

**PARENTS-TEACHERS RELATIONSHIPS IN REMOTE AREA DWELLER
SETTLEMENT PRIMARY SCHOOLS: AN EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA**

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Abstract

Based on utopian perspective, parents and teachers should cooperate on matters of teaching and learning that enhance pupils' learning, but there seems to be a dearth of such cooperation in Remote Area Dweller Settlements primary schools. Thus, this paper examines the nature of relationships between parents and teachers in primary schools in selected Remote Area Dweller settlements of Botswana. The paper is an outcome of the revelation by some teachers that most parents from ethnic minority groups showed lack of interest in their children's education. This study adopted a qualitative approach and it used an open ended questionnaire, classroom observation, and interviews and field notes to investigate how the language-in-education policy was implemented in linguistically and ethnically diverse situations. The concept of early socialization was used to guide this study. The findings indicate that most parents do not cooperate with teachers in regard to their children's education, and possible contributory factors were language barrier, ignorance, different cultural practices, illiteracy and poverty. This study concluded that parents and teachers working relationships need to be redressed in order to simultaneously achieve both learners' academic growth and educational goals.

Keywords: Parents, Teachers, Relationship, Education, Pupils, Remote Area Dweller settlements

Introduction

This paper is an extract of the main study that investigated the implementation of the Language-in-Education Policy in Botswana primary schools. The issue of parents-teachers relationships emerged as a sub theme from the study, hence, problematized in this paper. Parents and teachers relationships play a pivotal role in pupils' education. Parents should encourage their children to learn and assist teachers where they could. There is a deep rooted concern by teachers that parents in rural and remote areas drag their feet when it comes to participating in their children's education, hence they do not support the school goals. In most cases the barriers to parental involvement are ignored by teachers and school management. It is common to use the language of instruction prescribed by the government that is unfamiliar to parents. The use of home languages in schools could be a bonus to both teachers and parents. With the use of home languages, parents can assist their children with school work. In this regard, parents and teachers should work together to develop, motivate and shape children's behaviour for them to succeed in school. Parents and teachers have to support learners. For example, parents have to volunteer to do school activities and encourage other parents to commit themselves to their children's education. Parents' educational background may also act as a multi-variant barrier that prevents parents to participate in the school activities and have a mutual relationship with teachers.

Parents have to be involved in school activities and events and take leadership positions in Parents Teachers Associations. If the relationship between parents and teachers is intact, it will enrich learners' education. In this regard, parents can be in a position to monitor their children's progress by monitoring their work and visiting the schools to check their children's progress.

The relationship between parents and teachers, especially in Remote Area Settlements, seems not to matter or has declined over the years. In some cases, a stalemate has been reached and this has created a dilemma for both parents and teachers. It is on the basis of the latter that this paper explores the relationship between parents and teachers in remote and rural primary schools of Botswana. If parents are not involved in their children's education, children will not see the importance of education and this will impact negatively on learners' performance. In addition, learners' will not respect their teachers, and they will also not learn properly about social issues. Therefore, it is important for parents to participate in school events or activities, while teachers focus on providing learning resources or information about their children's grades.

Literature Review

A vast amount of research highlights the importance of parents-teachers relationships in schools to enhance pupil learning. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) alludes that parents and extended families have a direct and lasting impact on children's learning and they also play a critical role in supporting their education (GPE, 2018). In support of parental involvement, the GPE indicates that when parents are involved in their children's education, pupils get more engaged with their school work, enjoy staying in school longer and achieve better learning outcomes. This means that parents-teachers relationships should be nurtured as much as possible to achieve national and international educational goals.

Parents could be involved and engaged in various ways and work with teachers to enable a desirable achievement in the end. In this regard, Dekhinet and Zeedyke (2012) argue that parents should always act as role models to their children. They should play a critical role in a child's language development. Scholars indicate that children who are read to and spoken to by their parents acquire greater vocabularies and better grammar than those who are not (Dekhinet & Zeedyke, 2012). Hence, the parents' efforts to develop their children's vocabulary and cognitive skills from home should continue to schools as a step further to assist teachers to lay a brick on the foundation built by their parents.

Parents-teachers relationships set a strong foundation that is needed for pupils' lifelong academic success. Teachers should assist vulnerable parents to gain knowledge and skills which cause behaviour change and impact on pupil learning. When parents learn to engage more richly in various ways in schools, their children will show greater gains in language and social skills which are critical for success as well as decreased behaviour problems. Sheridan (2016) posits that parents-teachers relationships have been shown to improve children's academic achievement, social competencies and emotional well-being and greater ability to adapt to situations. Therefore, it is vital for parents and teachers to communicate effectively, develop stronger relationships with one another and use the relationship as an opportunity to address gaps that exist in those relationships, if any. The stronger the relationship the more the partnership will communicate and collaborate for pupils to achieve learning.

Even though the parents-teachers relationships have been seen as vital for the success of children's learning, it has long been considered a serious problem that the relationship can be highly emotionally charged and this discomfort often leads to miscommunication and increased difficulties in the relationship (Minke & Anderson, 2003). This could be due to the fact that parents and teachers' perspective often differ (Wong & Hughes, 2006). For example, teachers emphasize behaviours they can observe in pupils while parents tend to reference home-based support as well as school based support. Parents see themselves as more involved in their children's education than teachers. Teachers too often interpret a lack of visible involvement at school as evidence of parents' lack of support for their children's education thus leading to unproductive working relationships (Lawson, 2003). Parents and teachers differ with respect to initiation of involvement activities. Teachers who believe that parents are unlikely to help their children are less likely to attempt to engage parents. Thus, the link between home and school will be lacking. In the end, teachers may develop negative stereotypes and beliefs about parents. This means that if the partners do not have shared perceptions, the beneficiary who is the child in this case suffers. The views of teachers about parents in the four schools are related to what Wong & Hughes (2006) say about different perspectives. Wong & Hughes (2006) argue that when parents do not share a common culture with teachers, it is difficult to establish shared understanding and to build trust between the two groups.

The parents in this study are from rural and remote set ups, some have never been to school or their literacy levels are low, did low primary education, have different cultural lifestyles and poverty stricken and therefore could be having a different view about the education system which negatively impacts on their children's learning. The parents referred to in this study are bilingual in home languages or can even speak three to four different home languages due to various reasons. Such reasons include: intermarriages or neighborhoods and therefore some of them are not familiar with the school languages. Even the code-switching is done between the home languages. This could be a challenging situation for parents especially where the education system requires them to assist their children with learning in the target language. The education system recognizes only two languages, Setswana (national language) and English (official language) (Republic of Botswana, 1994). The policy is inaudible about indigenous languages. This could have serious consequences that are indirect on the parents' contribution towards their children's education. Although parents register their children to attend schools, things seem not to fall in place for their

children to achieve educational goals. The children's school attendance is jeopardized by cultural lifestyles which negatively affects full completion of primary education or cause other problems such as disengaging from school.

Conceptual Framework

Early Socialization: Parents as Role Models

This paper uses the concept of parents as role models as described by Catherine Stern (2012). The concept is used because it is relevant to the problem discussed in this paper. The concept highlights issues about how parents should behave in front of their children because children copy what parents do; they imitate them and believe what they do is right because they are still under developed. Stern argues that most of our behaviours and beliefs are learned through observation and imitation. Therefore, it is no surprise that having role models, whether positive or negative, can have a major impact on the development of children. Role models are everywhere in today's society. From parents and teachers to peer groups and celebrities, there are a wide range of people who can have an influence on the way in which our children grow up. Everything from their attitudes to their future success can be attributed to the effect of a role model.

Stern (2012) points out that parents should inspire their children. Children need inspiration in order to succeed and this generally comes from people they admire and look up to. Those who have strived for excellence in their chosen career can act as role models for children. They show them how hard they have to work to achieve those levels of success. Children see that if they are successful, they will achieve what they want to and lead happier lives.

The other important aspects is that Stern (2012) believes that parents' attitudes and beliefs are important at children's young stage. The author argues that parents' attitudes and beliefs are ingrained at an early age and these generally come from our role models. What we learn in these first few years will see us through the rest of our lives. If we see someone who's hard working and has a good belief system, then we are more likely to follow the same path as them. The life of the person we aspire to be, becomes the standard that we base ourselves on.

Also, Stern (2012) argues that parents' personality influences that of their children. In this regard, parents should be cautious in the way they handle themselves that much of children's

personality is derived from those of their role models. During their childhood, children have the tendency to adapt their personality to that of their role model, including things that they like or dislike, attitudes to certain circumstances and how they react to a situation. Stern (2012) emphasizes that in order for children to succeed in life they have to have a positive outlook and this is something that can be passed down through their role models such as parents. If they are influenced by someone who has an optimistic viewpoint, then they are more likely to carry this on.

On the same breath, Stern (2012) notes that role models do not just have positive influence on children; they can also be negative ones too. This can come from hanging around with a wrong group of friends or looking up to a celebrity who's not as innocent as they should be. They can have a negative impact by their lifestyle choices, such as smoking or drinking, or through their religious or political beliefs. Stern (2012) suggests that there are ways in which parents can divert children away from negative role models. If they are involved with the wrong crowd, then you can encourage them to have a more diverse range of interests or try and introduce them to new people.

In conclusion, Stern (2012) sees the concept of parents acting as role models as something that can have a major impact on children's lives by helping them to develop, make the right decisions and lead happy and fulfilled lives. Therefore, it is important that parents surround their children with positive influences. In addition, the implication of early socialization does not end at home. Once the children start schooling, it does not mean that they have to relax in shaping their children for the future. It demands that they have to network and collaborate with the children's caretakers during the day who are their teachers. This relationship of networking should be based on solid ground for children to be well rounded. This means that children should see that academic work does not end at school; home should be a continuation of what they do at school. Therefore, this challenges the teachers as well to understand where their pupils are coming from. Seeing them at school is not enough to nurture their education. Learning about their lifestyle, culture and background cannot help the teachers to address the academic needs of their pupils with appropriate measures.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative approach with an ethnographic taste. The study was conducted in six districts of the country, hence the study was multi-case. The six districts were far apart in terms of distance to avoid biasness and influences in responses provided by participants. The districts have different ethnic groups living together and therefore even schools in these regions were heterogeneous. Children go to school on the first day speaking different home languages from the two school languages: English (official) and Setswana (national language). Parents too speak the same home languages as their children and in most cases many of them are multilingual for one reason or another. For example, there could be intermarriages amongst neighbours who speak other languages and therefore teaching their children those various home languages. Only information from four schools: A, B, C & D was shared in this paper because they are Remote Area Dweller settlement primary schools where most of the parents had low literacy, were poverty stricken or illiterate.

The population of interest in this paper are 31 teachers of Standards One, Two, Four and Seven and School Management. Teachers were chosen because they were the direct implementers of the policy and therefore it was important to get first-hand information on how they implemented the policy. In this regard, the study describes and makes field evaluations by teachers about parents, hence, the paper focuses exclusively on teachers' views. Their primary diagnosis of parents' behaviour could not be ignored. Standard One is where Setswana was introduced as a language of instruction while English is taught as a subject. In Standard Two there is a shift, English becomes the language of instruction while Setswana is taught as a subject. Standard Four is a stage where pupils sit for the National Examinations and it was important to see the status in which they sit for their national examinations. Standard Seven was important because this is where pupils sit for their Primary School Leaving Examinations. School Management were the direct supervisors of policy implementers. Hence, the population and samples contributed significantly towards revelation of the implementation process. In this regard, random sampling was used for teachers while convenient sampling was used for School Management.

Data were collected using a triangulation of methods to check for reliability and validity purposes. The methods used were open ended questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and field notes to collect data. It was in this data that the parents' picture about their children's

education was revealed by teachers and School Management and hence the key issue in this paper. Data were analyzed according to each key research question to make sure that all the questions were answered and themes were teased out from the data. In all the schools studied there was always an issue about the parents-teachers sour relationships.

This study did not include parents to hear their views about how they contributed towards their children's education because they were not part of the study. Their participation demanded another study to also share their experiences and views about their relationship with the schools and educational set ups. During data collection of the main study, teachers constantly kept on reporting about the lack of parental involvement in various context. In addition, there were cases which the researcher witnessed of some parents' behaviour while collecting data. In some of the schools studied, parents lived far away in rural settlements while some parents stayed near the school. But the parents' lack of involvement in this study does not mean that teachers' views cannot be reported about parents' lack of involvement and engagement in school activities. The teachers' outcry could not be ignored about the behaviour of parents and how they relate with the schools. It is with no doubt that had the parents been involved in the study, they too could have shared their own views or perspectives about teachers and the schools where their children attend. Though the story is one sided, the researcher too witnessed some of the scenes during the data collection period. For example, in schools A, C and D, the researcher witnessed parents waiting in the bush for break time for their children to go and get bread from the school kitchen, a parent shouting at teachers that teachers do not look after their child well because he is losing wait and classes that were half empty because it was the hunting season and children went with their parents. Also, due to the fact that some parents stay away from where their children attend schools in Remote Area Dweller Settlement hostels, it may have been difficult to follow them to hear their views. Those who stayed in close proximity to the schools, it was difficult to involve them because they were not part of the study.

Information in this paper about parents and teachers relationships cannot be generalized to other regions that were left out or other parents who take the initiative to be involved in their children's education. The idea was to share information about the parents-teachers relationships in Remote Area Dweller primary schools and most importantly attempt to address the issue. Also, the idea was to share expertize in the area of education only.

Results of The Study

This section presents scenarios about parents that teachers and school management reported about as well as what the researcher observed in Remote Area Dweller settlements primary schools while collecting data. Hence, the researcher presented the scenarios of parents as reported by teachers from different primary schools studied for analysis. The data were sourced out from open ended questionnaires, interviews and field notes. Even though one parent is used as an example in each scenario, it does not mean that it is only this parent who behaves that way, a good number of parents were said to be doing the same, except for parent 7. This parent stands alone in the scenario. The rest of the parents' behaviour are representative of some other parents whose children attended primary school in RADS. The alphabetical labels of schools shall be used for confidentiality and parents shall be enumerated for easy following. The scenarios were from schools A, B, C and D only because they were in rural and remote area settlements.

Parent 1

In School C, the researcher and teachers saw some parents dropping their children who had dropped out of school over the fence at break time. This did not surprise the teachers but the researcher was amazed by the scene. The researcher enquired from teachers what the scene meant. The teachers reported that the reason for such was for children who dropped out of school to have a share in the school meal and then go back home. Because the parents did not know what time the break time is, they would wait in the small bush until they observed that pupils were running out of the classrooms to go to the kitchen for their meals, then they would drop their children over the fence. Teachers reported that the parents could not use the school gate because there was a gate keeper who monitors the movement of visitors and pupils. The dropping of children over the fence could suggest that these parents knew that their children were not attending school but since they once attended in the same school they are still entitled to a meal for the day. Again, this could mean that due to poverty and illiteracy the parents do not have any other option but partake the schools meals. However, the parents saw it vital for their children to eat the school meals on daily basis though it was illegal; they knew it was illegal because they could not use the school gate to get their share at break time.

Parent 2

In school B, teachers reported that some parents leave their children alone in the village while they stay in cattle posts despite the fact that their children would be on Anti-Retroviral medication for HIV/AIDS. These children would play truancy and come to school after a week or two, dirty and looking hungry. The children would miss the prescription or take it on a hungry stomach. Some of the children came to school because they were bonafide students just before break time to have a meal and disappear. Teachers reported that their parents did not monitor to see whether their children were religiously taking their medical prescriptions. They were not sure whether their children were indeed going to school. One of the parents came to school and shouted at teachers that her child was not given enough food at school and that is why he lost weight. The researcher witnessed this argument in front of one of the classes studied. Also, the parent said she heard from neighbours that the boy played truancy and therefore teachers were not monitoring their children to attend school. This suggests that the parent is carefree, blames teachers for her absenteeism in her child's life. The parent seemed to be irresponsible and ignorant of her role as a parent.

Parent 3

In School A, teachers reported that when it was time for hunting and gathering season, the San parents leave with their children to go hunting and gathering of wild fruits. The researcher too saw some classes where some children were missing because they went with their parents. Parents do not ask for permission from school when they want to leave with their children. The teachers also knew that when it was time for hunting and gathering season, their classrooms will be left with half the pupils or just a quarter of them or an empty one. The parents and children can take the whole school term and then appear again in the next term without any explanation of where the children had been. This suggests that the parents were influenced by their culture and lifestyle. They cannot leave their children alone without food, it is a social issue. Again, it was a way of educating them about their culture and lifestyle for continuity. To date, some San communities are still hunters and gatherers.

On the same breath, teachers reported that some parents from another ethnic group send their boy children to the forest to look for stray cattle when it is time for vaccination by the

government veterinarians. The parents would make the children miss school for two to three weeks until the cattle were vaccinated. The children were sent back to school without any report. This suggests that the parent is not concerned about their children attending school, not concerned to liaise with the school but concerned about saving the lives of their domestic animals from natural diseases. There is no connection with the school whatsoever. But it is the lifestyle at home that when these boys grow up, they will take over from their fathers to look after cattle and stay away from home for days and weeks to look for stray animals.

Parent 4

In School D, the school management and teachers reported that some parents stay across the border in a neighbouring country. In fact, parents on both sides of the countries have relationships, they are relatives and some have their intimate partners across the two borders and therefore use ungazetted routes to visit their partners. In this regard, pupils can visit with the other parent for two to three weeks and miss school. These children would come and sit in the classroom without any report. It is not clear which nationality is recorded in the pupils' school card because of the close proximity of the borders to their homes, the maternal parent could be from the other side of the boarder and the paternal parent could be from the other side too. But partners see where their bread is buttered and claim citizenship. It is a tricky situation. Even the border patrols allow them to visit as they wish because they are tired of chasing them away and some knew about this practice of crossing the border to visit parents. But the cracks of the matter is that parents do not encourage their children to attend school regularly. This suggests that parents were only concerned about the welfare of their partners and not the welfare of their children. Parents were aware of the importance of education but did not care to advice their children about the importance of school. The parents take it as 'normal' border jumping to check their relatives and partners. It was like they were going home on a normal route.

Parent 5

In school C, teachers and school management reported that when the schools re-open, the government sends out drivers to various destinations to collect children who are accommodated in boarding hostels in Remote Area Dweller settlements schools. Instead of the parents encouraging and preparing children to wait for the trucks to collect them, they hide the children in the bush or

shelters until the trucks leave for the next destination. Whether the pupils have completed their education or not is not an issue. The reasons for parents to not allow their children to attend schools was that the schools are far from their destinations, their children are abused in the hostels and they do not have money or fares to pay for public transport to visit their children. This suggested that parents were concerned about the welfare of their children and do not tolerate abuse, but this is at the expense of their children's education. Again, children who stay in Remote Area Settlements do not want to leave their parents for too long, hence, the long school term of three months makes them nostalgic.

Parent 6

In schools A and B, there were similar practices, teachers and school management reported that when they call a Parent Teachers Association meeting at school, most of the parents do not attend such meetings. The reason for their non-attendance is that parents stay in Remote Area Settlements and communication with them is difficult, and hence, the school administration is unable to reach them. Those who stay in close proximity to the school, who are able to attend meetings come under the influence of alcohol from home brewed beer and disrupt meetings or do not follow what is being discussed. Again, the other reason reported by teachers was that parents do not understand the languages of communication used in meetings. According to the teachers, this suggests that parents are disrespectful and uninterested in their children's education because they attend meetings under the influence of alcohol. The fact that parents cannot communicate with teachers due to language barrier with the teachers is sound reason for not attending the school meetings, unless there is a translator or interpreter.

Parent 7

In school A, one of the teachers reported that she gave her class an English language exercise homework. The teacher asked the pupils to request their parents to assist them with homework. The following morning one of the parents came with the child and started shouting at the teacher that when she taught her child his first language, she did not ask the teachers to assist her. She sent her child to school to be taught the school languages which she does not know. Therefore, the teachers should not ask her to assist them. Even though the teacher interpreted it otherwise, this was the naked truth, the problem was the language barrier. The parent could not

assist the child with language related issues because she speaks a different language/s from the school languages. This issue is Language-in-Education Policy related by giving only two languages status out of the many that are spoken in the country.

Parent 8

In school C, teachers and school management reported that one of the parents was called to school because her child was caught smoking and drinking at the hostel. The boy dodged from the hostel and bought home brewed beer and was reported to the school principal. The child was asked to bring the parent the following morning to school because smoking and drinking by pupils in school premises was not allowed. The parent reported to school the following day. After some discussions with the teacher, the parent was given a chance to comment. The parent said that she told the child not to smoke and drink in front of teachers. At home she smokes and sometimes drinks with the child but he should not do it while the teachers were there that is why the child was in trouble. The teacher and administrator could not further comment because the parent seems to be supporting what the child did as she also smokes and drinks with the pupil at home without any problem. This suggests that the parent allowed the child to smoke and drink at home as they shared a homemade cigarette or whatever was being smoked. In essence, the results above paint a different picture about parents who seem not to understand how they should contribute to their children's education. The parents and teachers live in worlds apart and it may be necessary to try and close the gap that exists between the two groups.

The scenarios used in this paper are highly unusual and extra ordinary. Owing to the behavioural uniqueness of the cases, they cannot be ignore where stakeholders transpire to improve the relationship between teachers and parents.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study signposted an educational dilemma which is partly influenced by the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP). Teachers seem not to know how to deal with parents in the above scenarios and parents also seem not to know how to deal with management in schools attended by their children. This is partly due to language barrier and home lifestyle. Both the literature review and the conceptual framework do not match the characteristics of parents discussed in this paper. The parents cannot be role models because they seem not to display any

positive roles and good characteristics that could shape the future of their children or assist them to complete their education. Instead, some children imitate the wrong doings of their parents such as smoking and drinking. One cannot rule out the LiEP that presents language barrier as it does not give the parents the freedom to attend school activities and assist their children educationally. The LiEP results in limitations and restrictions that come in various forms to perpetuate imbalances in parents and students' lives. The scenarios of parents above could be a result of language suppression, exclusion and homogeneity from the parents side (Watson, 2007). However, the cases are unique on their own and seem to be influenced amongst other things by the parents' lifestyle.

The findings of the study indicated that indeed the relationship between some parents and teachers in RADS primary schools studied was at stake. The picture painted by Parent 1 who drops her child over the fence to have a meal at school is disturbing and leaves much to be desired. This incident is not done by one parent only. This was a representation of negligent parents who do not encourage their children to attend school. The parents seem to have a different perspective about schooling that, a school is where children in the village could have meals even if they have dropped out of school. Such parents could negotiate with the school for their children to go back to school. It was not clear at the time of data collection why parents would drop their children over the fence to eat meals from school and yet they disengaged from school. There could be an indication of illiteracy and poverty stricken homes because the children had to eat some of the food inside the school and take some slices of bread for their parents. Stern (2012) argues that parents should behave appropriately in front of their children because children copy what parents do, they imitate them and believe what they do is right because they are still under developed. Hence, this could mean that even these children were going to do the same thing once they have children. They may allow their children to drop out of school and influence them to take their daily meal at school. The parents were very much aware of the risks involved in using the school main gate, the gate keeper would not allow them. However, the researcher and teachers witnessed this as a daily routine and could not do anything about it. Teachers and school management seemed to have given up about such parents because they could not communicate their intentions to the school. A further analysis of these parents is that they could register themselves in programmes that are provided by the government for village development and feed their children.

The findings revealed that Parent 2 who shouted at teachers that her child was losing weight because he was underfed at school and teachers do not monitor his attendance was reckless and careless. This behaviour indicated a gap between home and school – the parent has limited knowledge about the demands of schooling and caring for her child. Several parents were implicated in such scenarios. This parent thought it was the responsibility of the teachers to take care of her child while she stays at the cattle-post. Stern (2012) noted that parents can have a negative impact by their lifestyle choices. Although, it is not clear what this parent's beliefs and values are, the parent did not care whether her child had something to eat before they he took his medication. Teachers reported five similar cases of children who were left on their own and yet they were on Anti-Retroviral medication. While it was vital for health reasons for the parent to monitor her child's taking of Anti-Retroviral medication, the parent could not take the responsibility to monitor the child to take the medication religiously. The parent had the nerve to shout at teachers because her child was losing weight, little did she know that the contributory factor was her absence from home and the child's lifestyle as well as failing to adhere to taking medication. It was 'in order' for the child to play truancy because there was no encouragement to attend school from home. Teachers lamented about such parents because their children were neither educationally encouraged nor academically assisted from home. This means that teachers too could develop negative stereotypes about such parents and not involve them in school activities.

The findings also designated that Parent 3 who literally removes his child from school to go for hunting and gathering of fruits, lacked focus and accountability as regards his child's education. According to Stern (2012), this is negative influence. While it was a norm for San groups to be nomadic in the past, it was still regular practice to leave with school going children and stay away in the forest hunting and gathering fruits. Though a cultural practice, it disadvantaged children educationally. For the parents, education was not a priority, they could remove children from school whenever they had to leave for traditional practices. Further, the issue of poverty cannot be ignored, the parents had to make ends meet by hunting and gathering, otherwise they would starve. Important to note is that, these children and their parents do not understand the school languages and therefore leaving school unceremoniously was a better option to them.

Additionally, there is also the representation of parents who would make their children leave school to look for strayed cattle for vaccination by the veterinary team. These parents thought their children were already adults that they have to look after cattle and yet they were still at primary school. Again, it is a cultural issue that the boy child has to be taught responsibility at a tender age. The parents loaded their children with responsibilities of looking for stray cattle and yet it could be done by them to allow children to attend school. Missing school to be burdened with social responsibilities questions the parents' perspective towards their children's education.

Referring to the first incidence, to make the children miss school to be involved in hunting and gathering of fruits for months of the school term is another issue that questions the parents' integrity. But, it was a cultural practice. However, these parents take their children back to school after the hunting season without any communication about their children's absence for the whole school term. Teachers reported that it happens across all levels of primary schooling such that in some cases some children would miss continuous assessment and National examinations while they are out hunting and gathering fruits. In this regard, it is for the Ministry of Education and Skills Development to device a suitable programme for such children. It seems they cannot go along with the school curriculum, they could be made to write their own examinations and be allowed to complete school according to their own plans. This is food for thought for education systems where there are nomadic students.

The findings again showed that Parent 4 who falls in the category of parents who allow their children to miss school to visit other parents on the other side of the boarder are those who do not have a relationship with the school. This is a kind of lifestyle of the parents. This case involves two countries, Botswana and Zimbabwe, which share borders. While the two countries are aware that citizens cross the border using ungazetted routes, nothing is being done to address the 'problem' in an effective manner. Even the border patrols seem to be aware of the problem because they allow citizens – children and parents to cross over to both sides of the country and come back because citizens have intimate relationships. Although teachers lamented that they were not sure about the citizenship of the pupils they were teaching because of the 'interrelationships' of citizens from both countries, nothing was being done. Teachers seem to have given up on such parents because educational authorities keep a blind eye to this long standing problem. According to teachers and school management, their duty was to accept the children back to class after they

missed school for two to three weeks. This could be every month or every two months. As for the parents they hardly ever come to school because it is unclear which citizenship they belong to. In this regard, it was difficult for teachers to have mutual relationship with all the parents. This scenario could mean that children and parents did not have passports to use at the two countries' borders and therefore crossing legally would be impossible. Further, since the villages on both sides of the countries were in close proximity, it was not necessary for them to travel a long way to the border while they could easily walk and cross over to either side for only 15-20 minutes' walk. This scenario is a serious challenge to the two countries.

The findings indicated illiteracy and ignorance of Parent 5. These parents hide or ask their children to hide when the truck that collects children to go back to school when the school term commences arrives until the school truck leaves. Although it is not clear why these parents do not want their children to go back to school, previous research indicated violence and cultural misfit in RADS primary schools (Chebanne, 2002; Polelo, 2004; Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006, Motshabi, 2006). However, such parents hardly ever visit schools because of poverty, they cannot afford the fares for transport to visit their children at school. Therefore, children do not see their parents for the whole school term and become nostalgic. Other contributory factors could be that these children belong to ethnic minority groups and therefore the school culture is alien and find it difficult to cope with (Chebanne, 2002; Mokibelo & Moumakwa, 2006). While teachers were aware that children from ethnic minority groups were not reprimanded by corporal punishment, it was difficult to communicate with the parents. The reason being that it was difficult for them to come to school to see their children, hence, leaving all the responsibility of teaching and learning to the teachers. In this scenario, it would be good for the teachers to understand the background and culture of children to avoid high school dropouts resulting from cultural misfit.

The findings also revealed that where parents stay in close proximity to the school, parents do not attend Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings because of the language barrier, those who come to the meetings attend them under the influence of alcohol. The school languages, Setswana and English, are different from the home languages and therefore parents do not see the reason why they should attend meetings while they do not understand the languages used. Further, because the PTA meetings were called in the afternoons after school, parents have all the time to entertain themselves with home brewed beer in the morning before they could attend meetings.

Under these circumstances it might be difficult to communicate effectively with the parents because they are under the influence of alcohol. What would be a suitable solution for parents in this scenario? While it was important for the parents to attend the PTA meetings, it would be appropriate for the school management to seek an interpreter for the benefit of the two parties. Otherwise, the language barrier would drive the parents away instead of bringing them closer to their children's education. Further, it would be ideal for the school management to call a meeting in the morning while parents are still sober, this would benefit the children, parents and school. It might end the silent war of not attending meetings. Another solution would be to involve the village chief to intervene and address parents when they go for village meetings at the *kgotla* (a traditional meeting place for the chief and villagers). In most cases village chiefs use the home languages spoken by parents for better understanding.

The findings indicated that Parent 7 was unable to assist her child with homework due to language barrier and illiteracy. This is a LiEP issue because the school languages are different from the home languages. Most parents do not speak the school languages just like their children. This was an irritated parent who knew that the school languages are alien and yet teachers keep on 'bothering' them to take part in their children's education. The relevant question here is how can they contribute to their children's education while they do not speak the school languages? Although the parent was aware of the importance of education and that she must assist the teachers to enable the success of the child academically, she was helpless not only because she was illiterate but because she could not speak the school languages. This scenario too cannot nurture the parents- teachers relationship. This could mean that the government should introduce using home languages for teaching and learning as this could involve the parents. The current situation of recognizing only two languages out of the twenty nine that exist in the country keeps the parents who do not speak the school languages away from their children's education. The government claims this is inclusive education yet it is the opposite.

The last scenario of Parent 8 was about child social behaviour that both home and school should nurture. It was a case of discipline. It was unfortunate for the school because the cultural misfit comes into play. While the school thought smoking and drinking was a disciplinary matter that demanded the presence of the parent to come and reprimand her child, the parent was surprised because at home, smoking and drinking with their children was not an issue. In fact, the child seem

to have discussed the issue with the parent in the past because the parent advised the child accordingly that he should not smoke and drink in the presence of teachers. The perspective of the teachers and parents were different on the issue of smoking and drinking, therefore, the teachers could form their own stereotypes and not involve the parents in future in school activities. In essence, the typical parents above do not represent all parents in RADS areas, but they cannot be ignored. There could be parents who play an active role in their children's education, fully participate in school activities and also given roles in Parents Teachers Associations despite their level of literacy and poverty situation.

Parental involvement seems to be lowest in families below the poverty line, as well as parents who do not speak the school primary languages or did not graduate at high school (Child Trends, 2018). In this regard, there could be a hidden message that emerged from the implementation of a monolingual policy in a multilingual set up and this has gone for decades. Parents cannot communicate in the school languages. Parents cannot assist their children in the school languages. Teaching and learning is the responsibility of teachers alone because parents are helpless. In between this relationship of parents and teachers are the pupils. The pupils are suffering because their education is jeopardized. The pupils are torn between their parents' lifestyle and culture and the demands of the education system. However, the pupils are still at a tender age and will only go with the tide, whether they are benefitting from the education system or not will be determined by the tide.

Implications of The Study

There are implications to this study. First, the teachers seem to be missing the culture of the parents and the children in Remote Area Dweller settlement schools they teach at. Teachers seem to be locked up in schools and not mingle with the villagers or parents, seek assistance from the village elders to understand the cultures of the children they teach. This means that teachers may find it grim to reach the parents because of the parents' lifestyle. In this regard, it may be difficult to form mutual parent-teacher relationships to develop the children's education.

Second, the parents' status of illiteracy, culture and language barrier keep the parents far from their children's education. This means it may be cumbersome to involve and engage the parents in the school system to develop learners. In this regard, a gap remains between parents and

teachers which might be problematic to close due to seemingly different worlds. Parents need to be educated on the importance of their children's education and how they can effectively contribute to nurture their children's academic life. This vacuum needs to be filled in by stakeholders, village elders, councillors, members of parliament and educationists to avoid jeopardizing the children's education.

Further research needs to be done to get the views of parents as regards their relationship with teachers. The views might benefit the school to nurture this important relationship, other parents and teachers to collaborate and network on their children's education.

Conclusion

The scenarios above indicated that the parents and teachers relationships are difficult to maintain and sustain because both teachers and parents live in worlds apart in Remote Area Dweller primary schools. Some parents do not commit to prioritizing their child's educational goals and there is no space for collaboration with teachers and school management. There is no effective communication, networking and collaboration between the two parties, hence, the parents and teachers' perspectives run parallel as regards learners' education. Parents' own personal school experiences create obstacles to their involvement. Parents who have dropped out of school do not feel confident in school settings. The parents' limited schooling makes it difficult for them to help their children with homework beyond the early primary level, in this regard, it sours the relationship between teachers and parents. For some, this situation is compounded by language barriers and lack of written literacy skills. The teachers and parents seem not to have mutual relationship to take their children's education to the next level and this could backfire badly on learners' education. Some parents are torn between their culture and lifestyle and their children's modern education. Pupils also are torn between their culture and lifestyle and education. However, parents are not wholly to blame for this state of affairs. Strategic approaches to effective communication need to be considered by school management to take the parents on board. Some of the problems that seem to drive parents away from their children's education are languages of instruction used in schools and cultural misfit. Parents need to understand how the school operates, what the school expectations are and therefore see how they could fit in for the sake of their children's education. Again, the conceptual framework runs parallel with the parents scenarios presented. The scenarios are living examples of parents and teachers relationships that demand

further debates, discussions and decision making. This is not to say that all is lost, there are some parents who do their best to participate in their children's education, but this is only limited to engaging in school activities and they cannot be swept with the same broom. The parents and teachers relationship is of interest to this study because it indirectly affects the Language-in-Education Policy of Botswana because it takes heed of only two languages that are not necessarily spoken by some parents from ethnic minority groups. Therefore, we need ground breaking methods and game changers to improve the teachers and parents relationships in Remote Area Dweller Settlement primary schools.

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