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Differential Perceptions, Challenges, Conflicts and Tensions in the Role of Board of Governors (BOG) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in Sub-Saharan Africa: A case of Kenyan Secondary Schools

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Parental involvement in schools as Parent Teacher Association (PTAs) and Board of Governors (BOGs) is now recognized as a widespread phenomenon. In many contexts they constitute part of the school governance structure. Their involvement and active support in teaching and learning is critical to sustained educational quality. Their support is a critical factor in the success of the school and their cooperation with teachers enhances pupils' performance. Parental involvement in schools takes different kinds and forms or aspects. As key stakeholders in education, they are involved in mobilization of local resources, improving school management and strengthening local ownership. This article reports on the findings of a study conducted in the Gucha district of Kenya. The main focus of the study was on school governing bodies' roles, issues and challenges. The study, a survey design comprising of heads (30), chairs of BOGs (30) and PTAs (30) set out to investigate the roles of BOGs and PTAs in the teaching and learning process. Thirty secondary schools which were purposively sampled were involved in the study. Data was collected from the heads and chairs of BOGs and PTAs through use of questionnaires whose response rate was 100%. The questionnaire format consisted of closed, open-ended and rating scale items. While BOGs and PTAs were considered part of the school leadership team, they perceived their respective roles differently and operated in an environment characterized by contradictions, challenges, tensions and conflicts which were attributed to role overlap and lack of clear guidelines. The study also identified lack of training and appropriate induction programme and induction pack as challenges that impeded the roles of the BOGs and PTAs. Also, a majority of the BOGs and PTAs lacked confidence in their roles.

Keywords: Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Board of Governors (BOG), Sub-Saharan Africa, Differential Perceptions, Role Conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in schools through BOG and PTA has been widely acknowledged in both developing and developed countries (Kamba, 2010). The parental involvement is associated with school effectiveness and children performance in general which view is held by Clase et al., (2007) who note that: parental involvement despite the educational background or social position of the parents is an essential component for successful education and teaching at school level. Commenting in favour of parental involvement in schools, Massey (1993) states that:

It is a mistake to underestimate the willingness and capacity of many parents to work with the school, and an even bigger mistake to cling to old ways which although

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cozy and comfortable do not meet present or future needs.

The reasons advanced for the emphasis on parental involvement in education includes: children learn better and the school become more successful; citizens get empowered and become active in education; home environment has been identified as a contributing factor in the children's education; strong home-school relationship has been identified as critical in the academic achievement among children; seen as a mechanism for raising standards as well as promoting local community social inclusion; contributes to educational, social and behavioural gains of the children; it is a requirement that schools have parent representatives among the governing bodies; when effective, it improves accountability within the education systems; it contributes to ownership and commitment.

Although BOGs are voluntary in nature they have a legal mandate. In both developed and developing countries and especially within the last thirty or so years there has been a growing move through legislation or successive legislation changes to involve parents in the education of their children, through school governing bodies. The move resulted in the transfer of powers and responsibilities from local authorities to individual schools. Therefore through legislative reforms, school governors received a legal backing. Decision-making was devolved to school governing bodies (Field, 1993).Through legislative reforms the governors received statutory responsibilities (Wilson, 2001) and became part of the schools' leadership (Earley, 2003). Field (1993) notes that the legislative changes 'altered the basic power structure of the education system in England and Wales'. Another consequence of the reform is the 'change of the locus of decision-making' (Johnes, 1995). Similar changes have also been experienced elsewhere, for instance, South Africa, New Zealand, Northern Ireland and Kenya, just to mention a few (Robinson et al., 1997; Nalushi, 2006; World Bank, 2008).

It has been widely reported that the underlying intentions were to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Earley and Creese, 2000; Ramsay et al., 1992). This is also echoed by Mohajeran and Ghaleei (2008) who comments that the changes were 'intended to develop more effective schools and raise the levels of student achievements'. Farrell and Law (1999) also attribute the move to the need for public accountability, for better standards in schools, arguing that school governing bodies are accountable to all who have an interest in the school and its activities. Donnelly (1999) asserts that the move is in line with the 'new public management (NPM) ideology' arguing that "educational reforms were based on the idea that parents and lay governors as educational consumers would be empowered to monitor the work of professionals."

Therefore school governing bodies are expected to add value to the school life (Earley and Creese, 2000). In a way the challenges have raised expectations on school governors, however, Wilson (2001) views it as 'unrealistic expectations', given their level of commitment, skills, knowledge and understanding. He further comments that the wide-ranging responsibilities transferred to school governors are burdensome and impossible to achieve. Nearly similar views are echoed by Farrell and Law (1999) and Donnelley (1999), who report that related legislations have given school governing bodies huge responsibilities and immense powers.

The general concern is how possible that people who are unpaid, part-time, volunteers, lay, non-professional, without correct balance of skills, commitment, expertise, relevant knowledge and understanding, who are perceived as ignorant within education professional circles, and, without interest and time are given such huge and wide-ranging responsibilities and powers in the education system? How can they contribute effectively to school improvement or effectiveness? How effective are they in discharging their roles and responsibilities? These concerns are widespread among various stakeholders (Earley and Creese, 2000; Earley, 2003; Wilson, 2001; Farrell and Law, 1999; Donnelley, 1999).

Both positive and negative views have been expressed regarding not only their involvement in school governance, but their powers, roles and responsibilities as well. But there are far more negatives than positives (Earley and Creese, 2000; Kerry, 2005).

Further review suggests that legislative reforms not only made it compulsory for schools to have governing bodies but gave the school governing bodies mandate to perform their duties. The legislative reforms commenced a new system of governance within public schools (Karlsson, 2002). Besides, it also introduced what Munn (1998), describes as giving "parents new rights over their children's education." The legislation offers guidelines in terms of parental involvement, setting out a framework regarding their composition/constitution, term in office, powers and responsibilities (Robinson et al., 2003). The legislation makes it possible for delegation to take place, for instance, in Kenya, the Education Act 1968 and the Teachers Service Commission Act, Cap 212, "gives the minister extensive latitude to delegate powers to local authorities, district boards, educations or governors" (Wanderi, 2008). Therefore their roles and responsibilities are legal responsibilities, and hence governors are legally empowered to perform them (Wyk, 2007). Munn (1998) views them as statutory responsibilities. Hence, governors are 'obliged by legislation to give an account of the performance of their school' (Farrell and Law, 1999).

The effect of all these series of legislative changes is 'enhanced powers and responsibilities of governing bodies' (Wilson, 2001) and substantial increase of parental roles as school governors (Hornby, 2000). In this connection, Donnelly (1999) observes that "legislation and policy have the power to transform board of governors from 'supporters clubs into citizens who

actively shape and monitor school policy."

Lewis and Naidoo (2006), reports that between 1995 and 2005, over 25 Sub-Saharan African countries had decentralized their education system. It however, appears that in some Sub-Saharan African countries, the new school governance came into existence a few years after attaining independence. Kenya and South Africa serve as examples in this case. In South Africa for instance, the South African Schools Act was created in 1996 barely two years after apartheid came to an end. Very similar to gaining independence and came into force in 1997 when the first official School Governing body was elected (Wyk, 2007). In Kenya, the Kenya Education Act came into existence in 1966 (World Bank, 2008). It is assumed that the drive for the change of governance within public schools was to improve accountability, teaching and learning practices. Whether this has been achieved, it is another matter.

It is evident from the preceding section that school governors' roles/responsibilities originated with legislation and grew with subsequent/successive legislative reforms. Wilson (2001) describes the increase in responsibilities as "a cross a wide range of issues." The amount of responsibilities varies from one country to the next. For instance in South Africa, the governing bodies' roles and responsibilities include (Wyk, 2007):-development of the mission statement of the school; adopt a code of conduct for learners of the school; determine the admission policy; setting language policy; suspend learners from attending the school as a correctional measure for a period not exceeding one week; recommend the appointment and promotion of teaching (and other) staff at the school; deal with disciplinary hearings of teachers; support the principal, teachers and other staff in the school in the performance of their professional functions and supplement resources supplied by the state to improve the quality of education provided by the school; may oversee the maintenance of school property and buildings and manage school finances.

In other contexts other devolved responsibilities include, finance, appointment of staff and national curriculum. Other duties include, development planning (governing body's strategy setting role), supporting, monitoring, steering, set targets and monitor the school's performance together with that of head teacher, challenge the head teachers' decisions (Ranson et al.,2005). However, all these roles fall into a broader model of three, namely, strategic role, critical friend and accountability (Swaffield, 2005). However, Wilson (2001) reports that the school governors' efficacy as critical friend has been questioned.

While governments may consider parental involvement as governing bodies in schools an excellent idea, review of literature reveals certain degree of resentment among the educators who consider themselves professional (Earley, 2000; Thomasson, 1997). The educators' argument is that they operate in a professional territory

and therefore lay and non-professional citizens are not very much welcome. For instance, the educators make a claim to the effect that governing bodies are non-professional and lay; and that they lack relevant skills, time, understanding and knowledge about education in general and therefore are ill-equipped for certain roles (Shearn et al., 1995; Earley, 200). Nelushi (2006) argues that they lack the capacity to perform their roles properly. Karlsson (2002) describes their state as "capacity deficit." In such a state they are therefore constrained or limited in terms of performing their duties (Lewis and Naidoo; 2006). The writers further noted that "many parents as school governors lacked the cultural capacity to participate effectively in the decision-making process." Therefore they are performing restricted roles (News, 1993). In Kenya, for instance, Wanderi (2008) reports that in a majority of secondary schools, board of governors are composed of "old and unenergetic retirees, semi-literate business people or other semi-skilled non-professionals." He argues that the old managers lack the ability to cope with rapid changes in terms of social, technological, economic and cultural. He also observes that the old managers are not able to readily grasp the provisions in the Education Act, lacks managerial skills, expertise and experience in management. Hence they have created managerial gaps in public schools resulting in discontentment among parents and students.

Allemano (2003) supports the notion of parental involvement and argues that active support from key stakeholders is critical to sustained educational quality. For instance, they mobilize local resources, improve school management and strengthen local ownership (World Bank, 2008a). Lin (2010) reports that evidence from research suggests that parental support is a critical factor in the success of the school and that cooperation between teachers and parents enhances the pupils performance. Kamba (2010) also recognizes that and observes that involving stakeholders in governance and management of schools improves the quality of education system.

Parental involvement in schools takes different kinds, forms or aspects. However this article focuses only on Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and Board of Governors (BOG). Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and Board of Governors (BOG) constitute part of the formal structures of governance through which parents and the community are enabled to participate in the education of their children. It is assumed that through such structures educational provision is enhanced and, school governance and educational quality are improved. But Azeem (2010) notes that school governance was generally weak due to poor parental involvement in school financial management and key decision making areas.

In many countries, apart from Southern Sudan, Zambia, Djibouti, PTA is voluntary and informal and has no

standing in the law, while BOG though voluntary in nature, is legal and formal (Kamba, 2010; Wragg, 1989; USAID, 2009). It has what Field (1993) calls legal backing. According to Robinson and White (1997) an informal organization refers to groups of individuals who cooperate in the financing and provision of goods and services for the benefit of their own communities, through reciprocal exchange. The Scottish Parents Teachers Council (SPTC) offers the following definition of PTA which is very fitting in the parental involvement discourse (Edwards and Redfern, 1988):

A local people who recognize that the education of a child is a process of partnership between parents and teachers and who wish to take joint action to improve the quality of that partnership.

PTA and BOG both contribute to educational development in various ways and because of their nature and status; they are meant to perform different but complementary roles in the life of the school. However in a number of cases evidence suggest that their roles occasionally overlap resulting in tensions and conflicts. Conflicts among governance bodies have also been reported in South Africa, Zambia and Kenya (World Bank, 2008).

Role of BOG in Teaching and Learning process

In Kenya, the core functions of BOGs in schools include: Planning and development of physical facilities for the purpose of learning and teaching in the school; sourcing and management of school finances which includes receiving all fees, grants from public funds, donations and any other income to the school. The Board is required to prepare, approve and implement both the recurrent and development budgets of the school; organize, direct, supervise and monitor approved projects and programmes in the school; recruit, appoint and discipline the non-teaching staff in the school. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) seconds the teaching staff to the Board for service in the school; discipline of teachers and students under the general guidance of the TSC and the Director of Education respectively; regulate the admission of students subject to the general direction of the Director of Education; The Board of Governors is also guided by; The education Act chapter 211 of the Laws of Kenya (Revised 1980); The Teachers Service Commission Act Chapter 212 (1967) of the laws of Kenya; The Teachers Service Commission code of regulations for Teachers (Revised 1986); The code of management for secondary schools and teachers training college approved by the Minister for Education, (Order of 1969); The Kenya National Examination Council Act Chapter 225A (Revised); Any agreement entered between the previous boards and a recognized trade union that represents the interests of the non-teaching staff in the school. In Kenya BOGs are responsible for the management of schools (Wanderi, 2008).They are now involved in what, Thomasson (1997) calls 'corporate responsibility.'

In Kenya, the roles of the boards include; responsible for hire and remuneration of support and subordinate staff in public schools, acts as custodians of their school movable and immovable property, control and discipline of teachers and, audit and regulate the expenditure by the administration to ensure that funds are spent objectively. All these roles are mandated by the Education Act (Wanderi, 2008).

Role of PTA in Teaching and Learning process

The historical development of PTA in both the developed and developing countries is partly linked to school Board of Governors' failures and partly due to the need for extra financial support from the local community for school development (Hurt, 1985). In Kenya, for instance, PTA was created following a presidential directive in 1980 (World Bank, 2008). It is assumed that it was set up to raise extra funds for school development, however, later on there seems to be a growing feeling that BOGs are politically elected and therefore are not the right forum to address the interest and needs of parents and the community in general (World Bank, 2008). Therefore PTAs are seen as a better option. In Southern Sudan, PTA is mandated by the Southern Sudan Education Act 2008 (Kamba, 2010). It is stipulated in the Act 2008 that:

School management committees and parent teachers association shall be established by committees at the school level as a means of engaging communities and creating community ownership and commitment to delivery and management of education services to the citizens of Southern Sudan in accordance with the Interim constitution of Southern Sudan 2005 (Part1:Chapter1;Clause 41.1.b).

It is therefore expected to enhance community engagement, community ownership, community commitment and management of education services.

Macbeth (1990) has identified six purposes of a parental association but warns that they may conflict. They include: To provide support for teachers; To represent parent's interest; To provide a forum for educational discussion and a means of communication; To foster educational partnership between home and school for the benefit of children; To assist members who have difficulties; To advance an ideology (e.g. religion, educational etc). But clearly teachers' interests are excluded from the list.

In the UK the current breed of PTAs is strongly associated with the Plowden report, which recognised it as an important means by which parents could be involved in the life of the school. Edwards and Redfern (1988), argues that PTA eliminated traditional barriers and thus provided an informal setting by which

communication with parents and other stakeholder could be improved.

However, historically, evidence shows that in the UK there has been PTAs (the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Association-NCPTA) long before 1956. However the early configuration was rather different- a loose kind of PTAs which was isolated and based on individual schools. So there is evidence of a long history there, which dates far way back long before the Plowden report. Therefore Plowden report's recommendation on the formation of PTA is not seen as a new development (Edwards and Red, 1998).

Also in the UK, according to Munn (1993), the school boards play a role in the formation of PTAs. In some other contexts PTA is regarded as pressure group. They are likened to 'a football supporters' club in their capacity to raise money' (Brighouse, 1985). They are also perceived as a parent interest group whose existence and growth is associated with the notion of consumerism (Macbeth, 1993). However the way PTAs are defined and used depends on individual schools and local contexts (Wolfendale, 1992).

Interestingly, most head teachers in the review perceive PTAs very positively as a group that has a genuine interest in the welfare of the school, that is less threatening to the running of the school and as a valuable resource in the life of the school. They are also esteemed as good social functions or events organisers. Further review reveal that head teachers regard PTAs as 'a reserve battalion' especially when tackling local authorities disputes over resources and other needs (Brighouse, 1985). But Edwards and Redfern (1988) note that during early days head teachers and teachers felt that PTAs involvement in schools consumed a lot of their valuable time. Cyster et al., (1979) conducted a study on head teacher's views towards PTAs and report both positive and negative perceptions.

The roles of PTA have been widely reported and especially that of fund-raising (Bereford and Herdie, 1996; Bastiani, 1993; McConkey, 1985; Dufla et al., 2009; The Save the Child, 2005). For, instance, they organise events such as social or family evening for either socialising or fund-raising purposes or both. Besides, they hold such events 'to nourish the growth of links with the community. In the USA, for instance, Lin (2010) reports a number of roles performed by PTAs, they include, involving parents in classroom decision, promoting communications, social events and fundraising and, lobbying the state and national legislatives on behalf of the students. The PTAs forum therefore affords parents and teachers an opportunity to socialise and raise funds (Wolfendale, 1992; Yahie, 2000; Novicki, 1998).

Social events also served the purpose of promoting good relationship between parents and teachers as well as improving relationship among parents themselves. But as Macbeth (1993) points out many of the activities

organised by PTAs are less appealing to parents. Edwards and Redfern (1998) have also identified fund-raising as one of the most controversial aspect of PTAs' social events. In the UK, Her Majesty's inspections of 1983/4 reported of schools becoming increasingly dependent on PTAs funds. The funds could be used in any of the following items or areas: textbooks, equipment, minibuses, furniture, library books and school redecoration. Other roles of social events include, disseminating information to parents and in some occasion welcome new parents to the school (Edwards and Redfern, 1988).

The danger associated with fundraising events is that schools may tend to exert enormous and unnecessary pressure on the associations in order to raise more funds as circumstances may dictate regardless whether the kind of events they use are controversial or not. The other danger is that PTAs membership may be adversely affected. The other claim is that fund-raising activities impacts negatively on the establishment of what Edwards and Redfern (1988) describe as, 'a true educational partnership between parents and teachers.' They argue that fund-raising events not only absorb much effort and energy but also distracts the process through which such relationship is established and strengthened. In other words the focus is lost. Also, Macbeth (1993) warns that 'when the interests of parents and schools do not coincide, PTAs may be of little value.' Also Miguel (1999) highlights problems associated with ethnic diversity, which are reflected in less parental participation in PTAs, in school meetings and sharp reduction in the amount of money received through fundraising activities.

Wolfendale (1992) reports that limitations have been reported related to this kind of forum resulting in alternative forums such as a parents association, an education association and mini-association. This view is also reported by Macbeth (1993) who observes that their 'peripheral nature' is linked to the emergence of 'parallel parental activist groups' in many countries. The views that PTAs were peripheral associations appear to have prevailed prior to the 1990s because Macbeth (1990) comments that, that image may be changing leading to a genuine relationship between schools and parents. The other claim by Wragg (1989) and Macbeth, (1993) is that the PTA forum was powerless as far as parents were concerned and that it was similar to a staff social club and therefore does not appeal to parents. They have also been criticised for lack of a clear mechanism for dealing with conflicts (Macbeth, 1993). The other criticism is that of 'failing to be educationally central'. They also lack clear aims and scope. However, heads leadership has been identified as key to the success of PTAs roles (Macbeth, 1990).

Parents and Teachers Association (PTA)also manages the affairs of the school In that this is a welfare body that brings together the teaching staff and the parents of the school. This body generally provides the funds approved

by the BOG for the development of the school. Other roles may include the following: bringing closer the staff and the parents of the school; providing a forum for discussion on all aspects concerning the school and its activities; providing opportunity for exchange of views between the staff and parents; organizing social activities with an aim of bringing staff, parents and the BOG closer together; providing, through its fund raising efforts, for equipment, scholarships, improvements and development to the school; both BOG and PTA steer the school academic standards to a level that is admirable and this is seen through the improvement of results of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (KCSE). The PTA also plays an important role in two areas; participating in the discussions concerning the annual school budget; they receive the recommendations of the BOG and discus them. They then approve it, which in effect approves the school fees to be charged every year; participating in the discussions concerning the identification of development projects and prioritization. They then participate in the implementation of the projects.

Conflicts in roles of BOGs and PTAs

In many education systems in developing countries there are tensions and conflicts in the roles of PTAs and SMCs (Dunne et al., 2007). In Ghana for instance, school management committees' (SMCs) roles and responsibilities have been found to conflict with those of PTA. Tensions and conflicts are likely to occur in the following situations: When responsibilities and roles are either not clearly defined or overlapping or when certain groups have gone beyond their mandates. According to Ramani and Zhimin (2010), role conflict involves real differences in role definitions, expectations or responsibilities between individuals who are interdependent in social systems. If there are ambiguities in role definitions in an organization or unclear boundaries of responsibilities, then the stage is set for interpersonal frictions between the persons involved. In Malawi for instance, school committees and PTAs collided because both of them thought it was their responsibilities to collect money (Mark, 2000). Tensions and conflicts undermine school management committees or Board of Governors and PTAs effectiveness. Studies have looked at various types of conflicts, for instance, conflicts between students and fellow students; conflicts between students and teachers; conflicts between students and school administrations and conflicts between teachers and school administration. The best way to avoid such conflicts is through clearly written statements of respective roles, powers and duties. The current study focuses on role conflicts between school governing bodies and parent teacher association.

Current study

The study was conducted in Gucha District, one of the eleven districts of Nyanza province. Nyanza is one of the eight provinces of Kenya (Makori, 2005). It is situated in the Western part of the country, about 500 miles from Nairobi and has about half a million people based on the 1999 census. There are 174 secondary schools and 474 primary schools with an enrolment of 22, 952 and 124,894 pupils respectively. Onderi and Croll (2008) have identified a number of educational issues and/or problems confronting the district. They include, poor examination performance, lack of structured in-service training programmes for teachers, a lack of priorities for relevant continuing professional development programmes for teachers, shortage of qualified teachers and shortage of educational facilities such as classrooms, libraries and laboratories. On examination performance, for instance, the authors report that in 2006, 6329 candidates sat for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and only 11.6% made it to public universities. It can be argued that some of these challenges fall within the domain of school governing bodies and equally confront them; the main role of the governing bodies is to improve teaching and learning outcomes. It is therefore almost certain that the governing bodies of schools in Gucha district are 'a worried punch' of people.

METHODOLOGY

The study reported in this paper was conducted to increase understanding about the nature of complex problems encountered by BOG and PTA leaders in schools with the aim of investigating how the governors perceive and respond to these complex contradictions, challenges, tensions and conflicts arising from role overlap and lack of clear guidelines for the governing bodies. The data will contribute to building a knowledge platform for understanding the nature of the dilemmas as perceived by the governing bodies. The study involved thirty secondary schools which were purposively sampled in that it included the head teacher and PTA and BOG chairman to each sampled school.

Data was collected from the head teachers and chairs of school governing bodies (BOG) and parent- teachers association (PTA). To get in touch with PTA and BOG chairmen, the researchers contacted sample school heads with a request to invite them to schools to participate, followed by an invitation letter. In this letter, the researchers introduced themselves, described the purpose of the study, explained what the respondent was requested to do, indicated that they had a choice to opt out of the study without any negative consequences on their part, assured them there would be no physical harm

in participating, and undertook to keep their names and all the information they provided strictly confidential and to use these only for research purposes. At the end of this letter, respondents were requested to sign a declaration of informed consent form in which they confirmed their understanding of the contents of the letter, the nature of the study, and their voluntary participation in the same, explaining what was expected of them. The head teacher was the first place to begin such research as it is the head teacher who holds the ultimate accountability for the school. The chairmen were also contacted by phone or e-mails and were given extended information about the study. Arrangements about the date and place for filling in the questionnaires were made. The researchers met the chairmen of PTAs and BOGs in the schools they worked. The questionnaire filling lasted approximately twenty minutes. Questionnaires' response rate was 100%. The questionnaires question format consisted of closed, open-ended and rating scale items. This was necessary to diversify responses as well as reduce what Watson and Coombes (2009) call 'question fatigue'. The open-ended section offered the respondents an opportunity to make a comment or expand or clarify some information on their response and thus help the researchers capture their perspectives on the issues affecting their roles or the teaching and learning process of their schools. Both the head teacher and BOGs and PTAs chair persons questionnaires asked some general questions such as gender and level of education. Besides, the head teacher questionnaires asked about experience in headship and period of service in their current school, while the chair persons were asked about occupation. These areas were considered important for the purpose of providing some understanding on their background.

RESULTS

Understanding participants

The participants comprised of chairs of Board of governors (BOG), chairs of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and head teachers. And data was analyzed per category.

All chairs of Board of governors who took part in the study were males. Perhaps saying something about how the Board of governors' role is perceived by women. Ninety percent (90%, n=30) of them had beyond primary education and less than half (slightly over 40%) were either professional or semi-professional. On the level of education an open-ended section was provided in the questionnaire, where they were asked to specify and their responses included, Form IV, 'A' Level, Diploma, college and university, which showed that the BOG chairmen did not have same level of education. Also on occupation an open-ended section was provided for them to specify, and they identified their occupations as, retired police officer, police officer, church pastor, church officer (deacon), airline industry and peasant. Suggesting that the BOG were mainly lay people on educational matters.

All figures are rounded to the nearest 10%. Nearly all heads (90%, n=30) who took part in the study were male while only 10% (n=30) were female. All participants (100%, n=30) had beyond primary education level. When asked to specify, their responses included, diploma in education, university degree and Masters Degree in education (Med).On experience in headship, half (50%) had less than 5 years of experience, while slightly less than half (40%, n=30) had more than 5 years. Just a small portion (10%) had over 10 years of experience. More than three quarters (80%) of the participants had served in their current school for 2 years and more.

Ninety percent (90%, n=30) of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) participants were male, while 10% (n=30) were female. Just fewer than 90% had beyond primary education level, which included Form IV, 'A' Level and certificate in theology. Just over half were either professional or semi-professional. Their profession included, church pastor, politician (Councillor), farmer, nurse aid and businessmen. Suggesting also that PTAs were mainly lay people in the field of education.

Differential perceptions of BOG and PTA roles

The table below shows differences in perceptions between the head teachers, BOG and PTA about various roles in secondary schools.

The BOG and PTA respondents were asked to identify by ticking on the box provided what they thought was their role or responsibility. The head teachers were further asked to identify by ticking on the given table whose task they thought it was from the roles listed, BOG, PTA or BOTH? Their task was to identify from a set of roles that they thought fitted them. In their responses, PTA scored highly (over 80%) on the following areas or roles: - Identification of school development projects; Looking after the welfare of the school community; Improvement of school performance; Raising funds for various school projects and School finance management.

This may suggest a positive perception about these roles. Further, suggesting that they felt that it was their responsibility to support their schools in those areas. PTA scored medium (60-79%) on the following 3 areas: - Quality standard assurance; Maintenance of discipline in the schools; Maintenance of school environment. But scored poorly (40%) on the following other 3 areas: - Curriculum implementation; Salary review; Recruitment of staff- Suggesting that majority of the PTAs did not consider them their roles. BOG scored highly (80-90%) on the following four areas: - School finance management; Improvement of school performance; Recruitment of staff; Identification of development project. BOG scored medium (60-79%) on the following six areas:- Maintenance of discipline in the school; Looking after the welfare of the school community; Salary review; Raising funds for various school projects; Maintenance of

Table 1. Showing differential perceptions of various roles of BOG and PTA

Roles	Heads (%) n=30			BOG (%) n=30	PTA (%) n=30
	BOG	PTA	BOTH		
Identify school development project	10	30	60	90	80
Curriculum implementation	30	10	50	50	30
Salary review	90	0	10	70	40
Recruitment of staff	90	0	10	90	40
Look after the welfare of the school community	10	20	60	70	80
Quality standard assurance	20	0	80	70	60
Improvement of school performance	10	0	90	80	80
Maintenance of discipline in the school	50	0	50	89	70
Maintaining school environment	10	30	60	70	70
Raising funds for various school projects	20	50	30	60	90
School finance management	80	0	20	90	90

Table 2. BOG and PTAs' roles arranged in order of importance: based on their individual perceptions.

BOG Roles in order of importance	PTA Roles in order of importance
• School finance management (90%)	• School finance management (90%)
• Identify school develop project (90%)	• Raising funds for projects (90%)
• Recruitment of staff (90%)	• Identify school develop proj.(80%)
• Improvement of school performance. (80%)	• Look after school welfare (80%)
• Maintenance of discipline (80%)	• Improvement of school performance.(80%)
• Salary review (70%)	• Maintaining school environment (70%)
• Look after the school welfare (70%)	• Quality of discipline in school (70%)
• Maintaining of school environment (70%)	• Quality standard assurance (60%)
• Quality standard assurance (70%)	• Salary review (40%)
• Raising funds for school project. (60%)	• Recruitment of staff (40%)
• Curriculum implementation (50%)	• Curriculum implementation (30%)

Table 2 shows a list of the various roles of BOGs and PTAs in teaching and learning in a school. The two groups had been asked to rank their roles in order of importance; from the most import to the list important.

the school environment; Quality standard assurance. BOG scored poorly (50%) on the curriculum implementation- Suggesting that curriculum implementation was the least in both BOG and PTA roles. Table1 also reveals some tensions between BOG and PTA in relation to roles, for instance, 90% (n=30) of BOG viewed school finance management to be their role, while 90% (n=30) of PTA views it as their role as well. But 80 %(n=30) of head teachers saw it as a BOG job and not that of PTA.

Table 2: BOG and PTAs' roles arranged in order of importance: based on their individual perceptions.

When BOG were asked to rate their role in the teaching-learning process, just fewer than 90% rated it as good, very good and excellent. But when asked to rate PTAs' role in terms of teaching - learning 70% rated them as good, very good and excellent. Ninety percent (90%) of PTAs rated their role as excellent, very good and good.

Eighty percent (80%) of the head teachers rated BOG as good and very good. Seventy percent (70%) of the head teachers rated PTA as good and very good. The two groups i.e. BOG and PTA scored low in curriculum implementation, suggesting that a significant number of them did not consider it their responsibility.

However when asked if they felt confident and effective in discharging their roles, just over 90% indicated that they felt confident and effective. Something that is positive and encouraging on the one hand, but on the other hand raised questions how they gained such confidence. But one head teacher commented that most of the BOG and PTA complete their term without knowing and/or understanding their roles. The study also indicates that BOG experience a number challenges as they discharge their roles. They are illustrated on the table 3 below.

The study identifies nine sources of conflicts that impact

Table 3. Identifying sources of conflicts in relation to BOG roles: BOG perception

Sources of Conflicts	%, n=30
Conflict of interest	70
Raising and spending of money on school projects	70
Non-recognition of PTA by the Education Act	60
Lack of clear operational guidelines	50
Lack of understanding of our roles as BOG	50
As BOG members I feel we are not in full control of the school finances	40
Poor working relationship with PTA	40
Being left out on major decision making processes on school development	40
I feel that the head teacher sometimes leans too much towards PTA	20

Table 4. Identifying sources of conflicts in relation to PTAs roles: PTAs perception

Sources of conflict	%, n=30
Lack of understanding of their roles	90
Lack of operational guidelines	60
PTA wants to have more control and power on the raising and management of finances	70
Head teacher leaning towards BOG	60
Poor working relationship with BOG	30
A feeling of being left out in major decision making in school development	50
Lack of understanding of roles	70
Raising and spending money on school development projects	70
Non-recognition of PTA by the Education Act	60

on BOG as they discharge their roles. The first five (See table 3) seems to be of major concern compared to the last four. Despite the sources of conflicts identified the following emerged from the study: Seventy percent (70%) indicated that the resulting conflicts are resolved, for instance through mediation committees or teams, improved communication and sponsor intervention for those schools that have sponsors; Ninety (90%) regarded PTA as partners in the teaching-learning process; All (100%) of the study participants indicated that they regarded BOG, PTA and head teachers as one team in the teaching-learning process; 80% felt that the relationship between PTA and BOG was good, very good and excellent; Ninety (90%) felt that the relationship between BOG and head teacher was good, very good and excellent. Also 100% felt that the relationship had a positive impact on the teaching-learning process.

The head teachers also indicted that some conflicts emerge as PTA play their roles. These are shown in table 4 above.

A part from 'poor working relationship with BOG' the rest of the sources of conflict were perceived as very significant. It emerged that the most significant source of conflict between BOG and PTA roles is lack of understanding of their roles. This perhaps explain the need to have all BOGs and PTAs take a mandatory induction and continued in-service training courses once

appointed to the school governing bodies to clearly understand their specific roles as enshrined in the Education Act. It is also important that the Ministry of Education revises the Education Act to provide for a recognized role of PTA in schools.

A majority of the heads felt that all the nine sources of conflicts identified were genuine sources and obviously impacted negatively on their roles. Sixty percent (60%, n=30) of the heads confirmed that conflicts did exist between PTA and BOG. Twenty percent (20%) indicted that the nature of the conflict was very serious and serious. This may suggest that the conflict is less damaging. Sixty percent (60%, n=30) indicated that conflicts do get resolved, through training, use of clear guidelines and mediation committees. Use of mediation committees was also identified by BOG in the study, perhaps giving an impression that it is a popular approach for resolving such conflicts.

On the nature of conflict between BOG and PTA, the head teachers identified the following: Control of school project finance; Roles in the running of the school; Decision making and management of the school; There is no major distinction between the roles of BOG and PTA and therefore at times roles overlap and this brings friction; As to who collects money and who spends it; equipment and disciplining of workers. They differ on financial control and management, PTA feels that they

should be included in spending sourced money; Both want to control the running of the school affairs; Conflict on their roles as to who should manage the school resources; Conflict of interest, non-recognition of PTA by the Education Act A majority of them have limited understanding in the education arena. On partnership, 60% (n=30) of the participant heads felt that the level of partnership was moderate. On the relationship between PTA and BOG, all (100 %, n=30) rated it as good and very good. But on relationship between PTA and the heads, 60 %, n=30) rated the relationship as average. Seventy percent (70 %, n=30) indicated that at the school level relationship between PTA and BOG was facilitated by the head. Forty percent (40 %, n=30) of the heads gave the impression that PTA exerts unnecessary pressure on the school heads in order to achieve their aims and objectives in relation to school development. Also just over half felt that PTA compromised established procedures in order to have their way in school development.

DISCUSSION

Parental involvement in education through PTAs and BOGs and their roles has been widely reported. However, fewer studies have been conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps suggesting that this area has not attracted many researchers' attention. The current study set out to investigate how BOGs and PTAs perceived their roles. The results showed that there were significant differential perceptions of roles between PTAs, BOGs and heads (See Table 1). For instance, roles on top of BOG list were: Identification of school development projects; Improvement of school performance; School finance management; Recruitment of staff. The roles on top of PTAs list included: Identification of school development projects; Improvement of school performance; School finance management; Looking after the welfare of the school community; Raising funds for various school projects. The first three roles can be described as 'overlapped roles', 'shared roles', or 'contested roles'. A similar trend continues in the middle and lower set of roles as can be seen in the results section of this article. According to the Department for Education (2009) governors' role can also be perceived in terms of managerial, localizing and democratizing. Through localizing and democratizing local people are involved in local decision making processes. However a study involving three disadvantaged areas found that governing bodies had difficulties in these three roles, for instance, they lacked the capacity to perform the managerial role and did not consider it their responsibility (Department for Education, 2009). They were also limited in other roles i.e. localizing and democratizing because they did not represent their local communities in a significant manner. It also emerged that governing bodies

did not reflect the local community or the school community (Department for Education, 2009).

Table 2 which represents heads perceptions about PTAs and BOGs role paints a different picture, resulting in two typologies i.e. separate or individual roles and shared or joint roles. Separate or individual roles refer to the roles that are perceived as either PTAs or BOGs. Shared roles refer to the roles that the head teachers have indicated both suggesting that the roles are for both BOGs and PTAs. For instance, based on table 2, separate roles are: BOGs (Salary review, recruitment staff and school finance management) and PTAs (Raising funds for various school projects). Shared or contested roles include (identification of school projects; curriculum implementation; looking after the welfare of the school; quality standards assurance; maintenance of discipline in the school; maintenance of environment and improvement of performance. Obviously if roles are shared but there are no clear guidelines, conflicts and tensions are more likely to emerge. Conflicts and tensions have also been identified in the review of literature. BOG and PTA involvement is underpinned by the assumption that they would contribute positively to the learning of their children and therefore the quality of education would improve and that children would attain better results. Also that children's behaviour would improve. In Kenya, the roles of the board of governors include hiring and remunerating of support and subordinate staff in public schools, acts as custodians of their school movable and immovable property, control and discipline of teachers, and audit and regulate the expenditure by the administration to ensure that funds are spent objectively. All these roles are mandated by the Education Act (1980) (Wanderi, 2008). The Board of Governors recruits staff on behalf of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC). It is a delegated responsibility under the TSC Code of regulation 1986 (Onsomu et al., 2004). However concerns have been reported concerning BOGs ability or competence to interpret and implement TSC guidelines effectively. Also recruitment of staff involves the process of interviewing and concerns have been reported regarding BOGs competence and understanding of professional, topical, socio-economic and political issues affecting education in general. Also local interferences and biases associated with recruitment of staff have been reported. Some head teachers in a study held the view that BOGs capacity to make honest decision on recruitment is affected by their political, religious and clan leanings (Onsomu et al., 2008).

BOGs roles are driven by legislative reforms, while PTAs are purely voluntary. But questions have been raised in relation to their commitments, skills and capacity to perform certain roles. While PTAs have been recognized for raising extra funds for various development projects among other activities in the life of the school, concerns have been reported regarding fund-raising activities. Many of the parents resent fundraising

events employed by PTAs; as a result membership has been negatively affected.

The study also identified sources of conflicts as perceived by the BOGs, PTAs and head teachers (See tables 3 and 4). The sources were differentially perceived between the three groups of participants. For instance, On top of the BOG list (60%-90%) includes Conflict of interest; Raising and spending of money on school projects and Non-recognition of PTA by the Education Act. On top of the PTAs list (60%-90%) include lack of understanding of their roles; raising and spending money on school development projects; PTAs wants to have more control and power on the raising and management of finance; Non-recognition of PTA by the Education Act; lack of operational guidelines and poor working relationships with BOG. PTAs list is long and may suggest that they are really struggling to deliver their services to school. And one wonders for how long things will go on like this. Lack of guidelines was also mentioned in the review. Current results show that while BOGs and PTAs play certain roles in the life of the school, there is evidence of roles conflict resulting in tensions, giving an impression that the two organizations operate in a very contentious environment. There was also an evidence of differential perceptions regarding roles, conflicts and tensions and, challenges. Other researchers have also found that in many education systems in developing countries there are tensions and conflicts in the roles of PTAs and school management committees (SMCs). In Ghana for instance, school management committees' (SMCs) roles and responsibilities have been found to conflict with those of PTA. Tensions and conflicts are likely to occur in the following situations (Dunne et al., 2007):When responsibilities and roles are either not clearly defined or overlapping and When certain groups have gone beyond their mandates. According to Ramani and Zhimin (2010): *Role conflict involves real differences in role definitions, expectations or responsibilities between individuals who are interdependent in social systems. If there are ambiguities in role definitions in an organisation or unclear boundaries of responsibilities, then the stage is set for interpersonal frictions between the persons involved.* In Malawi for instance, school committees and PTAs collided because both of them thought it was their responsibilities to collect money (Mark, 2000). The best way to avoid such conflicts is through clearly written statements of respective roles, powers and duties. Tensions and conflicts undermine school management committees or board of governors and PTAs effectiveness. Studies have looked at various types of conflicts, for instance, conflicts between students and fellow students; conflicts between students and teachers; conflicts between students and school administrations and conflicts between teachers and school administration (Ramani and Zhimani, 2010).

The study also revealed that PTAs and BOGs experience challenges (See table 4) as they performed various roles. On top of the BOGs list are, lack of adequate funding; lack of parental support and unnecessary red tapes. So lack of adequate funding and parental support appears to be a significant challenge to both. Other challenges identified in the study include lack of appropriate training, lack of induction and induction pack, which raised questions regarding the effectiveness and efficacy of their roles. Resentments have been reported regarding BOG and PTA involvement in education in general because they are regarded as non-professional and lay people operating in a foreign territory, that of professionals. Other limitations include adult illiteracy, lack of expertise to serve effectively in a school governing position and unhealthy relationship between teachers and school governors (Mashele, 2009). When school governing bodies are illiterate it means they cannot easily access policy materials because they are written in unfamiliar language (Lemnar and Van Wyk, 2004).

In Kenya, the Board of Governors has a legal mandate from the ministry of education under the Education Act Cap 211 to manage secondary schools. Primary schools are managed by school management committees (SMCs) and PTAs. Their role is to facilitate smooth operation of teaching and learning in schools through the provision of teaching and learning materials and development of infrastructure. However school management committees and board of governors have not been exposed to adequate management training. Although Kenya education staff institute offers training in management courses clear government policy on training of BOG members is absent. Issues with training of school governing bodies in South Africa has also been cited in the literature, for instance, Lemmer and Van Wyk, (2004) report that training for new governing bodies is brief and uneven. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) strongly recommends that for Board of Governors to be effective, they have to be screened, trained and acquainted with school policies. The inquiry of Koech report (Republic of Kenya) as cited in Kindiki (2009) expressed concern that management of educational institutions in Kenya was weak due to the fact that a majority of the board of governors lacked quality management capacities. Therefore training is a key to successful school governance. The other issue cited in the study in relation to secondary school governing bodies in Kenya is linked to their appointments. Kindiki (2009) reports on political interference or influence, which results in bringing into office people who are not only unqualified but ignorant and limited in knowledge on professional matters related to education or school governance. In a majority of the cases school governors who are appointed through political influence are those with low level education, lack of commitment and dedication and the result is weak management of institutions.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored conflicts and tensions associated with the role of parent teacher association (PTA) and board of governors (BOG). Specifically, we explored role conflicts between school governing bodies and parent teacher association. Parental involvement in education through PTAs and BOGs are now widely recognized. Their involvement despite the educational background or social position of the parents is an essential component for successful education and teaching at school level. PTAs and BOGs are considered part of the school governance and leadership structure. Current results show that while BOGs and PTAs play certain roles in the life of the school, there is evidence of roles conflict resulting in tensions, giving an impression that the two organizations operate in a very contentious environment. There was also an evidence of differential perceptions regarding roles, conflicts and tensions and, challenges. While PTAs and BOGs were considered part of the school leadership team, they perceived their roles differently and operated in an environment characterized by contradictions, challenges, tensions and conflicts, which were attributed to role overlap and lack of clear guidelines. The study also identified lack of training and, appropriate induction programme and induction pack as challenges that impeded the roles of the PTAs and BOGs. Also a majority of the PTAs and BOGs lacked confidence in their roles. There is a need for a further research regarding training of board of governors.

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