

THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER INCENTIVES ON EDUCATION IN BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Upon independence the Government of Zimbabwe recognised the central role played by education in any society in improving the lives of citizens. The government profoundly invested in the provision of education for its citizens through payment of teacher's salaries. Zimbabwe's education system, once the most excellent in Africa, faced enormous challenges during the peak of the economic and political crises in 2008/2009. In view of the fact that education is an essential base for a child's bright future, parents who had the resources arranged with teachers to privately teach their children. During this period the provision of incentives was a splendid idea meant to cushion teachers from the hyper-inflationary environment the country was facing in a bid to avoid strikes, which would affect children's learning. The Ministry of Education Sports and Culture formalized the incentive system through Circular No. 5 of 2009. The study sought to investigate how incentives rejuvenated the education sector and at the same time how they have negatively affected the system. Teacher incentives were a positive move on short term basis. The findings of the study were that in the long run the incentives have negatively affected the education sector, parents, children and the teachers. The paper will discuss how these different stakeholders were affected by the teacher incentives.

Keywords: *Teacher incentives, Education, Dynamics, Effects.*

INTRODUCTION

Upon attaining independence the Government of Zimbabwe declared education as a basic human right to ensure that all the people of Zimbabwe had access to education. The Government of Zimbabwe recognised the central role played by education in any society in improving the lives of citizens. The government profoundly invested in the provision of education for its citizens through payment of teacher's salaries. In this regard Dike (2009) pointed out that teachers play a critical role in nurturing the minds and hearts of citizens. The government's pro-people determined philosophy yielded positive results. As a result in 2004, Zimbabwe had achieved the highest literacy percentage in the Southern African region and in Africa as a whole, it held the second position to Tunisia (Jinga and Ganga: 2011). The underlining factor to the significant achievements was that, teachers like other civil servants were motivated by the remuneration. This important role of education has been demeaned in Zimbabwe with the advent of the 21st century. The country experienced economic downturn the first decade of the 21st century. The ominous economic and political environment left the education sector as one of the most crippled sectors. According to Mlambo and Raftopoulos

(2010), by 2008 the Zimbabwean economy had undergone a veritable meltdown, with all indicators signifying a country in severe distress... By 2007, per capita GDP was estimated at \$200, compared to \$900 in 1990, while over 80% of the Zimbabwean population was reported in 2005 to be living on less than \$2 a day. Exports, which in 1997 had accounted for 33.5% of the country's GDP, were worth only 9.9% of the GDP in 2007. Unemployment at 2008 stood at 90%, while once the breadbasket of the entire region, Zimbabwe was now importing basic foodstuffs to feed its population.

The statistics above show how economic crisis resulted in an immense disintegration of the country's once renowned social services sector, with health and education provision being the most affected.

Zimbabwe's education system, once the preeminent in Africa, faced immense challenges during the climax of the economic and political crises in 2008/2009 and continues to face challenges. The government's financing of the education sector like all other public sectors shrank and the school fees rose beyond the reach of many and this in turn tattered the past successes in the sector. The education sector was debilitated by loss of professionals attributed to the massive brain-drain. The mockery remuneration system as a result of the ailing economy was the major characteristic of the country's public service (ibid). During the period teachers were demoralised and they were undignified as the situation had reached an extent where even students would make fun of the teachers and their salaries. This consequently destroyed the teaching environment and the relationship between the teacher and the student was eventually eroded. It was pointed out that;

In the past we used to think the teacher was above everyone but nowadays even society is demeaning the profession and making fun of the teacher, you even find our local media is carrying cartoons of teachers on their knees seemingly begging, this among a number of things makes the teacher lose credibility and respect (Dube, 2012).

Due to the persistent humiliating state of affairs, subsequently, most of the teachers ended up migrating to neighbouring countries in search for green pastures. It was estimated that the education sector lost 20 000 teachers between 2007 and 2008 (ibid). This loss of teachers significantly affected teachers of science and mathematics as they were in enormous demand in the neighbouring countries. The persistent tendency of migration ultimately led to the reduction of experienced and qualified personnel in the education sector. This in turn led to a series of poor results due to sub-standard education in our schools. The paltry salaries and poor conditions of service were the chief grounds for the extensive brain drain in the country. The high levels of brain drain resulted in a general decline in the status of the teaching profession.

Economic downturn resulted in numerous vulnerable schoolchildren dropping out over the years, though new programmes aim to rectify the situation. According to a UNICEF Report (2008) it was noted that "barely a week to national examinations for primary, ordinary and advanced level, the visits, revealed that an estimated 40% of the country's teachers were attending lessons, a third of pupils were reporting for classes and district education officers were ill equipped to run national exams." This shows the extent to which the brain drain affected the education sector in 2008.

In view of the fact that education is an imperative foundation for a child's bright future, parents who had money arranged with teachers to privately teach their children. According to Jinga and Ganga (2011);

The practice increased as more and more parents took their children to renowned teachers until it became institutionalised by schools as holiday lessons meant for all pupils. The phenomenon was motivated by the schools desires to fund- raise as well as preparing pupils for examinations.

With this development teachers highly praised the extra and holiday lessons as it generated extra income. As highlighted earlier on some teachers had migrated to neighbouring countries. In response to the brain drain, the Public Service Commission announced that teachers who resigned between January 2007 and March 1, 2009 should be allowed to rejoin the profession and for those who left earlier than 2007, had their conditions of re-admission relaxed. As a way of honouring the teachers that had been patient enough to remain serving in the profession and retain returnees, the Ministry of Education introduced a new system of incentives for teachers in 2009. The Minister of Education Sports and Culture asserted that "what affects the Government, affects the parents. Right now the government can't afford to pay teachers a reasonable salary that is when the parents have to come in and help." (Ndlovu, 2012) This shows that the Minister encouraged the parents to partake in efforts meant for reviving the deteriorated education sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPT OF INCENTIVES

Incentives are external measures that are designed and established to influence motivation and behaviour of individuals, groups or organizations (UNDP: 2006). Incentive measures, such as secondary benefits, and intangible rewards, recognition have traditionally been used to motivate employees to increase their performance. Incentives can be direct such as salary, pension, insurance, bonuses. Incentive systems are an imperative part of organizational motivation. Organizational incentives are revealed by the need for many people to join an organization, and at the same time the way an organization rewards its staff. In this regard organizations must continually seek ways to keep their employees engaged in their work, motivated, efficient and productive. An organization's success rests upon its ability to create the conditions and systems that entice the best people to offer their services. In addition, a good incentive system eggs on employees to be productive and creative. This has long term effects as it cultivates allegiance among key employees who are for the most part productive, and it arouses innovation. Incentive systems are inherent in organizations, their structure, rules, human resource management, opportunities, internal benefits, rewards. Thus incentives are a crucial factor in creating a conducive working environment and for the success of organizations.

INCENTIVES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

As the incentive systems have a momentous influence on the performance of individuals and thus the organization on the whole. A wide ranging reality in a number of developing countries is that public service incentives are weak. The salaries are too low and pay scales that at best are barely sufficient to live off of, are not competitive with the private sector or do not compensate for postings to remote locations (Adams and Hicks: 2000). A study of Ghana's public sector concluded that;

the significance of internal factors in creating positive organizational cultures suggests that many of the changes needed to transform public organizations could be initiated by the organizations themselves without substantial external support(UNDP: 2006).

In most African countries the salaries are too compressed, not reflecting the skills, training, and seniority of management positions as compared with low paid jobs. These factors have contributed to a culture of absenteeism, alternative employment, rent-seeking and low productivity in the public service. This is often compounded by a system of non-transparent benefits and allowances that discourage rather than encourage performance.

TEACHER MOTIVATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Work motivation refers to the psychological processes that influence individual behaviour with respect to the attainment of workplace goals and tasks (Bennell: 2004). It has been noted that the inducement for schools and teachers in the public education system to execute well their duties is frequently frail due to ineffective incentives. Extremely low pay scales have created a culture where large proportions of teachers are engaged in private tutoring and other activities so as to enable them to earn secondary income. Available evidence suggests that teacher pay is generally very low and declining in real terms in most developing countries. Salary supplementation for teachers by parents and communities is common throughout Africa. Primary schooling is supposed to be free in most countries but, given the plight of teachers and lack of learning materials, parents are frequently expected to pay various charges. Bennell further posited that teaching has become employment of the last resort among university graduates and secondary school leavers in many countries. Consequently, teachers often lack a strong, long-term commitment to teaching as a profession. Ultimately, teachers are paid considerably less than the mainstream professions (ibid). Teaching has been demeaned and a result most teachers are no longer motivated to remain in the profession.

Long-drawn-out economic crises together with economic reform programmes have gradually destabilized the ability of developing countries to uphold the worthiness of public sector salaries. In response to this, for the teachers private tutoring has become the dominant activity in many developing countries. In some countries, this is school based, for example Academic Production Units in secondary schools in Zambia and after-school extension classes in primary schools in Sierra Leone. In Vietnam, primary schools offer only two-three hours of publicly funded lessons each day after which pupils are expected to pay (ibid). The norm, however, is for teachers to give either individual or group tuition to pupils outside of school. This private tuition culture has amounted to a shadow education system in many countries with very large proportions of pupils involved. It has been noted that the secondary employment activities have continued to promote opportunistic behaviour among the teachers. In Most developing countries this has weakened service delivery in government-funded schools. In most cases the teachers trigger private tutoring exercises by not covering the complete syllabus during normal classes. This shows that teachers in most developing countries teachers are less motivated and this has affected the quality of the education systems.

METHODOLOGY

A desk study was used for the study.

DISCUSSION

TEACHER INCENTIVES IN ZIMBABWE

During the apex of the Zimbabwean economic and political crises in 2008 parents contributed some funds to cushion the teachers' meager salaries. This was in view of the fact that education is an imperative foundation for a child's bright future, parents who had money arranged with teachers to privately teach their children. This was done in a bid to reduce the enormous exodus of qualified teachers to the neighbouring countries. The majority of the parents chipped in to try and revive the deterioration education situation in Zimbabwe. During the 2008/2009 period the system of parent providing incentives was a splendid idea meant to cushion teachers from the hyper-inflationary environment the country was facing during that time thus trying to avoid strikes, which would affect children's learning. Circular No. 5 of 2009 stipulates that 10% of the levies must be channelled towards incentives for teachers. However, a clause in the circular stated that parents and teachers could negotiate and reach a consensus on varying figures which maybe higher than the 10%. The agreement must be reached in a general meeting where +20% of the parents are present and +50% of those present must vote for the figure (Circular No. 5 of 2009). The deliberations of the meeting must be minuted and sent to the District Education Officer for application approval. According to the circular no teacher has the right to collect incentives direct from pupil as it is the mandate of School Development Committees, Heads and Bursars.

EFFECTS OF INCENTIVES

The circumstances highlighted in the introduction revealed that the introduction of the incentives were of much importance. The introduction of the teacher incentives were for a good cause in 2009 and they were met with mixed feelings by the citizens. Mr Dan Moyo, the Provincial Education Director for Bulawayo, indicated that parents were paying teachers incentives in a bid to boost their morale so as to upgrade standards (The Chronicle, 2012). The incentives cushioned the teachers and this led to a rejuvenation of the education sector. The incentives together with the introduction of the foreign currency attracted back the teachers that the sector had lost as a result of brain drain. Although there are still some gaps in staffing numbers the incentives have contributed to the reducing the rates of brain drain. The incentives have provided some motivation to some teachers. The Minister of education sports and culture pointed out that the incentives were a necessary evil.

Incentives have had effects on the children, education sector, parents, other civil servants and the teachers themselves. This is largely because in 2009 the government introduced a multi-currency system and inflation rate was reduced. Despite this the parents continued to pay incentives to teachers because their salaries were still way below the poverty datum line. In point of fact the issue of poor salaries is not only affecting teachers but civil servant in Zimbabwe. Those who are self employed and those in the private sector are in the same predicament. Some parents with school going children are even earning salaries, which are below those earned by teachers. Even if the parents are trying to make ends meet they are expected to contribute towards the incentives. The School Development Associations have been at the forefront of forcing and ensuring that parents pay the incentives. The parents are left with no choice as the situation is tantamount to choosing to pay the incentives or risk having their children denied the right to education.

EFFECTS OF INCENTIVES ON CHILDREN AND PARENTS UNJUST

The incentive are unjust to the children as they segregate against the child who is from a disadvantaged and poverty stricken background, who fails to pay the varying amounts of incentives. As a result the children with parents who cannot afford to pay the incentives have their right to education being violated. Education is an elementary human right and indispensable with all other human rights. Education on promotes an individual's freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012). Failure to access education as a result of barring or inhibitive incentives denies the child all the aforesaid benefits of education. Due to teacher incentives in Zimbabwe, some children in Bulawayo have been denied access to education, therefore denied a powerful tool by which economically and socially children can lift themselves out of poverty. In terms of Section 27 of Statutory Instrument 379 of 1998, no child should be excluded from school on account of levy. The incentive culture has led to the disregarding of such important statutory instruments and the Education Act of Zimbabwe. The issue of incentives has been a hindrance on the achievement of Millennium Development Goal number 2 which aims at achieving universal primary education by 2015. No universal primary education can be achieved when some children are denied their right to education as a result of the incentive issue.

DIVISIVE

The incentives have been blamed for creating divisions within the children. One resident of Bulawayo pointed out that “we still pay teachers incentives because it's a way of helping them fend for their families and be able to teach our children, but then what happens to the poor child, he or she will not learn for that period” (The Chronicle, 2012). The children with parents with the resources to pay incentives have access to education whilst those with parents who do not afford have been disadvantaged through being turned away, kept in school halls, or being forced to do manual work or face the wall while the teacher attends to those who have paid. As a result, education became a preserve for the few from economically stable backgrounds. Thus the incentives have been a divisive tool between the children from the poor and the rich backgrounds. The incentives are harmful to the parents. This is because the varying methods being used to calculate figures for incentives have led to parents being siphoned large sums of money. The parents who were expected to fund teachers were also emerging from an economic quagmire hence find it highly provocative to pay teachers since they are also in the same predicament.

BOGUS PRIVATE COLLEGES

In addition to the low teaching salaries there was shortage of experienced teachers as many left government schools in search of better wages in the private education sector. In addition, a numerous of unregistered and bogus colleges sprouted across Bulawayo. The parents who could afford turned their back on government schools and opted to send their children to private and even unregistered schools and colleges as their children were short changed by teachers due to the influence of incentives. One parent whose child attended class in a municipal recreational hall that has been turned into a school asserted that “we are aware some of these colleges are not registered but at least here the teachers are dedicated” (Banda, 2011). However, it is not certain for how long the unregistered schools and colleges would

survive. In 2011 the government shut down hundreds of such schools, which have been operating without licenses. This shows that the incentives have had a negative impact on children and their parents.

EXTRA LESSONS

Some teachers were no longer applying themselves fully in order to deliberately influence extra lessons. Parents continued to blame teachers for not sufficiently teaching during the term in order to make possible paid extra lessons. The extra lessons were conducted either in schools or privately by the teachers in their homes. The injustice exercised by teachers to both the learners and the curriculum during the term in a bid to pressure parents simply to cover up for their laziness. Frequent complaints were raised by parents condemning teachers of the architecture of holiday lessons so as to gain financially. It has been noted that in most cases during the holiday and extra lessons, the teachers concentrate on topics and concepts they did not cover during school terms. This became a great inconvenience to children and parents who did not afford to pay extra tuition. No one, even the government could control fees charged in each teachers home. There were numerous complaints by parents accusing teachers of masterminding holiday lessons for personal benefit. In some cases primary school teachers were also pointed out for conducting extra lessons for non exam sitting classes. In Bulawayo teachers from schools that include Mpopoma, Milton high, and St Columbus have been accused of abusing the holiday lessons for personal benefit as they were charging between \$10 and \$15 per subject a month for Ordinary Level and Advanced Level respectively (Bulawayo24news, 2011). This shows that the extra lessons are now a burden for the parents. Some students have been abused by teachers during the privately conducted extra lessons.

EFFECTS ON TEACHERS AND PUBLIC SERVICE DIVISIVE

The incentives have caused some divisions within the teachers themselves. Evidence suggests that they favoured those who teach in the low density suburbs than their counterparts in the high density suburbs. Incentives are causing divisions in the teaching fraternity and could likely lead to the demise of the education sector (Ndlovu, 2012). The government, through the Ministry overlooked the fact that levies charged across the schools vary for this reason applying the same percentage accommodates differences across schools. This on its own has proved to be inequitable to teachers creating some elements of divisions. For example, a teacher at a private school gets an incentive six-fold that of a public school teacher and a rural teacher gets nothing at all. This has resulted in most qualified teachers shunning rural schools hence disadvantaging the rural child. Now these incentives are causing disharmony in the teaching sector. The incentives have been blamed for the failure of the January 2012 strike. In this regard, Ms Chikowore pointed out that “right now we are engaging in a strike and I can tell you there are some of us who are not even participating because they feel what they are receiving is okay,” (Dube, 2012). This suffices the fact that the incentives have created some divisions with the teachers.

DEMEANING

Incentives are demeaning the teaching profession. The incentives have also undignified the teachers in the eyes of their pupils. A teacher from one of the Bulawayo schools pointed out that Nowadays being a teacher immediately qualifies you to become the laughing stock

among your pupils. Gone is the respect that used to be given to teachers as students' behaviour is directly influenced by the fact that they literally pay their teachers' salaries through the incentives being paid out by their parents. (Dube, 2012)

This shows that although the teachers are benefitting financially from the incentives this has indirectly contributed to demoralising teachers as they are demeaned by their pupils. The children are no longer giving the teachers the respect they should get due to the incentives. This can also be linked to the fact that in 2011 Bulawayo needed 170 teachers to cover the staffing gaps (Bulawayo24news, 2011). Some teachers left the profession as it is demeaning as a result of vast factors which include the issue of incentives.

CORRUPTION AND CONFLICTS

Some administrators prefer to keep the amounts raised as incentives shrouded in mystery leaving those monies open to misuse through conversion by those at the top. In such situations the incentives have led to corruption in some schools in Bulawayo. In relation to the corruption incidences the incentives have also led to conflicts within schools. There has been several clashes between School Heads and the School Development Committee members over the school levies. Teachers have also gone on strike protesting the nonpayment of incentives and the mismanagement of funds by the school heads. This shows that the incentives have brought more harm than good in many schools as the system have led to corruption which has become a source of conflict between the teachers, heads and the SDCs.

EFFECTS ON OTHER CIVIL SERVANTS

The incentives have led to divisions with the public service, given that only the teachers benefit from these incentives at the expense of other public service employees in other ministries. Other civil servants have reiterated that incentives should be abolished as they had to divisions. One civil servant in Bulawayo pointed out that;

Teachers are behaving like the only civil servants in this country. What about other ministries who doesn't have any direct link to the public. Poor remuneration is affecting all civil servants not teachers only. Where do I get the money to pay the teachers whilst I am a civil servant earning far below the teacher who is complaining whilst he/she is earning better than me. Teachers should be reminded that government is their employer not parents and within the parents there are also civil servants poor than them. They (teachers) are not special. (Bulawayo24news, 2012)

This shows that the incentives have led to some resentment from other civil servants who are not benefiting from the incentives.

CONCLUSIONS

The above problems have affected the education policy in Bulawayo which is enshrined in the Education Act of 1987, amended in 2008. Access to education is a fundamental human right. The incentives were a noble idea as a way of fire fighting in 2009. The incentives have contributed towards the rejuvenation of the education sector. The incentives contributed towards reducing the brain drain in the education sector at the same time the incentives have proved to be discriminatory to those who are from disadvantaged families. Lack of proper accountability systems followed has led to cases of embezzlement of funds in most schools.

The incentives have also caused some divisions within the teachers themselves and this has demeaned the education sector. All this has affected the children in a bid to access education which is their fundamental right.

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