

**ENHANCING QUALITY IN PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION
“Pay the Teacher extra in Order to Pass.” The Provision of Incentives
in Secondary Schools Versus the Enhancement of Quality of
Education in Zimbabwe.**

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Abstract

The Zimbabwean education system has deteriorated gradually over the past years leading to the introduction of incentives in the school system around 2009. These incentives were meant to be a strategy of retention of staff in schools after the high exodus for greener pastures to neighbouring countries of teachers, especially those in the Science and Maths departments. The focus of this paper is to explore whether this system of incentives has been effective in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Defining incentives is a complex process, not to mention implementing them, therefore it is the researcher's intention to focus on the incentives system and how it has been implemented in our schools, in light of the fact that schools are graded differently; former group A, mission, rural day, urban day and so on. Has the system been equal to all teachers or equal to some? How about school heads and education administrators? This was a desktop as well as qualitative study, using questionnaires and interviews to gather data.

Key words: Incentives, Staff Retention, Quality Education, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The status of teachers in Zimbabwe and across the continent has declined over the last decades. Teachers have reached the point of being “deprofessionalised” by their working conditions versus their remuneration. Though it is a mass occupation, teaching is challenging and needs hard work from teachers themselves so that they meet their teaching as well as students’ learning goals. Bennell (2004, 12) notes that teaching has become ‘employment of the last resort’ among university graduates and secondary school leavers in many countries. Teachers play a central role not only in ensuring a good quality education system but also in the realisation of the broader national agenda of human capital development (Gwaradzimba & Shumba, 2010).

Teachers nurture everyone to become who they are but they are the most disgruntled and are used as examples of people who are educated but have no money in society. Their financial remuneration is too low to the point that they cannot uplift themselves socially. Their social standing is sometimes below those people who are not academically endowed. Such had become the situation in the Zimbabwean education system.

The 2008 situation in Zimbabwe worsened the position of the teacher. The Zimbabwean teacher was not spared from the devaluation of the dollar, food shortages and queues, poor medical facilities and low educational standards among other situations. According to Sinyolo (2009), the Zimbabwean education system was not immune to the political situation and harsh socio-economic environment. "Our once revered education system is now a shadow of its former self... many schools and institutions of higher learning have not been operating normally for more than a year now...thereby depriving millions of students their right to quality education" (Sinyolo 12/01/09, online).

The Time magazine (2008) reported that in the mid 1990s there was a national 'O' level pass rate of 72% yet in 2007 it crashed down to 11% culminating in the cancellation of the school year in 2008. UNICEF records show that 94% of rural schools closed yet they serve the majority of the population. Overall, the school attendance rate declined from 80% to 20%. Taking a look into the Education Act, the Statutory, Instrument 87 of 1992 made provisions for school Development Committees and School Development Associations, giving them powers to intervene and take control of situations in schools. Therefore parents had no option except to intervene in the education system and help the government who had failed to pay their teachers well. This then saw the introduction of incentives in the education system, to motivate and retain teachers.

Incentives have been defined as an additional payment made to employees as a means of increasing production (www.oxforddictionaries.com). The term is derived from the Latin *incentivum*, meaning something that sets the tune or incites. Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (2004) define incentives as motivating factors to employees which direct their performance towards organizational goals. They are a motivating influence stimulus and in the Zimbabwean education system these incentives were paid by parents not by the teachers' employer. They came in different forms in the school system, either in cash or kind.

With the intervention by SDCs and SDAs, through the introduction of incentives in schools, learning only "resumed" in urban areas and mission schools where teachers' salaries were covered in US dollars by parents, creating a widening gap between rural and urban teachers. Even in urban areas, not all teachers were

paid by the parents so some schools remained dysfunctional. Chagonda (2010) notes that in circular minutes 10/2009 the Ministry of Education proposed that 10% school levies could be appropriated as teacher incentives and 5% for non teaching staff upon endorsement by the SDCs and SDAs. However, the payment of the incentives at particular schools depended on the ability of the school to pay, since the amounts to be paid would be determined by the amount of levies paid by pupils at that school.

Motivation Theory

The motivation theory notes that people are pulled toward behaviors that offer positive incentives and pushed away from behaviors associated with negative incentives. According to Stoner et al (2004) motivation is a human psychological characteristic that contributes to a person's degree of commitment. It includes factors that cause, channel and sustain human behavior in a particular committed direction. In other words, differences in behavior from one person to another or from one situation to another can be traced to the incentives available and the value a person places on those incentives at the time. (Bernstein, 2011) Motivation is the force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. Motivating then becomes the management process of influencing people's behavior based on "what makes them tick" In this study, money is considered as a motivating factor.

The study follows Maslow's theory of motivation. According to this theory, the individual strives to seek a higher need when lower needs are fulfilled. Once a lower-level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a source of motivation. Needs are motivators only when they are unsatisfied.

Maslow talks about the physiological needs which are first order needs and include the most basic needs for humans to survive, such as air, water and food. In the second level, safety needs exist which include personal security, health, well-being and safety against accidents. In the third level are belonging needs where people need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. It is about relationships, families and friendship. Organizations fulfill this need for people. In the fourth level are self-esteem needs where people look to be respected and to have self-respect. Achievement needs, respect of others are in this level. In the top-level, self-actualization needs exist. This level of need pertains to realising the person's full potential.

Teachers, most of them with postgraduate qualifications, felt their self esteem needs lowered due to failure by the government to meet their physiological and safety needs. Their lower needs were not met and there was need to motivate them. With such high level of education their remuneration did not match therefore motivation levels declined.

Incentive theories proposed that behavior is motivated by the “pull” of external goals, such as rewards, money, or recognition and a particular goal, such as a promotion at work, can serve as an external incentive that helps activate particular behaviors.” (Hockenbury&Hockenbury, 2003). Franzoi (2011) notes that the value of an incentive can change over time and in different situations and in the Zimbabwean education system, this scenario prevailed. During 2008, incentives came in all forms, (money, farm produce, coupons,) anything that could pull the teacher back into the classroom for the future of Zimbabwean children. The focus, in the provision of incentives then was that the pupils get the best from the teachers’ knowledge.

Administering of incentives in schools

Incentives were administered differently depending on the school. Some schools managed to incentivize their teachers highly, giving them as much as \$300 per month, while other teachers got as less as \$10 per term. This would depend on how “rich” the school would be. The richness of the school depended on how much they set as levies. The government only set uniform standards in schools for tuition fees not levies. Naturally teachers in rural schools and even those disadvantaged urban schools did not benefit from the system as their levies were low, or pupils failed to pay. The moneys (incentives) were either given in cash or deposited in bank accounts. Some school administrators devised a system where incentives were paid on the normal pay day, therefore allowing the teachers to budget properly. In some schools, parents brought goods in kind, items such as maize, fruits, fowls and livestock. The teachers would then either sell them or maintain as is.

Implications on educational quality

With the introduction of incentives in the education system, many pupils in schools who paid the teacher a little extra performed very well. Incentivised teachers put in all their best effort in their work, because they were motivated by the extra money. Their status had been uplifted in society, so they worked to uplift that of children also. In a study carried out in Midlands Schools in 2013, it was noted that the average pass rate rose significantly. In 2014 however, even after the banning of incentives during the first term, the pass rate at the end of the year was still significant. This might be because the generation that sat for examinations that year had started secondary education during the incentive period and had been groomed properly. They were the “incentive generation” (emphasis mine). They were not a lost generation. On being asked if they had continued paying incentives in kind after the Minister of Education had banned them, most school authorities remained evasive.

With the introduction of incentives, most teachers refused to accept promotions to District/Provincial offices and preferred to remain at schools which were more beneficial, financially. This stifled growth within the education system as well as lowered self actualization needs of teachers.

Banning of incentives

Even though incentives were a good move in as far as retaining and motivating teachers was concerned, they created serious divisions within the parent ministry. This was because the government had set a percentage rate for the payment of incentives but had not rationalized the levies payment in schools. There was a lot of maladministration within the system of incentives. Inside fighting within the ministry became the order of the day. As alluded to by Makanga and Mutsagondo (2014), instead of being a cure for the financial disease among teachers, incentives became a curse. The Herald (23/09/11) reported that Teachers Unions were against the payment of incentives from the start but vowed for long term solutions for improving salaries and working conditions. In a meeting between the then Minister of Education David Coltart and Provincial Education Directors as well as school Development Committees and Teachers' Unions, a resolution was passed to phase out incentives as they were increasingly becoming divisive.

In his study, on remuneration in schools, Mawere (2012) recommended that, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture should seriously consider revising the issue of teacher incentives.

In fact if the issue of teacher incentive is to continue or legislated as a reform in the way teachers are compensated, then the justification of legislating teacher incentives could bare the government's agenda of remunerating 'fairly' and 'equally' all teachers in the country vis a vis economic priorities and political exigencies. This is because if the government is to be 'fair' and 'just', it should make sure that all teachers in both private and public education get the same amount of monetary incentive and other working conditions. Otherwise, the government should take full responsibility to give all its workers working conditions and wages that correspond their qualifications and the work they do. Such a measure is most likely to have a positive impact on the part of all education stakeholders as high salaries will definitely boost their morale and enable them to live a life with dignity.

Mawere further notes that as early as 2010 the issue of incentives had already begun having its ugly head with many media and public pronouncements

proclaiming it as unfair and unsustainable. Incentives were paid in a small proportion of schools especially in urban areas where parents could afford to incentivize the teachers.

Teachers and heads of schools clashed over the payment criteria. Some school heads would deny payment to teachers for absenteeism or misconduct of any form, thus personal issues affected payment. Again, some teachers would get more than others while teaching at the same school, depending on their relationship with the school administration.

In the last term of 2010, the issue of incentives brought out a lot of confusion among stakeholders. *Newsday* (5/09/10) reported on confusion over incentives just a day before schools opened, where Bulawayo Provincial Education Director Dan Moyo had lashed out at teachers on the issue of incentives saying it's a form of corruption. "The issue of incentives has greatly corrupted our education system and it should be stopped immediately." Though the critical role of incentives was acknowledged, the system was doing more harm than good. Minister Dokora, quoted in the *Herald* (26/04/14) said "there is no justification for their payment. Their payment is not consistent with the educational values they are meant to be servicing". There was no equity in the payment of incentives. The proportion among rural and urban schools was different. Parents paid so that their children would not be victimized. Therefore it had become a form of extortion.

Incentives also stifled promotion as teachers preferred schools with incentives than jobs at district offices. SDC/SDAs connived with school heads and abused funds. They paid themselves for minor things like meetings held or unexplained jobs done at schools. The issue of incentives compromised the education system greatly in that students were regarded as customers, not normal ordinary children. Some schools were paying more than the stipulated 10%, which left schools with little capital to work on projects. Maposa (2013) notes that the incentivisation system attended to the symptoms, but left the cause(s) getting more and more malignant.

Therefore to restore sanity and equality within the education system, incentives had to be banned. All forms of incentives were thus abolished by the government as pronounced by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education circular Number 6 of 2014.

Conclusion

It should be realized that salaries are not in any way the only motivating factor in schools but they enhance life as money is needed for the daily upkeep of the human

being. People need food, accommodation, transport and other personal needs. If reasonably paid they become motivated and their morale is boosted. The teaching conditions in Zimbabwe in the 21st century had become and are still unbearable, to the extent that teachers moved and are still moving for greener pastures. The responsible authorities thought of incentivizing the teachers to reduce teacher attrition. Though this was a good move, it had its negative aspects until incentives were banned in 2014 due to differences of management skills as well as views amongst the stakeholders in the school system.

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