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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF THE POLICY OF TEACHER INCENTIVES IN ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF GOMADODA CLUSTER IN NKAYI DISTRICT

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Abstract

It is a universal fact that salaries of teachers in most countries are relatively lower than those of other professionals with similar qualifications in other sectors (Watson, 2008). This is despite the fact that Ministries of Education in most countries generally receive the largest slice of the national budget (Bowels, 2012). The reasons put forward for this irony is that teachers constitute a very large number of employees and when they share the budget allocated to their sector, it leaves them with very low salaries (Moyo, 2012). Zimbabwe is no exception to this problem. Since independence, teachers have engaged in labour wars with their employer in the form of strikes, sit-ins, stay-aways or demonstrations in an attempt to force their employer to increase their salaries (Zhou, 2011). However, during the period 2007 – 2008, Zimbabwe experienced an unprecedented economic meltdown that rendered teachers' salaries almost valueless (Chinamasa, 2009). As a result, absenteeism due to what the teacher trade unions termed 'incapacitation' (which implied that teachers had no capacity to go to their places of work because they had no money) became the order of the day (Chikowore, 2009). There was an exodus of teachers to neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures. Those who remained, exhibited a laissez-faire attitude, engaged in unending strikes and engaged in personal businesses like selling airtime cards, second-hand clothes, 'burning money' and offering private lessons in order to survive. In order to motivate teachers to teach their children, concerned parents in some schools introduced incentives to motivate the teachers (Ndebele, 2010). The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture legalised the teacher incentives through a policy circular dated 4 July 2009. Ever since, teacher incentives are part of the Zimbabwean school system. This article draws on a quantitative enquiry on the impact of the teacher incentives in the school system. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population included all teachers in Gomadoda Cluster which has a teacher population of 100 teachers. The sample consisted of 30 respondents who were made up of 18 females and 12 males. All information was collected through a questionnaire which had both close-ended and open-ended questions. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret data. The study revealed that the teachers were frustrated by the way the incentives were paid out to them. It also revealed that teachers viewed the policy on incentives positively but were against the implementation modalities. The study recommends that there should be transparency in the schools regarding the implementation of the policy.

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Introduction

Parents, through their School Development Committees and Associations introduced incentives for teachers to prevent schools from closing to ensure that those teachers who remained in the schools continued teaching their (parents') children (Dube and Moyo, 2009). Initially, the system was introduced in the former group A and private schools and it seemed to bear positive fruits. Inevitably, government schools had to follow suite (Chivende, 2009). This forced the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture to come up with a policy pronouncement in support of the incentives phenomenon in the form of a Ministerial statement that stipulated that ten (10%) percent of levies payable per school could be used to pay teachers an incentive after a general consensus between parents and the school authorities (Moyo, 2012). Although the ministerial statement mandated school administrators to implement the system, some schools in the country were reluctant to implement the system due to lack of consensus and clarity about the policy (Chikowore, 2009). It should be highlighted that prior to the pronouncement by the Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, some schools had already started giving teachers incentives in the form of money and other non-monetary incentives (Mlilo, 2009). Eventually, most schools in the country finally adopted the incentive system although in a variety of interpretations. The incentives varied from school to school which brought about a lot of debate about the system at local as well as at national levels. It is on account of this information that this study set out to explore the impact of the incentives policy in the school system.

Literature Review

According to Dhlomo (2010), the objective of incentives is to motivate workers with the hope of improving their performance thereby leading to improved quality of the product produced by workers. In the case of teachers, it means that incentives help to motivate teachers so that pupils' performance is enhanced. The major reason for introducing teacher incentives in Zimbabwe therefore, was to motivate a largely apathetic teacher force due to poor remuneration (Mpofu, 2009). According to Griffin (2008), motivation refers to individual influences with regards to priorities, attitudes and aspects of lifestyle that we may seek to fulfil in our work. Motivation, therefore, directs our energies and behaviour towards the attainment of organisational goals (Watson, 2008).

According to Smit and Cronje (2007), the two major proponents of the motivational theory were Maslow and Herzberg. Maslow's theory of motivation was based on two important assumptions (Smit and Cronje, 2007). Firstly, it assumes that people always want more and their needs depend on what they already possess. A need that has already been satisfied is no longer a motivator. Only unsatisfied needs can influence behaviour. Secondly, people's needs are arranged in order of importance or in a hierarchy (Robbins, 2004). When one need has been partially satisfied, the next one manifests itself for it to be satisfied.

On the other hand, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory culminated from a study he undertook in the 1950s and is based on two main factors (Stoner and Freeman, 2005). All those factors that give rise to job satisfaction were grouped into one category; which he termed 'hygiene factors'. Hygiene factors are preventative measures whose existence prevent dissatisfaction but will not lead to satisfaction. The theory further argues that hygiene factors cannot motivate staff but job content factors do motivate staff and these were termed 'motivators'. The theory contends that removing dissatisfying characteristics from a job does not necessarily make the job satisfying (Peterson, 2009). This probably implies that even after the introduction of teacher incentives, some teachers may still remain dissatisfied since motivation itself is a multi-faceted phenomenon.

There is not much in the literature about the role of money as a motivator and motivation theorists seem to have neglected the issue on its own as a motivator. According to Maslow's Theory, lower order needs can be satisfied by money since it is used to cover most of an individual's basic needs (Miskel, 2002). Herzberg's hygiene factors can be satisfied by money although the same theory argues that motivators cannot be satisfied by money (Watson, 2008). Other theories (for example, expectancy theory, reinforcement theory), do not explicitly point out money as a motivator. However, they implicitly concur that money can satisfy a variety of needs and depending on how employees perceive it and how it is paid, money can be used to reinforce positive behaviour, attitudes and job satisfaction (Watson, 2004). Money derives its unique power as a motivator from the fact that its symbolising power is not confined to the market value. Money can symbolise almost every other value that people are motivated to pursue (Pearce and Robinson, 2007).

While money plays a role in motivation, a properly crafted reward or incentive system should also satisfy other requirements (Griffin, 2008). In Zimbabwe, monetary incentives were introduced in order to lure teachers back into

the classroom. The Secretary's Circular Minute No. 5 of 2009 which legalised the incentive system stipulated that incentives had to constitute ten percent (10%) of the levies that schools collected from pupils (Duke and Moyo, 2009). The Ministerial statement further stated that the amount of levies payable at each school should be determined by general consensus between parents and school authorities (Chiromo, 2010). The policy procurement did not stipulate how the incentives were to be administered, thereby, leaving the implementation of the incentive system at the discretion of school heads and School Development Committees (SDCs) or School Development Associations (SDAs), (Chikowore 2009). It was not indicated how the 10% should be apportioned among different staff categories, hence different schools could come up with different incentive structures which either satisfied or dissatisfied the teachers (Dube and Moyo, 2009). The attractiveness of the incentives was therefore, going to be determined by the school's ability to raise adequate levies and the ability of parents and guardians to pay.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of teacher incentives in schools is a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Its introduction was received with mixed feelings by various stakeholders, particularly teachers who in the majority of cases felt prejudiced and short-changed. This study seeks to specifically assess the impact of the policy of teacher incentives in the Zimbabwean schools.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to investigate the implementation modalities of the policy of teacher incentives in the Zimbabwean schools so as to highlight both the positive and negative effects of the system. The study also sought to come up with suggestions for the improvements of the system.

Research Questions

1. How are schools implementing the teacher incentive system?
2. What are teachers' attitudes towards the introduction of teacher incentives?
3. Was the introduction of teacher incentives a panacea to low teacher morale?
4. What improvements can be effected on the current teacher incentive system?

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stemmed from the fact that it sought to expose the implementation modalities of the policy of teacher incentives. A clear understanding of teachers' perceptions towards the policy will ensure it is implemented in a way that is acceptable and motivational to teachers, thereby impacting positively on teacher performance. It was also hoped that education authorities and the government of Zimbabwe would use the findings to improve the operational modalities of the teacher incentives policy. It was also envisaged that focus on the pros and cons of the system would foster stakeholder and community ownership and support of the system which would most likely lead to enhanced teacher motivation, improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and ultimately an increase in students pass rates.

Limitations of the Study

In view of the small size of the sample and sub-samples used, the findings of this study, therefore, will have limited generalisability. It has to be pointed out that perceptions about an issue are essentially subjective and cannot be measured accurately. Moreover, since feelings may vary in intensity, what may be interpreted positively by one individual may be interpreted differently by another. In other words, attitudes have no universally recognised and accepted scales of measurement and measures used in this study cannot be considered to be very accurate.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was confined to one cluster in Nkayi District in Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe. A cluster in Zimbabwe is the smallest educational structure grouping schools geographically located closely to each other for purposes of assisting each other on educational matters. The respondents were teachers. Heads of schools, SDC/SDA members and parents were outside the purview of this study. The study was concerned with the way how schools implement the policy on teacher incentives as promulgated by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture in 2009.

Research Methodology

The study employed the quantitative methodology. Quantitative methodology was chosen for its ability to enable this study's findings to be generalised to other clusters (Blumberg, 2008). The quantitative methodology was also

found useful in this study because it enabled the researcher to investigate some teachers' perceptions on the policy of incentives. The study settled for the survey research design. The population comprised of 100 teachers from the cluster. The simple random sampling was used to come up with a sample of 30 teachers because it permitted every teacher to have an equal chance of participating in the study (Kumar, 2008). The researcher used a questionnaire which largely had close-ended questions and two open-ended questions. Close-ended questions enabled the researcher to collect pre-determined respondents' opinions regarding the studied phenomena (Anderson, 2011). The researcher was able to get the actual situation on the ground regarding the implementation of the teacher incentives policy in the cluster from the respondents' open-ended responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered by means of a questionnaire which was largely made up of close-ended questions and few open-ended questions. The questionnaire was chosen as Lawrence (2005) observes because it has the ability to reach many respondents who live at widely dispersed addresses and preserves anonymity which encourages greater honesty. However, Anderson (2011) argues that a questionnaire generally has a low response rate and is inflexible in that it does not allow ideas or comments to be explored in-depth and many questions may remain unanswered. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the schools where the respondents worked. The same method was used to collect the completed questionnaires. Data generated through the questionnaire produced descriptive statistics around the variables under study. These statistics were computed and inferential implications from them derived.

Findings and Discussion

The study set out to explore the implementation modalities of the policy of teacher incentives in Zimbabwean schools. This section is presented in two parts, namely, presentation of data and discussion.

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Composition of sample by gender (N = 30)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	47
Female	16	53
Total	30	100

Table 1 above shows the distribution of respondents by sex. It shows that the female teachers were slightly more than the male teachers in the sample. The datum was considered statistically significant to the extent that it confirmed the hypothesis that there are more female teachers in the education system than the males.

Table 2: Composition of respondents by approximate age (N = 30)

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30	10	33
31 – 40	15	50
41 – 50	5	17
50 and above	0	0
Total	30	100

From table 2 above, 33% of the respondents were from the below 30 years age group, 50% were from the 31 – 40 years age group, while 17% belonged to the 41 – 50 years age group. None fell within the 50 years and above age group. This information reveals that 83% of the respondents were below 40 years of age. These are relatively young teachers who still have quite a number of years in service and require a lot of efforts by the government to motivate them to remain in the schools.

Table 3: Composition of respondents by professional qualifications (N = 30)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate in Education	3	10
Diploma in Education	25	83
Graduate Diploma in Education	0	0
Bachelor of Education	2	7
Total	30	100

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents were in possession of the Diploma in Education qualification (83%) a few held the Certificate in Education (10%) and the Bachelor of Education degree (7%) qualifications respectively. None were in possession of a Graduate Diploma in Education qualifications. As Watson (2008) argued, both academic and professional qualifications contribute towards the way teachers value themselves vis-à-vis how the education system views them.

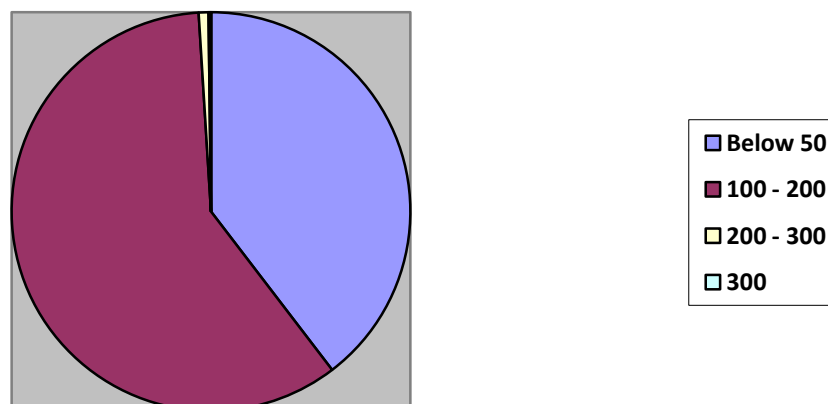
Figure 1: Composition of teachers by incentives received per term in US\$ (N = 30)

Figure 1 above shows that 40% of the respondents said they were receiving between \$200 and \$300 per term, 30% indicated that they were receiving between \$100 and \$200 dollars per term, 20% said they were receiving below \$50 per term and a paltry 10% said they were receiving about \$300 per term. The information shows that there are varying amounts of incentives that teachers holding similar qualifications are receiving from their schools.

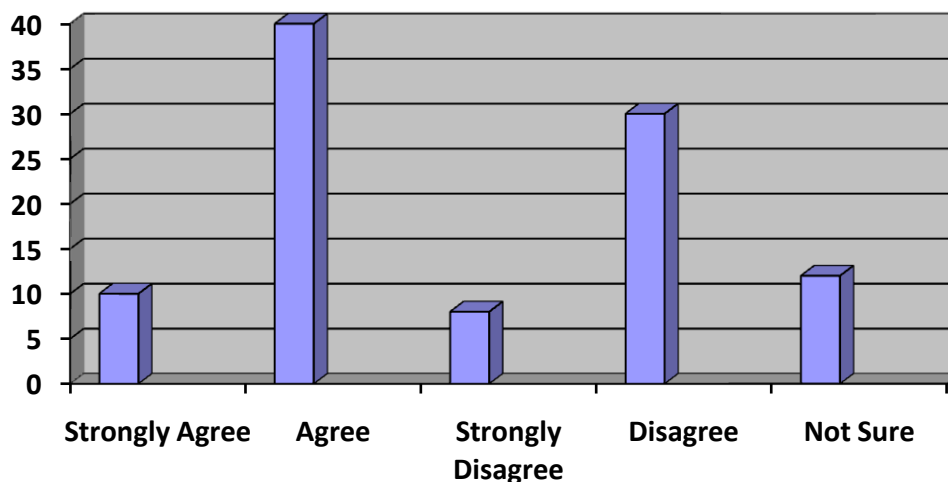
Table 4: Distribution of teachers by whether payments were made on time as per agreement (N = 30)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Always	3	10
Sometimes	8	27
Often	7	23
Never	12	40
Total	30	100

Table 4 above shows that only 10% of the respondents indicated that they were assured of receiving their incentives as per agreement while 23% reported that they often got their incentives on time. In the majority of cases (40%), the

teachers stated that they never received their incentives as per agreement. A further 27% reported that they sometimes got paid while at other times they did not get their incentives.

Figure 2: Composition of respondents by perceptions on incentives (N = 30)



When teachers were asked to indicate how they felt about the introduction of teacher incentives, the responses were quite varied as depicted by figure 2 above. While the majority (50%), agreed with the idea, an equally high proportion (30%) disagreed with the introduction of teacher incentives. A further 8% indicated that they strongly disagreed. A further 12% of the teachers appeared not sure about their feelings towards the introduction of incentives.

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions which bolstered data from the close-ended questions. The first question wanted to find out from the teachers what they thought were the reasons that led to low incentives and to delays on paying incentives. The majority of respondents thought it was because most of the parents were poor and levies were low. They also thought that the administration was not prioritising their incentives.

The second question sought to find out from the respondents on whether incentives influenced their continued stay at their current schools. The overwhelming majority of the respondents said that they were planning to transfer to urban schools or boarding schools where teachers received better incentives. A few indicated that they wanted to transfer to neighbouring schools that paid better incentives and on time.

Discussion

Information from the study reveal that payments of incentives varied in terms of amounts given to teachers from school to school, even when the levies charged by the different schools were the same. This conform the observation by Chiromo (2010) who argued that the policy pronouncement did not stipulate how the incentives were to be administered, thereby leaving the implementation of the policy at the discretion of school heads and SDCs/SDAs.

Findings also reveal that most teachers received their incentives long after agreed dates of payment. The majority of the respondents indicated that they could not plan for the incentives as they were not sure to receive them. This left teachers disgruntled and demotivated, thereby negating the purpose of introducing incentives, which as Dhlomo (2010) states is to motivate workers in order to improve their performance.

The study also shows that most of the respondents indicated that the introduction of teacher incentives was a noble idea. This tallies with observations made by Pearce and Robinson (2007) who found that managers should bear in mind that rewards can only motivate if workers perceive them as to be fair and noble.

Findings also show that there was no transparency in the way how funds earmarked for teacher incentives were administered. Most of the respondents suspected that their heads were misappropriating these funds and channelling them to other areas.

Findings also indicated that most of the teachers in the study were contemplating to transfer to schools which offered higher amounts of incentives than their current schools. The situation is corroborated by Peace and Robinson (2007) who posit that if incentives are perceived wrongly by the beneficiaries, this might result in negative reinforcement which will lead to unintended or undesirable behaviour.

Conclusions

Given the background of the above findings, the researcher makes the following conclusions:

- Most of the teachers welcomed the policy of teacher incentives. However, it is the implementation that creates disgruntlement among the teachers.
- There is no universal formula adhered to by schools when paying incentives.
- Most schools delay paying teachers their incentives causing friction amongst staff members.
- Schools whose parents and guardians were poor had no capacity to pay teachers reasonable incentives.
- Some school authorities were misappropriating funds earmarked for teachers' incentives for other purposes.
- Incentives had resulted in most teachers with low incentives wanting to transfer to schools that pay higher incentives.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make some recommendations.

- The government should review the policy of teacher incentives and come up with a clear legal framework or guidelines to stipulate a uniform system to administer and implement the incentives policy.
- Schools should have committees made up of stakeholders that would oversee the payment of incentives to teachers.
- Heads of schools and SDCs and SDAs should be more transparent in administering funds earmarked for incentives to reduce suspicions of misappropriation.
- Where parents have no capacity to pay high levies, schools should be allowed to fund-raise for incentives.
- The government should come up with an equalisation fund to close the gap between schools that pay higher and lower incentives particularly in the rural areas.
- As a long term solution, the government should increase teachers' salaries to a level where there would be no need for teacher incentives.

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