The Influence of Cultural Norms and Values on the Provision of Multicultural Education: The Perspective of Four Private Schools in Harare, Zimbabwe (2nd Series)

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Abstract

The article is part of a broad study that was carried to establish the extent to which multicultural education issues are being embraced at four private schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. This article specifically explored the influence of cultural norms and values on the provision of multicultural education in the schools. The study paradigm was largely quantitative though some elements of qualitative research were also employed in sampling. The survey design guided the study. The population included all 16 administrators and 115 teachers. Convenience sampling was used to come up with a representative sample of 4 administrators (one from each school) and 20 teachers (five from each school). Structured interviews were used to collect data from school administrators while questionnaires were administered to teachers. The results showed that there are school rules which are against discrimination. Schools also emphasize equality and equal treatment among learners and teachers. Christian values were also used to counter discrimination. Lastly the schools are also using Religious and Moral Education subject which emphasizes moral aspects of life. Teacher in-servicing is also used. The study concluded that while the schools are using brilliant ways of dealing with cultural diversity Christianity is given precedence over other religion which is a potential source of conflict. The study recommended that challenges of multicultural education should be addressed in teacher training programmes at college and university level. Schools were also encouraged to embrace religious pluralism. Lastly schools were recommended to involve and work more with parents on multicultural issues and activities

Key Words

Culture, Cultural Norms, Cultural Values, Multicultural Education, Teachers, Administrators, Learner Diversity, Private School

1.0   Introduction

Zimbabwe is one of the African countries that embrace multiculturalism in educational, political, economic and social aspects. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) is the major law that shows everybody is welcome in all national activities. While Zimbabwe does not have specific stand alone laws on multicultural education she is a signatory to a lot of international charters on multiculturalism and non discriminatory education. Domestically there are a lot of policy frameworks that informs educational practice. These include the Zimbabwe Education Act (Education Act, 1987, revised 1996), the Disabled Persons Act (Disabled Persons Act 1992, revised 1996) and various Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education circulars such as (Education Secretary's Policy Circular No. P36, 1990). These require that all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, creed, and disability, have access to basic or primary education (up to Grade 7). The Zimbabwean Education Act introduced free and compulsory education for all students regardless of any demographic differences implying support for multicultural education (Chireshe, 2011).

Zimbabwe has four major categories of schools. These include government owned schools, church owned schools, and council owned schools and trust or privately owned schools. The researchers experience as an educationist for about two decades has shown that while most schools enroll learners from different cultural backgrounds significant multiculturalism is in private schools. These schools are mainly run by trust funds and they are considered as elite schools. There is a mixture of learners in these schools inter alia, Blacks, Indians, Chinese, Coloureds, and Whites. What motivated the execution of this study is the need to find out the extent to which multicultural issues are being handled in these private schools. This study was broad in nature and has been published in parts or series. This specific study sought to answer the question:

> How do cultural norms and values influence the provision of multicultural education in Zimbabwean Private Schools?

2.0   Delimitations

The study was restricted to four private schools in Harare only. The private schools included two primary schools and two high schools. Thus respondents were two administrators and ten teachers from two primary schools while the remaining two administrators and ten teachers were from two high schools. Other private or public schools in and outside Harare were not covered in this study. The Early Childhood centres in the 4 private schools were also not part of the study.

3.0   Literature Survey

3.1 Meaning of Multicultural Education (MCE)

The concept of MCE has been talked about seriously after the Second World War. This follows the rapid increase in migration as states were gaining self rule. The increase in immigrants necessitated the call for cultural sensitivity in the schools. Multicultural education encompasses theories and practices that strive to promote equitable access and rigorous academic achievement for students from all diverse groups to enable them work toward social change. It is a process of educational that challenges oppression and bias of all forms, and acknowledges and affirms the multiple identities that students bring to their learning. Researchers and scholars have been finding it difficult to come up with a generally agreed definition of MCE. Instead, the majority of these researchers found it better to define multicultural education as a matrix of practices and concepts rather than a singular static notion. They agreed that MCE must be constructed within its history and roots in the civil rights movement (Banks 2004; Grant, Elsbree & Fondrie, 2004; Gay, 2004; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004).

One of the most renounced scholars of MCE is James Banks. The meaning of MCE in this study is therefore in line with his definitions. Banks (2006) advanced a definition of multicultural education as a broad concept and extrapolated on five dimensions. These are content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2004). Content integration deals with the infusion of various cultures, ethnicities, and other identities to be represented in the curriculum. The knowledge construction process involves students in critiquing the social positioning of groups through the ways that knowledge is presented. Prejudice reduction describes lessons and activities that teachers implement to assert positive images of ethnic groups and to improve intergroup relations. Equity pedagogy concerns modifying teaching styles and approaches with the intent of facilitating academic achievement for all students. Empowering school culture describes the examination of the school culture and organization by all members of school staff with the intent to restructure institutional practices to create access for all groups (Banks, 2004). According to banks, while these dimensions are inextricably intertwined, a lot of effort must be put by schools to address each dimension separately. This makes the foundation for MCE assessment.

3.2 Cultural Norms and Values that Influence Provision of MCE
Religion
Religion has significant influences on provision of MCE . Issues of religion influence one's reactions to situations, (Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore, 1981 in Bhatia, 2004). This therefore entails segregatory education and dilutes the whole essence of MCE and its goals. It is also a clear attack on the rights issue to education, which the United Nations has put as mandatory to all children regardless of sex. Some of the dressing allowed in schools is seen as immodesty, for example, physical education attire necessary for modesty in such practical lessons, (Coleman et al 1981). Provision of MCE in such diverse cultural environment becomes a challenge. It therefore entails an understanding of several stakeholders, which includes Policymakers, legislators, education administrators, civic society and the parents whose children are at the centre of the debate. Differences in beliefs arise for example, some cultures believe in praying to the almighty God, while others pray to idols. Because of these differences, different religions have been in existence since time immemorial. Differences in beliefs have caused some frictions in some circles such as education. For example, Muslims find coeducation unacceptable for their daughters (Grant in Corner, 1984). They also find physical education as immodest; have arranged marriages, semi-purdah and even killing their sexually delinquent daughters and their lovers, (Coleman et al 1981 in Bhatia, 2004). Whether these practices are essential for Moslem culture is for them to argue but how far can they or even the discouragement of girls' scholastic advancement be accepted in a country where sex equality is a matter of law.

Behaviour
Culture was believed to be so pervasive in determining patterns of social behavior in general (Bhatia, 2004). There are variations among cultural groups in the formal and informal rules governing interactions between individuals. Such variations caused problems for students when classroom interactional patterns were not consistent or compatible with those that children experienced in their homes and community. In some cases, stylistic variations in what, how, and when something was said may be minor and remain largely unnoticed by teachers and students alike. In other cases however, cultural variations in interactional patterns could interfere with learning, particularly in the primary grades (Hernandez, 1989). Hymes (1981) in Corner (1984), observed that the differences typically recognized by school and community were the most visible symbols of culture, the most stereotypic of

conversations. What could be accepted behavior on one's homeland may be misunderstood, disdained, laughed at, or even illegal in a foreign land (Harndaez, 1989). For example, in the Shona culture, spitting and blowing of nose on the ground is a common thing while saliva or mucus in a tissue or handkerchief that would be put back into a pocket or purse is considered to be a filthy habit (Lynch and Hanson, 1995). Although both cultures have placed a value on personal hygiene, its interpretation is drastically different.   As a result of different behaviours and interpretations of these behaviours based upon cultures, ethnicity or language, this could be confusion to an observer.

Rules Shared
Hernandez, (1989) cited the Native American communities, which are multi-cultural in nature and stated that the classroom learning environment may be structured according to rules not shared by the community could affect teachers and students alike and may reflect in classroom, for example, how teachers control and monitor behavior, what kinds of behavior are used to intervene, how the students are organized, that is, group participation; such as frequency of volunteering and responding, willingness to interrupt other speakers (Mohatt and Ericson, 1981: Phillips, 1983; in Hernandez, 1989).

Dress and Appearance
Dress and appearance identify culture, for example, the Arabs wear a particular type of dress. The type of dress also carries a lot of meaning in some cultures. Dressing could also violet some beliefs, for example, a woman wearing a mini skirt or trousers in the presence of in-laws

Food Habits
Food habits typify a culture, for example, sadza is cherished in Zimbabwe, while pizza in Italy (Bhatia, 2004). In most Shona cultures, a welcome visitor is honored with a chicken, while in other countries; chicken is no novelty- though this practice is fast losing its value. Some types of food are a taboo in other cultural settings, while valued in others, for example, eating meat from animals with split hoofs and those that chew the cads.

Time
Time consciousness is different among cultures, from punctuality of the Japanese to flexible Africans, (Bhatia 2004). From observation, an African generally can sacrifice an appointment just to entertain an unannounced visitor to show politeness.

Reward and Recognition
Reward and recognition differ from country to country, for example, giving 15% of fare trip to a taxi driver in USA is customary, (Bhatia 2004), while in Zimbabwe, a hearty thank you and clapping of hands will do.. In some cases in African culture, a person can go on to cite a totem (kudetemba mutupo), just to express gratitude. This can be expressed as the highest form of expressing gratitude to a Shona man.

3.3Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Social Reconstructionism which describes a complete redesign of an educational program. The notion of reconstructionism draws from Brameld's framework to offer a critique of modern culture (Sleeter & Grant, 2006). Such a redesign recommends addressing issues and concerns that affect students of diverse groups, encouraging students to take an active stance by

challenging the status quo, and calling on students to collectively speak out and effect change by joining with other groups in examining common or related concerns (Sleeter & Grant, 1987, 2006).The study explored the extent to which learners cultural norms and values have been reconstructed in line with the concept of multicultural education.

4.0 Methodology

The study was largely the quantitative though some elements of qualitative research were also employed in sampling. The survey design guided the study. Permission was first sought in writing at each school before data was collected. The population included all 16 administrators of the four schools that included school heads, deputy heads, senior masters and senior ladies. The four schools had a teacher population of 115. Convenience sampling method was used to come up with a representative sample of 4 administrators (one from each school) and 20 teachers (five from each school). While parents were a key stakeholder in this study, those approached expressed mixed feelings towards participation and were dropped. Teachers were in turn asked questions related to the parents which is a great limitation. Structured interviews were used to collect data from school administrators while questionnaires were administered to teachers.
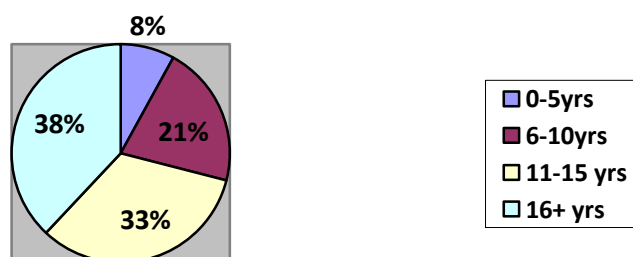
5.0 Results

5.1 Demographic Data

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sample	No. from which data was collected	Response Rate
Administrators	4	4	100%
Teachers	20	20	100%
Totals	24	24	100%

From the information presented in the above table, it shows that the response rate was 100% for both teachers and administrators.

Figure 1: Distribution by experience- Length of Service

Information presented in Fig 1 shows that all administrators and teachers had great experience in private schools. Teachers were had mainly 11-16+ years of experience and all administrators had over 16 years of experience.

The research intended to establish the levels taught by the teachers and the following was established

Figure 2: Distribution of Teachers by levels taught
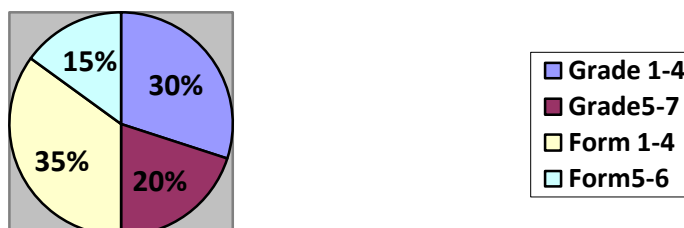
The data in Fig 2 shows that teachers from all levels participated, however concentration on respondents was from the lower primary and lower secondary which had 30% and 35% respectively. The upper primary and upper secondary accounted for the remaining 20% and 15%.

Figure 3: Distribution by Race
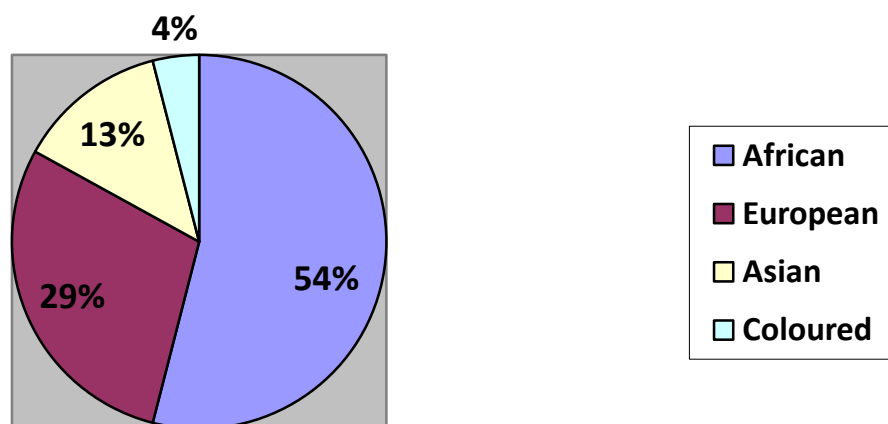
It was deduced that the majority of the respondents were African which constituted 54% Asians constituted 13%, and European constituted 29% while coloured constituted 4%.

5.2   Cultural Norms and Values that Influence Provision of MCE

The first research question solicited for information on cultural diversity in the schools. Teachers and administrators were asked whether they enroll students from different cultural backgrounds. The table shows the results.

Table 2: Whether students from different backgrounds are enrolled N=24

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	24	100%

The results show that all schools had students from different cultural backgrounds.

Question 5 for teachers, asked whether their students had any problems with cultural differences. The respondents answered either partially or no. The responses showed that some students had problems and some did not have problems at all.

Figure 4: Whether students had problems with cultural differences
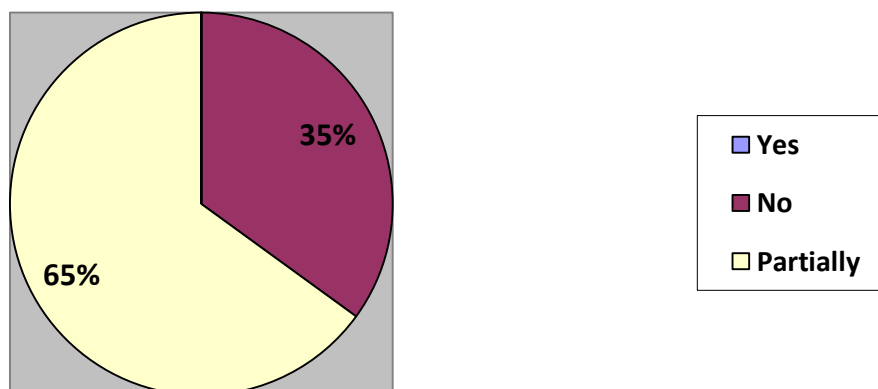
The results show that most students had problems with cultural differences while a few had no problems with cultural differences. No respondent was very positive about students having problems with cultural differences

Question 2 for administrators sought to establish whether the diversity in the schools affected the provision of multicultural education and in what way?

Table 3: Whether cultural diversity had effects on provision of Multicultural Education

Response	Most frequent reasons given
Yes	• It depends on how students respond to multiculturalism ad their own cultural background. • The school itself is responsible for cultural harmony- if it fails, other students are

	affected
	• If other cultures are looked down upon, education of the children is affected
	• Culture makes a person act unconsciously and the minority tends to suffer.
	• Students are affected initially when they are faced with new situations.
	• Some students fail to adapt to new situations and new cultures.
	• People have preconceived ideas about other cultures and this has adverse effects on learning.
	• Inferiority and superiority teachings children go through at home affects competency in school.
	• Inferiority and superiority complexes about their own cultures affects learning.
	• Differences in belief systems their affects learning e.g. some believe in teamwork while other believe in competition
	•
No	• Children like to learn new things so they find pleasure in new cultures
	• Diversity enhances knowledge
	• In school children are treated equally therefore cultural differences do not matter

The responses in Table 3 show that culture had more effects on the provision of MCE. Administrators gave more reasons to explain cultural effects on education that it had no effects. They all gave more than one reason why the thought culture had effect on education as shown in the table.

To solicit more information on cultural differences, Question 6 for teachers asked whether students formed 'cliques' based on their cultural backgrounds. The results showed that some students formed cliques while others did not as shown in the table below:

Table 4: Whether students formed cliques based on cultural backgrounds N=20

Response	Frequency	Rating %
Yes	13	65
No	7	35
Total	**20**	**100**

The results show that 65% of teachers thought that students formed cliques based on cultural backgrounds. The results also corresponded with results in the above figure 4 were 65% of the teachers' thought that their students had problems with cultural differences.

Questions 4 for administrators asked them to identify cultural norms and values that influenced the provision of MCE. Results are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Major Norms and Values that influenced the provision of MCE
N=4

Response	Frequency	%
Differences in religious beliefs e.g education of the girl child	4	100
Dressing styles of different religious	3	75
Level of authority of different cultures especially in terms of gender	1	25
Differences in behavior patterns	3	75

Differences in communication styles	3	75
Differences in cultural expectations	4	100
Common understanding that the world has become one global village	4	100
Realisation that to be competent on the world market, one has to be functional in diverse cultures	4	100
Common understanding on eradication of discrimination	3	75
In Zimbabwe, the freedom of worship	1	25

From the table it can be deduced that all the administrators agreed on a number of norms and values that influenced the provision of education. On religious beliefs, the administrators explained it in different ways. This included:

- Religious belief that the girl child should be educated only to a certain level which can be far below that of a boy child.
- Boys take precedence in education than the girl child
- The girl child cannot take positions of authority therefore there is no point in high levels of education.
- A woman's place is in the home that education is secondary.

Following up on the effect of religion, discussions indicated that different cultures had their own dressing styles. The styles can be accepted or unacceptable to other cultures or to other people. One administrator was quoted saying:
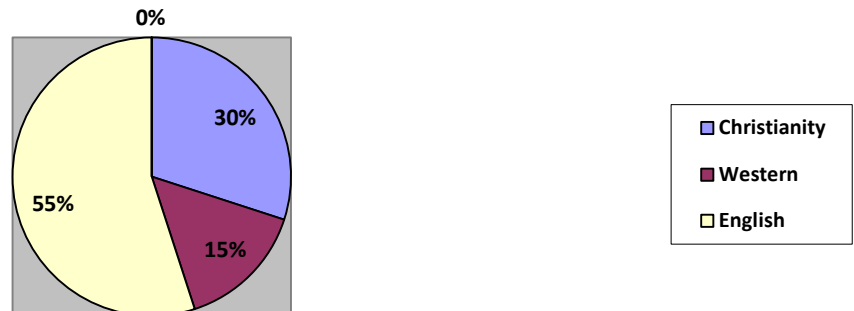
> *"Look at this recent issue in Bindura which will cost the students the whole year of learning! All in the name of culture. What has the hair got to do with education of a child ad what does the law say about educational provisions."*

The issue being referred to in this context is about children in Bindura who had applied for a form one place at a certain school. The girls had all passed but were denied vacancies because they had long hair, which was a cultural practice in their church.

Responses in the table also suggest that students should have diverse cultural exposure so that they can be competent in the global village.

Question 7 for teachers asked whether there were some dominant cultures among students and all responded either in terms of religious beliefs or in terms of language or behavior as reflected below:

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Figure 5: Whether there were some cultures dominant among students

The responses showed that all the schools were based on western cultures. None of the responses reflected indigenous cultures whether in terms of language, religious beliefs or behavior.

6.0   Discussion

Research results confirmed that there were cultural norms and values that influenced the provision of MCE in Private Schools. As reflected in the responses by the administrators and teachers, culture contributed a lot to education of students in general. Background to the study reflected that culture influenced lives beyond one's awareness at a conscious level and these influences were said to be pervasive and the impact on the educational process significant (Edward Harriot 1970 in Hernandez 1989). 100% of the administrators agreed that culture had influence on the provision of MCE as well as the 75% affirmation by teachers.

The major cultural norms and values identified in this research were religion, Language and communication, behavior, dressing style, living style (way of life), and food habits. These cultural norms and values were also the basis of cultural clashes by students in the schools. In addition to cultural norms and values that influenced the provision of MCE, it was found that other factors such as parental support, material support, self-motivation, instruction methods and the overall learning capability of the student influenced education in general. As cited in the literature review, researchers like Honig (1985), Cortes and Fleming (1986), Kane (1984), Saunders (1982) supported such influences in addition to culture on provision of MCE.

However, from the researcher's observation, there was a thin line between cultural norms and values and other influences to the education of the students. For example, instruction methods and learning materials are grossly influenced by culture. As the Association of the America Publishers (1984) established, words and pictures not only expressed ideas but also are part of the educational experience, which shape ideas. Hernandez (1989) reiterated and stated that textbooks influenced ideas and transmit "officially- sanctioned "cultural values.

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From the research, it was discovered that religious beliefs and its stereotype (ethnic superiority and inferiority beliefs) took a centre stage on the cultural influences on provision of MCE. The researcher's view is that religion is belief in supernatural power that governs our way of life. It therefore meant that religion and societal stereotypes influence our dressing, living style, food habits, worship styles and our behavior. These also influence how one perceives other people from a different culture. This was evidenced through responses by the teachers and administrators on sources of clashes among students in a multicultural environment. 100% administrators and 60% teachers cited inferiority and superiority beliefs of different cultures as having effect on provision of MCE.

The issues of Language/ Communication and behavior were raised as some of the cultural norms and values that influenced the provision of MCE. From the researcher's view, those were so interested in that one can communicate through behavior and language can be verbal or non-verbal. There are so many misinterpretations that can take place in these areas. As indicated in the literature review, these affected the interaction patterns in the classroom (Hernandez, 1989) Hofsted (1991) also indicated that words and gestures carried a lot of meaning. This therefore implied that both the teacher and the students should be careful in their language patterns so that education can fulfill its intended purposes.

From observation and inquiry, all schools had settled for the English language as their medium of communication. As highlighted in the literature review, being part of a culture knows its language and for minority students, acculturation and assimilation is apparent.

7.0 Recommendations

- Teachers and relevant stakeholders should be aware of culture components that affect education
- Teachers should be involved in community activities to enhance their cultural knowledge. Understanding culture also helps them understand learners and the challenges they face in their education.
- Knowledge of at least three cultures should be prerequisite to all teachers.

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