school vision and mission. Only 20 percent of the respondents agreed with Deutsch (1991:10) who notes, "Another vital strategy for preventing conflict in educational institutions is by ensuring that schools have effective student representation". The co-researchers tend to buy this view that 80 percent of the respondents were objected to on the grounds that through proper dialogue with pupils they can contribute meaningfully to the drafting of a school vision and its mission. The heads and teachers may brainstorm with pupils' school rules, class rules and expected instructional, co-curricular and hidden curriculum standards.

Table9: Respondents' Views on the Role of Climate, Job Description, Staff Development and Fair Distribution of Resources in preventing Conflict. (N = 50)

Number	Item	SA		A		SDA		DA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
7	An open climate can aid the prevention of conflict	18	36	7	14	0	0	25	50
8	Job description of teachers is also helpful in preventing conflict	0	0	26	52	0	0	24	48
9	Staff development is so central in enhancing effective conflict prevention	35	70	11	22	0	0	4	8
10	Fair distribution of resources facilitates effective conflict prevention	38	76	0	0	12	24	0	0

Table 9 exhibits respondents opinions based on Questions 7 to 10. Question 7 presents a balanced position of view by respondents on how an open school climate can aid prevention of conflict. Fifty percent confirmed that an open school climate can aid the prevention of conflict, while the other 50

percent refuted the view. Those who agreed with the above finding appear to echo Davis and Thomas' (1989:96) sentiments that, "the head's vision logically ties with academic school which is built through obtaining consensus through goals on internal and external sources". In that regard, the school head should posses a leadership style and philosophy which influence a conducive working environment with all the school's stakeholders from teachers to politicians and business people. Furthermore, an open climate determines what the staff does, how they relate to each other and the quality of pupil achievement. Therefore, an open climate is likely to avert tension and friction among school heads, teachers and the community. In that way, climate is often associated with a leadership and management style and thus, the school head's use of a democratic approach might empower and motivate teachers to explore ways and means of effectively preventing conflict using a school vision and mission. On the other hand, an over use of an open climate may result in disagreements and arguments among teachers over the school's vision and mission issues. That way conflict prevention becomes a dream rather than a reality. In that regard, it may be possible to use open and controlled climate situationally.

In Question 8 in Table 9, 52 percent of the respondents acknowledged that job description is helpful in conflict prevention. A clear definition of roles for staff does not breed tension and friction since members will not face or suffer from role ambiguity. To that end, clear vision and mission of a school may prove effective in preventing conflict since every member of staff will have a clear job description. On the other hand, of the 48 percent respondents who rebutted the issue of job description, one of them had this to lament:

> Job description largely confines a teacher to instructional decisions at the expense of corporate decisions which culminate in the crafting of a school vision and mission. Potential conflict between teachers and heads is therefore swept under the carpet since teachers' decisions would be regarded as peripheral, superficial and insignificant.

An emerging issue from the discussed opinion is the need to consider derolling one's status when it comes to conflict prevention through a school vision and mission.

Last but not least, Table 9 presents respondents views on Question 9 that centred on staff development's role in facilitating effective conflict prevention. The majority, (92 percent) of the respondents were in agreement with the preceding view. Their observations appeared to be compatible with Drucker's (1997:147) who argues, "Any organization develops people, it has no choice. It helps them to either grow or stunts them". It follows that the school head should strike a balance between the individual teachers' needs and the core business of the school. It may be argued that a shared vision by all members of school staff may be a good recipe for the prevention of potential conflict in the primary schools.Also, a school head that lacks skills and expertise to distinguish between conflict and non-conflict situations does not help in conflict prevention even if s/he has a clear and shared school vision and mission.

 Table 7 displays respondents' views regarding fair distribution of resources as a gateway to effective conflict prevention. Most, that is, 76 percent of the respondents agreed that fair distribution of resources is necessary in conflict prevention. Owens (1995) rightly backs the preceding observation by pointing out that organizations have always limited resources and these must be fairly allocated. In a school setting, all school grades need to get a fair share of funds to enable them to function effectively. Therefore, resources such as classrooms, toilets, furniture and books should be fairly shared much to the satisfaction of all members of the school's staff.

4.3 Findings on Limitations of Using a School Vision and Mission to Prevent Conflict.
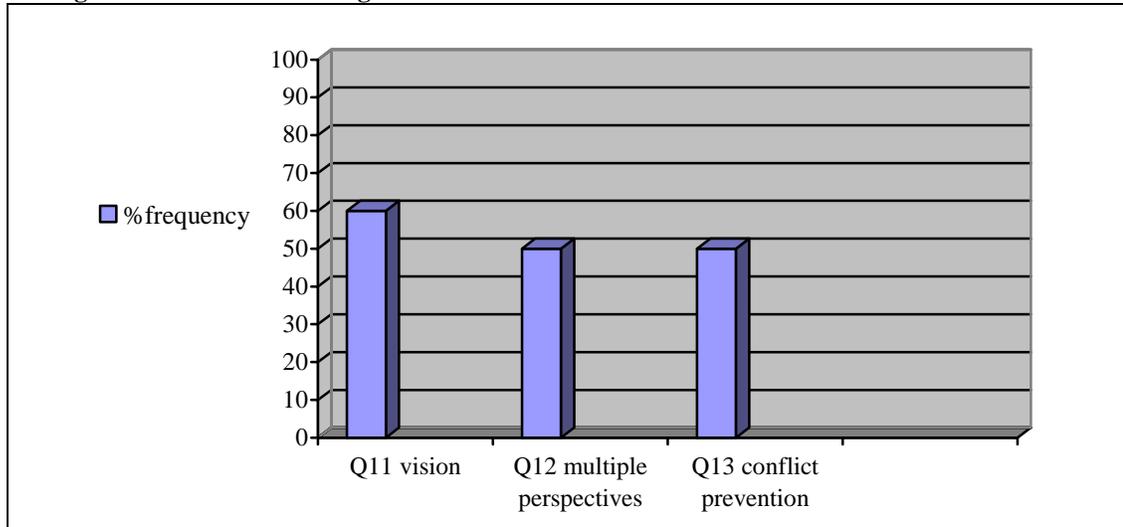

Figure 4.3: Respondents Views on Limitations of Using a School Vision and Mission to Prevent Conflict. (N=50)

Sixty percent of the respondents in Figure 2 responded positively to Question 11 which spelt out that a vision that has been translated into a business mission can only prevent conflict to a certain extent. This is because conflict by its nature emerges in challenging forms which may be hard to rub away completely. Such challenges may be worker dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism and staff turnover rates.

Question 12 in Figure 2 dealt with the limitation that school staff have multiple perspectives which they continue to view differently despite having one vision and a single mission. 50 percent of the respondents agreed with the Question 12's proposal. This takes place when heads do not allow tensions to be released. They do so by denying teachers staff development opportunities where teachers air and reconcile their views. On the contrary, the other fifty percent were content that staff development would not promote effective conflict prevention as heads lacked relevant skills to make the most appropriate decision when conflict rises.

Figure 2 presents Question 13 denoting that conflict prevention in a real school situation is hard to execute. Balanced perceptions to this issue were raised as 50 percent of the respondents agreed and disagreed apiece. This might be because the school heads might be lacking the capacity to correctly identify triggers which stimulate constructive conflict from those which stimulate destructive conflict. Also, the school heads might be deficient in their ability to manage a trigger which could initially be seen to trigger constructive conflict, but finally ends up triggering destructive conflict.

7.   Summary and Conclusions

The research came up with the following findings and conclusions:

- Conflict is a result of differences or disagreements in perceiving a school vision and mission. These three concepts appear to be mutually exclusive to each other whenever conflict prevention is to be executed in the context of a primary school.

- A clear school mission with specific objectives bears conflict prevention in mind. Any failure to put the potential conflict under control might ruin the realization of the school's objectives.
- Collaborative commitment, participative planning and collective decision making characterised by teacher and pupil input are hallmarks for effective conflict prevention in primary schools with clear and shared visions and missions.
- Effective communication of a school vision and mission stimulates effective conflict prevention in primary schools. It binds the members of staff together in the spirit of oneness and pursuing of common goals.
- Involvement of students in the drafting of a school vision and mission is critical in conflict prevention. Students are the most important stakeholders in the primary school. Therefore, their feelings, values and beliefs might be useful in conflict prevention.
- The use of job description as enshrined in the school's vision and mission is sometimes helpful in effective conflict prevention.
- Staff development of teachers on matters relating to the utility of a school's vision and mission to prevent conflict in primary schools is likened to a medical prescription. It informs, empowers and motivates teachers to creatively, analytically and reflectively think of ways to effectively prevent conflict.
- Resources in the primary schools are far from being enough to satisfy teachers who need to accomplish school goals and objectives. They therefore, need to be equitably shared among all teachers so as to alleviate potential conflict.
- Use of a school vision and mission to prevent conflict is let down by primary school heads' lack of relevant skills to manage conflict.
- School heads' ability to distinguish between constructive conflict and destructive conflict is dependent on their experience, leadership and management expertise.

8.   Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested.
- Primary school heads and their teachers need to tolerate/accommodate diverse and divergent views in connection with the use of a school vision and mission to effectively prevent conflict.
- There is also need for a collective crafting of a clear and specific school vision and mission containing aspects of conflict prevention, if conflict prevention is to be effectively executed in the primary schools. Thus, teachers' and pupils' input is critical.
- Effective communication should be employed in a bid to unite all school staff for the purposes of trying to mutually prevent conflict using a school's vision and mission.
- Pupil involvement in effective conflict prevention needs consideration since all decisions that emanate from the school's vision and mission directly affect them in all spheres of their school experiences.
- School heads need to situationally vary types climate, leadership and management styles in their bid prevent and manage conflict.
- Proper job description of all school staff should be expressed in the vision and mission of the school whose intent is to effectively prevent conflict. This would enable the staff to work as a team. Job descriptions should help the schools to achieve the desired goals. They should be well articulated in the school's vision and mission. In brief, they need to indicate the skill, knowledge, value and attitude levels of employees.
- Regular staff development programmes on the use of a school vision and mission need to be mounted so that teachers and heads are equipped with relevant skills and strategies to manage conflict. Staff development would also help heads and teachers to differentiate between constructive and destructive conflict.

- The need to formulate a clear and shared school mission is necessary for aiding conflict prevention in primary schools.
- Further research in this novel area needs to be carried out at a much wider scale in all levels education using qualitative and triangulation methodologies.

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