A comparative study of motivational levels for rural and urban teachers in Masvingo district, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the differences in motivational levels of urban and rural school teachers in Zimbabwe. The purpose of the study was to identify, document and provide strategies that minimize the differences in levels of job satisfaction and motivation between teachers who are based in rural areas and those who are based in urban centres. A descriptive survey design was employed to carry out the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. The findings indicated that there were major disparities in respect of teacher motivation in rural and urban areas. This is basically because of poor working conditions, low salaries, limited opportunities for promotion and growth and poor management systems exhibited in rural areas. Urban schools in Zimbabwe are better equipped and teachers get an additional allowance from School Development Committees (SDC) to augment their salaries from government. Urban school teachers also enjoy favorable promotional and growth opportunities because of their proximity to centres of power and University education. The study recommended that the government should improve working conditions for rural school teachers, provide opportunities for growth and train and develop heads of schools to equip them with modern management skills and techniques that are based on employee motivation.

Key words: Motivation, teachers, rural, urban.

INTRODUCTION

“The teacher has to have the energy of the hottest volcano, the memory of an elephant, and the diplomacy of an ambassador” (Mathews, 1988: 47). This shows that teacher motivation is a very critical antecedent to organisational effectiveness and efficiency hence it should be accorded the respect it deserves to both primary and secondary school teachers, urban and rural school teachers and private and public school teachers.

Motivation is an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behaviour, (Rosenfeld and Wilson, 1999). Motivation has also been described as an internal energy force that determines all aspects of our behaviour; it also impacts on how we think, feel and interact with others (Deci and Ryan, 1985). In teaching, high motivation is widely accepted as an essential prerequisite in getting teachers to fulfil their potential. However, given its inherently abstract nature, it is a force that is often difficult to exploit fully.

A comparison of teacher motivation between rural teachers and urban teachers need to be made in light of the respective benefits that accrue as a result of the geographical locations of the workplaces of the teachers. For instance, urban teachers do have more extrinsic motivators whilst their rural counterparts have more of intrinsic motivators (Domasi, 2000). Teacher motivation in various countries has been marred by differences owing to
the different work station teachers operate in. The schooling system throughout the world is not homogenous. Schools are run and owned by different organisations and are located in different geographic locations. Some schools are owned by governments or local bodies and/or religious organisations. Different types of schools cater for a widely different clientele. In sub-Saharan Africa Zimbabwe included, there are dual education systems which date back to the colonial period. Urban school teachers, particularly those catering to the upper end of the market, are usually much better motivated than their colleagues in rural schools (Sumra, 2001).

The differences are a result of higher pay, better working and living conditions, and more effective management. Urban schools are diverse with respect to size, fees and client groups which make them offer different working conditions to those offered by their rural counterparts. These differences account for the extrinsic motivators which undoubtedly have a significant effect in improving the performance of the teachers. Extrinsic motivation refers to the motivational factors external to the individual and unrelated to the task they are performing or in other words extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from an external as opposed to an internal source, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Job dissatisfaction seems to center on extrinsic factors such as salary, fringe benefits and working conditions (Barrett, 2004). This therefore explains why teachers in urban areas appear to be more motivated than their rural counterparts.

Rural teachers seem to be high on intrinsic motivation than their urban counterparts. Intrinsic motivation comes from within, is fully self-determined and characterised by interest in, and enjoyment derived from, teaching experience. Swai et al. (2004) revealed that teachers in rural areas enjoyed internal satisfaction from doing their job. A 2005 Tanzanian study by Bennel and Mukyanuzi revealed that urban school teachers indicated that if given an opportunity they would not choose to be teachers again in their lives. Whereas barely one-third of urban primary school teachers said they would make the same career choice again, over 80 percent of the rural teachers said they would. Teachers in rural areas appear to be interested in staying in the field probably because of the high status associated with the job in the rural areas. This is confirmed by Barrett who argues that rural teachers especially during the 1970s ‘used to be revered as special, enjoying gifts from peasants excited at seeing their children read’ (Barrett, 2003, p.mm).

Teacher motivation is critical as it helps in ensuring the success of learners. While the relationship between teacher motivation and student achievement has not yet been clearly established, the correlation between teacher motivation and student self-esteem has been shown by Peck et al. (1977). “Teachers with strong positive attitudes about teaching had students whose self-esteem was high. Students seem to recognize the effectiveness of teachers who are satisfied with their teaching performance.” The overall low level of motivation for rural teachers as compared with their urban counterparts is therefore clearly shown by the depressed pass rates in rural areas.

Statement of the problem

The study explores the key determinants of teacher motivation in urban and rural schools in Zimbabwe. Teachers in rural and urban areas operate under extreme different conditions of service, management systems, salaries and other benefits. There has been an observable movement or desire to move by rural school teachers to urban centres throughout the country. There have been reports in the local media and union reports indicating that teachers who work in rural schools lobby for rural allowance or hardship allowance to augment government salaries and also to compensate them for working under extreme inhabitable environments. This shows that there are motivational challenges in respect of teachers operating in rural Zimbabwe. What remains unclear is whether teachers in urban centres also experience the same motivational and job satisfaction problems. The study therefore aims to compare motivational levels for rural and urban teachers in Masvingo district of Zimbabwe.

Study objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To identify the main reasons for differences in teacher motivation in rural and urban areas.
- To establish the extent to which poor motivation and incentives affect teacher performance and the overall effectiveness of education systems.
- To suggest strategies of ensuring that teachers are adequately motivated.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Hoy and Miskel (1991) motivation is a combination of factors that start and maintain work-related behaviours towards the achievement of personal and organizational goals. Farrant (1990) define teachers' motivation as their state of being influenced by such factors, not as the factors themselves. Personal goals are also an important issue to motivate staff. Teachers would be described as being well-motivated if they are striving for personal goals that correspond closely to the official goals of the school and the ideals of the profession. Poor motivation could imply either that teachers make little effort or that they intentionally focus their effort on goals not useful for the school (Farrant, 1990; Hoy and Miskel, 1991; Nyanga, 2012). According to Johnson (1986), measures developed to boost teacher motivation are based
on four theories of motivation and productivity which are the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Vroom's expectancy, Adam's equity and Hertzberg's job enrichment theories. Expectancy theory is where individuals are more likely to strive in their work if there is an anticipated reward that they value, such as a bonus or a promotion, than if there is none. In equity theory individuals are dissatisfied if they are not justly compensated for their efforts and accomplishments. Job enrichment theory involves workers who are more productive when their work is varied and challenging. Teachers in urban and rural areas’ levels of motivation may differ if there are discrepancies in their expectancy, equity and job enrichment levels.

There are two types of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is motivation that comes from within a person whereas extrinsic motivation is determined mainly by the level and type of external rewards that are available. Although ‘extrinsic incentives’ (in particular higher pay and a decent working environment) tend to attract the most attention, attempts to improve the substance of teachers’ work, such as improvement of teaching materials or in-service training, can also be significant incentives (Farrant, 1990; Russel and Bernadin, 1996, Adelabu 2004, Tripathi 2004). The extrinsic type of motivation is the one which mostly differ depending on some external factors such as place of work, economic status of the community one is working in and the political and social environment. Teachers in rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe operate in different environments which provide entirely different motivational conditions and environments (Newsday, 2011).

Obanya (1999)'s research exploring teacher motivational issues in developing countries shows that teachers in rural areas are poorly motivated and are dissatisfied with their living and working conditions. The key reasons for this are low wages when compared to their urban counterparts, low status in the society, limited promotion opportunities for teachers, lack of career advancement opportunities, high teacher-pupil ratio, poor work environment, inadequate fringe benefits and irregular payment of teacher salaries (Blasé et al., 1994; Obanya, 1999; Nyanga et al, 2011, Gerber et al 2000). These antecedents are mainly responsible for low teacher morale and poses threats of attracting and retaining quality personnel into the teaching profession especially in rural areas. While it is true that all teachers are affected by the above raised factors, the degree, magnitude and density of the effect differs with the location and ownership of the work station (Nyanga et al., 2011; Farrant, 1990; Hoy and Miskel, 1991). Teachers in urban areas enjoy better working conditions, incentives and economic opportunities and privileges than their rural area based counterparts. This has always been the case since time immemorial. In a study carried out by Obanya (1999) in Nigeria, prior to independence, teaching was considered by almost all sections of society as a highly respected profession. Teachers irrespective of area of operation played key leadership roles in society and acted as role models. However, after Independence, when the demand for educated labour grew rapidly, many teachers left the rural areas to take up jobs elsewhere in the public and private schools or urban areas in general. According to Obanya (1999), this marked the beginning of the rural teacher motivation crisis in Nigeria, as the public began to look down on those teachers who remained in the classroom in rural areas as second-string teachers. The Nigerian scenario was equated to the Zimbabwean one by Nyanga (2012) who observed that the teaching profession has been relegated to the background and that teaching is no longer accorded the respect it deserves especially in rural areas.

In another research in Nigeria Adelabu (2005) observed that like all other sectors teacher motivation depends on various factors. He classifies these factors according to three main categories, namely job context, job content, and reward system. On Job context he described rural schools in Nigeria as a collection of dilapidated buildings, many without toilets and other basic facilities. The schools are staffed by tired and frustrated teachers and attended by poorly fed, disenchanted pupils. This environment does not engender high job morale. To make the situation worse teachers particularly in rural areas are seriously overworked. In Zimbabwe a teacher is required to teach from 8 am to 4: 45 pm each day classes which frequently have more than fifty pupils. Teachers are also expected to assist with other school-based activities that are sometimes labour-intensive such as school income generating projects and also sporting activities. In communities that are not economically distressed, such as urban areas specialist teachers for extra curricular activities may be hired, thereby reducing the workload for classroom teachers. Kazeem (1999) and Akinwumi (2000) found that urban school teachers are better motivated than teachers in rural schools. The conditions for teaching are more conducive in urban area schools in Zimbabwe especially because of incentives and other benefits given to teachers by school authorities and better working and living conditions. The Inclusive government that assumed office in 2009 directly or indirectly established a separate salary scale for teachers in urban and rural areas through teacher incentives and also accorded schools the right to hire extra manpower if they can afford to pay (Newsday, 2011).

**METHODOLOGY**

**Design**

The study employed a descriptive survey design within the qualitative research paradigm. The design was employed to gather the opinions and perceptions of both rural and urban school teachers with regards the different levels of motivation between teachers who work in rural areas and
those who are based in urban centres. The Qualitative design helps to understand behaviour and institutions by getting to know the persons involved and their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs and emotions (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). Qualitative methodology was preferred since it captured the lived experiences of the teachers both in rural and urban areas.

**Instruments**

The researcher utilised focus group discussions and interviews to collect data. These instruments were preferred because they accorded the researcher the opportunity to get an in-depth understanding of issues and also make a follow up on unclear responses. A total of thirty (30) participants were conveniently sampled from ten primary schools in Masvingo town and Masvingo rural. The participants were aged between 23 to 59 years. Seventeen of the participants were female and thirteen were male. Taking participants from different schools helped to cancel the possible effect of biased and unreliable results.

**Research procedure**

Fifteen participants from urban and another fifteen from rural schools were grouped into three separate groups to facilitate focus group discussions. Each group therefore consisted of five members. One of the researchers acted as a facilitator in the group discussions. Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted on a one to one basis with each of the fifteen participants after the focus group discussion. This was done to validate the findings from the group discussions.

**Data analysis**

Collected data were categorized according to themes (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). Verbatim quotations from the interviews and focus group discussions were presented to support points made.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study revealed that the level of motivation for urban and rural teachers were different because of differences in remuneration and other employment benefits. One of the respondent remarked, “In urban centres teachers are getting incentives of up to USD300 while we get nothing in rural areas”. This statement clearly indicates that teachers in rural areas are paid lower salaries than their urban counterparts hence breed some high levels of dissatisfaction among them. The differences are still notable despite the government of Zimbabwe’s effort to harmonise the rural and urban teachers pay by bringing them under one unified salary scheme and also ensuring that teachers enjoyed comparable salary status. There is a uniform grading and pay scale for the public sector employees in Zimbabwe, including teachers in both rural and urban areas. The harmonisation of salaries is in line with Nyanga (2011)’s view that the harmonisation of salaries help to ensure that rural schools are able to recruit and retain its manpower and eliminate invidious pay comparisons between the rural and urban school teachers. The government of Zimbabwe however failed to effectively implement the harmonisation of the salaries and other conditions of service of teachers in urban and rural areas because of the additional allowance given to teachers by their school development committees which has remained a source of major discord between rural and urban based teachers. The demand by the Progressive Teachers Union (PTUZ), Teachers Union in Zimbabwe (TUZ) for a just and more equitable remuneration by giving teachers based in rural areas a rural allowance has not received sufficient attention from government (Newsday 2011). In Zimbabwe low pay has forced teachers to find additional sources of income which create divided attention and loyalty to teaching thus, impacting negatively on the quality of schooling. High-cost of living in urban centres, makes teachers unable to meet their basic household needs. As a result, many of them are forced to find other sources of income (Nyanga et al., 2012; Moyo, 2000, ZIMTA, 2009). While there is harmonization of remuneration on paper, practically it shows that teachers in rural areas are more disadvantaged than their urban counterparts. This makes them have lower morale than urban school teachers. Teachers in most rural areas earn poverty wages of USD2-4 a day. Pay is so low that teachers, like many of their students, do not eat properly before coming to school. Over one-third of teacher respondents agreed with the statement that ‘teachers in rural school come to work hungry’.

Reports from the respondents show that when promotions are done usually urban teachers will be better positioned to be promoted because of their accessibility to information and also their social capital with senior government employees. One respondents remarked in his mother language domain, “promotion ndeyevari mutown not isu tirikumusha” (promotion is for those in urban areas not us who are based in rural areas). The other one also said if you want to be promoted you have to transfer to town otherwise you will never taste it till you retire. The remarks show that rural school teachers are extremely dissatisfied with the way the promotion systems/procedures are handled. There is a strong feeling that urban based teachers get a preferential treatment than them. The findings are in sync to a study by Kazeem (1999) who observed that teachers and other school workers tend to remain contented and reasonably motivated as long as they are promoted regularly. In the same vein Eton (1984)
Figure 1. Chart showing rural teachers responses to the importance of good accommodation in ensuring job satisfaction.

also identified the payment of salaries, allowances and promotion as the key factors that shape teacher attitudes towards their work. Promoting teachers 'en masse', without basing it on an evaluative mechanism linked to job performance, has also been found to de-motivate many teachers in Nigeria (Visa, 1975; Obilade, 1989; Sanusi, 1998, Bennell and Mukyanuzi Alvarez 1992).

The study also revealed that the work environment or living and working conditions are key antecedents to teacher motivation in Zimbabwe. One of the respondent said that the conditions in rural areas are so deplorable that you cannot expect a teacher to produce the same results as those in urban areas. The views concur with Obanya (1999) who argued that teacher motivation is entirely dependent on working conditions. Teachers who work in dilapidated buildings, poor working conditions are usually frustrated, dissatisfied and de-motivated.

The majority of teachers interviewed in rural areas highlighted that good accommodation was a crucial factor in ensuring their job satisfaction. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

While the importance of the work conditions cannot be overemphasized in teacher motivation in Zimbabwe urban and rural teachers work in entirely different conditions. The rural teacher’s working environment in Zimbabwe has been described as the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force. Facilities in most schools are dilapidated and inadequate. Some work stations are not accessible by phone and road, (Moyo 2000). In some instances teachers are forced to travel on foot for about fifteen kilometres to get to their work stations. Housing and travel logistics for rural teachers are different from that of their urban counterparts thereby suggesting that their level of motivation is different. The high cost of travel contributes to teacher absenteeism and lateness in urban schools. Owing to poor working conditions the status of rural teachers has declined significantly. One of the respondents based in the rural areas remarked that the low and declining status of the rural school teachers is a major factor contributing to poor motivation of rural school teachers. The findings concur with Farrant (1990), Blase and Blasé, (1994), Diveres and Sanchez (1992) and Clarke et al. (1998 Buckley and Caple 200, Tripathi 2004), who observed that the key factors that affect teacher morale are general classroom conditions, location, living conditions and distance to work. The teaching profession no longer commands the high status it enjoyed a decade ago. Unlike their urban counterparts teachers in rural areas are undervalued by society hence their morale is lower than teachers in urban areas. The social status of teachers has been identified as an important factor impacting teacher morale and motivation (Baike, 2002; Francis, 1998; Obanya, 1999). Where teachers feel society is dismissive of the profession, their commitment is undermined and diminishes.

The policy of “education for all” for primary school children ushered by government immediately after independence has had serious implications on rural teacher motivation. While it is appreciated that it is the single most important education goal in Zimbabwe that has made tremendous strides in eradicating illiteracy, it has brought new but complex challenges. The pursuit of this goal has negative impacts on teacher morale. Workloads and class sizes increased tremendously hence seriously demoralized teachers, because teacher recruitment did not keep in pace with rapidly increasing enrolments, (Moyo, 2000). Work overload is a problem for both urban and rural teachers so their motivational are affected in the same way. The
findings are in sync with Darling and Mchaaghlin, (1995) who carried out a study in India and observed that very large class sizes are the norm for most rural teachers in India. In countries such as India and Pakistan, rural schools typically have just one or two teachers. Not surprisingly, most teachers at these schools feel isolated and lack support and collegiality. Teachers point to high and often increasing workloads as a key contributor to low morale. Given the difficulties of staffing rural schools in Zimbabwe, teachers in rural areas generally have to work a lot harder. Since 2010 the government introduced recruitment freezes which it claims was prompted by the acute fiscal crisis in the country. The freezes have driven up vacancy rates and increased teacher workloads (Newsday, 2011; Daily news, 2011). Many teachers were expected to teach composite classes that are two grades which are taught by one teacher simultaneously. This has influenced a high rate of teacher attrition in rural areas through resignations which is a major indicator of low levels of teacher satisfaction and motivation (Davis, 1961; Coltham, 1972; Blasé et al., 1994).

School leadership and management style are also important factors, which can either motivate or lower teacher morale and commitment (Eggleton, 2000). Teachers feel highly motivated when they are consulted about decisions regarding their work. Unfortunately, in Zimbabwe especially in rural areas the high proportion of school heads are heavy handed and autocratic in their dealings with teachers (Nyanga et al., 2012). Heads of many schools make independent decisions with little or no consultation with teachers. The problem is more prevalent in rural areas. The attitude of heads of schools towards teachers in supervising their work is another important work related motivational factor. Bamisaye (1998) found that unfair administrative and supervisory practices tend to undermine teacher morale. One of the respondent said, “Unlike their urban counterparts, rural teachers are usually intimidated and do not have the autonomy to freely express themselves. Another respondent also said “kuzidiza kuromwe unenge uchingovhundutsirwa naheadmaster saka hauna freedom sevarikutown” meaning “If you work in rural areas you are subjected to intimidation by the headmaster hence your moral is already affected”. According to Gibson (1981), Coltham (1972) and Davis (1991) teacher motivation depends critically on effective management, particularly at the school level. Dysfunctional teacher management systems make teachers to lose their sense of professional responsibility and commitment. Teacher management is most crucial at the school level, where the importance of teachers’ work and their competence in performing it are crucially influenced by the quality of both internal and external supervision (Farrant, 1990; Gibson, 1981; Coltham, 1972). The difference observed by the study on different approaches used to manage teachers in urban and rural areas is a clear indication that their level of morale is different. Teachers in urban areas exercise their right to air their views and contribute to the formulation of school policies and also influence policy reforms at district and national level a ‘right’ which rural teachers do not enjoy.

Future studies need to explore the differences between primary and secondary school teachers in both rural and urban areas as this study did not give detailed attention to the differences in motivational levels between the primary and secondary school teacher.

Conclusion

The study concluded that poor teacher motivation is more rampant in rural areas than urban areas and have far-reaching adverse ramifications on the performance of rural school teachers. The unattractiveness of living and working conditions in rural areas compels most teachers to strongly resist to be deployed to rural schools. Consequently, rural schools invariably have relatively less qualified, less experienced and demotivated teachers. As a result of low motivation in rural school teachers, staff turnover is alarmingly high. Teachers in rural areas have to work harder than their colleagues in urban schools because of inadequate resources and big workloads that have been precipitated by the policy of education for all and the recruitment freezes imposed by the government. The major source of teacher dissatisfaction in rural Zimbabwe arises from disparities between the rural and urban teachers with respect to the time and mode of payment of salaries, fringe benefits, promotion prospects and working conditions.

Teachers in rural areas are more poorly motivated and dissatisfied than their urban counterparts with their living and working conditions. Low wages when compared with urban teachers, lack of promotion opportunities, low status in the society, lack of career advancement opportunities, high teacher-pupil ratio, poor work environment and inadequate fringe benefits contributed to lower teachers’ morale in rural areas.

Recommendations

Faced with what amounts to a motivation crisis among rural school teachers in Zimbabwe, the following recommendations were made:

- The government, local authorities and other stakeholders should make a deliberate effort to improve work-related conditions of teachers in rural areas by providing them with decent accommodation and accessible by road and/or telephone. This can go a long way to improve the quality of education in rural areas.

- There should be improvements in the supply of teaching and learning materials to improve student learning. The government should construct or renovate classrooms in rural areas so as to make them habitable for students.
• The provision of good quality housing with running water and electricity for teachers is probably the most cost-effective way of attracting and retaining teachers at hard-to-staff rural schools.

• Teachers who work at hard-to-staff rural schools should be given accelerated promotion, rural allowance and preferential staff development opportunities. Unless these issues are addressed children who live in rural areas will continue to receive poor quality education.

• The Ministry of Education, Art, Sport & Culture should organize leadership and management workshops to equip heads of schools with contemporary human resource management skills that are hinged on motivation, autonomy and employee participation in decision making.

• Policy makers should design policies that promote transparency and well managed teacher postings systems.

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