

## The Impact of Low Salaries on Teacher Motivation: The Case for Mutasa District-Zimbabwe.

### Author Details:

Sango Mesheck G. (Dr)-Zimbabwe Open University; Nyatanga Elisha K- Zimbabwe Open University; Saruchera Kenneth, J-Zimbabwe Open University

### Abstract

*This study sort to find out the extent to which teachers were motivated to carry out teaching tasks given the low salaries and incentives they were being paid by the state. A survey design was used so as to widen the reach to teachers' views. Data were collected through self administered questionnaires distributed to 36 teachers. In addition, more data were generated through in-depth interviews with 10 school Heads. The study found out that: teachers were intrinsically motivated by their engagement in teaching and learning as well as seeing the children learn; parents were paying monetary incentives to the teachers; teachers were not motivated by the low monetary incentives they got from parents. The study, therefore, concluded that teachers were functioning more on intrinsic motivation deriving from the joy of engaging in teaching and learning as well as seeing the children learn. It is, therefore recommended that school leaders could maximise opportunity for intrinsic motivation through improving teaching and learning conditions. Also, Parents could add non monetary incentives in their attempt to improve current level of extrinsic satisfaction among teachers.*

### Background to the study

For over two decades, the Zimbabwe national economy had a down turn in performance reaching its lowest in 2008. Teachers' salaries reached the lowest value ever, with teachers failing to afford even a loaf of bread. Many teachers left their posts and migrated to neighbouring countries and beyond leaving most schools closed by the end of 2008. Most Schools were re-opened in 2009 but were poorly resourced materially, financially and in manpower. Teachers salaries in 2010 were as low as US 220 for a senior teacher. Most pupils were performing below grade level and some schools scored 0% pass rate in public examinations (Zimbabwe Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, 2010). The Zimbabwe government-education planning division has been designing and implementing remedial policies. One such innovative policy is the Performance Lag Address Programme (PLAP) that was spearheaded by the Manicaland Provincial Education Directorate. The directorate carried out performance tracking studies which established the existence of a glaring gap between pupils' performance and their school enrolment grade levels at both primary and secondary levels. The directorate subsequently developed the PLAP to bridge the gap. Relevant information and procedure manuals were developed and distributed for use by teachers. However, the success of the programme is critically dependent on the extent to which teachers are motivated to carry out the rigour of implementing the programme. It is against this background that this study seeks to establish the extent to which teachers are motivated for the task, given the work context prevailing. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the state of teacher motivation in schools in Manicaland region. Thus, the study was guided by the following research questions. *To what extent are teachers intrinsically motivated? To what extent are teachers extrinsically motivated? How are schools motivating their teachers in carrying out their professional duties?*

### Literature Review

In the literature reviewed, Job performance has generally been conceptualised as a function of ability and motivation. However, motivation has been defined in many different ways and most authorities seem to agree that motivation is "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2001: 51). Motivation is thought to be responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it. It is the reason for action, and the term used to define the success or failure of any complex task like teaching (Brown, 1990). Further, motivation has been viewed as either being intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. Intrinsic motivation has been defined as one in which people participate in an activity for their own enjoyment, not for the reward it will get them (Frase, 1992; Benabou and Tirole, 2003). On the other hand, extrinsic

motivation is motivation by which people participate in an activity for a tangible reward (Fieldman, 1996; Benabou and Tirole, 2003). Research on the two types of motivation reveals that people are more apt to persevere, work harder, and produce work of higher quality when motivation for a task is intrinsic rather than extrinsic (Lepper and Greene, 1983, Deci and Ryan, 1985, Harackiewicz and Elliot, 1993) as cited in (Fieldman, 1996).

However, contextual realities may distort these general principles of motivational factors. These contextual factors include both job content and work context. Work context factors are those that meet baseline needs. They include working conditions such as class size, discipline conditions, and availability of teaching materials; the quality of the principal's supervision and basic psychological needs such as money, status and security. Work content factors are intrinsic to the work itself. They include opportunities for professional development, recognition, challenging and varied work, increased responsibility, achievement, empowerment and authority. According to Frase (1992) content variables are the crucial factor in motivating teachers to high levels of performance. The Oregon School Boards Association (2011) reports that there is overwhelming research evidence that teachers enter teaching to help young people learn. Their most gratifying reward is accomplishing this goal, and that the work-related factors most important to teachers are those that allow them to practise their craft successfully.

### **The Method**

This study was carried out in a quantitative paradigm but adopted a survey design to facilitate collecting of both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the extent to which teachers were motivated to take up the PLAP as advised by Babbie (2010). Data were collected through questionnaires that were distributed to 36 teachers who were randomly selected from 50 participants attending an education workshop in Mutasa District. In - depth interviews were held with 10 purposely selected information rich key informants from the participants in line with Creswell (2003). Data were analysed through calculating descriptive statistics through the SPSS computer programme. Qualitative data were mostly used to proffer explanations to emerging trends in the statistical analysis.

### **The Research Findings**

This section presents the findings of the study.

#### **Background of participants**

All the participating teachers (100%) were established officers, 17% of the teachers had bachelor's degrees in education, 69% of had teaching diplomas, and 14% had certificates in education. This data shows that the teachers were adequately qualified to implement the PLAP programme. Most of the teachers (80%) were above 5 years of teaching experience; and 86% of the teachers were in the 31 to 50 age range. Thus, the teachers were most likely to give an honest and reliable opinion of their prevailing motivational status.

**Table 1: Teachers' views on their work**

N = 36

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
1. I can be depended upon to do a good job.	100	-	100
2. I am personally responsible for part of the education of every student I teach.	92	8	100
3. Teaching is usually challenging.	75	25	100
4. One of the best things about teaching is seeing the students learn.	100	-	100
5. I set goals for myself and achieve them.	94	6	100
6. I like to spend a lot of energy to make my classes interesting.	100		100
7. I would like my students to learn more.	100		100
8. Teaching is an important job.	93		100
9. My attitude toward work is to work only as hard as I have to.	92	8	100
10. My students think I am a good teacher.	100		100
11. I set tougher standards for myself than my headmaster sets for me.	72	28	100
12. My principal values my educational opinion.	93	7	100
13. My peers respect my work.	88	12	100
14. I spend some of my free time on a regular basis for self-improvement for teaching by reading professional articles, attending workshops and meetings.	87	13	100
15. Participating in opportunities for professional growth is important to me.	100		100
16. My co-workers think I am a good teacher.	97	3	100

Teachers were asked give their views on their work. Table 1 above shows that many of the teachers (97%) perceived teaching as an important job. All of the teachers (100%) agreed that they would like their students to learn more from them. The teachers, 97% of them, indicated that they were personally responsible for the greater part of the learning of every student they taught. All the teachers (100%) indicated that they could be depended upon to do a good job in teaching. And, all the teachers (100%) revealed that the best thing about teaching is seeing the students learning effectively.

This finding is in tandem with Fraser (1992) when he places recommendation on intrinsic motivation for effective job performance. In agreement, the Oregon School Boards Association (2011) observed that the most gratifying reward for teachers was seeing their class learning successfully.

Further, data in table 1 reveals that the teachers seemed to be committed to their job. All the teachers (100%) indicated that they spent a lot of energy to make their classes interesting. Many of the teachers (70%) agreed that teaching was usually challenging; (95%) indicated that they set goals for themselves and achieved them; 87% agreed that they regularly spent some of their free time on self improvement for teaching by reading professional articles, attending workshops and meetings; and all the teachers (100%) agreed that participating in opportunities for professional growth was important for them.

The teachers' attitude towards their job seemed to be positive. Most teachers (92%) indicated that they worked as hard as they had to; 73% agreed that they set tougher standards for themselves than what school heads set for them; 93% of the teachers felt that the school heads valued their educational opinions; although, 27% of the teachers indicated that they did not go beyond what their school heads set.

All teachers (100%) indicated that their students thought they were good teachers; 84% of the teachers indicated that their peers respected their work; and 95% of the teachers indicated that their co-workers thought they were good teachers. The data presented above seems to show that teachers had a positive attitude towards their work and thus, were actively engaged in their work.

### Teachers' views on work environment and conditions of service

N = 36

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
17. The policies of my school system allow me to do my job effectively.	73	27	100
18. The principals for whom I have taught appreciated the effort I invested in teaching.	92	8	100
19. I have the support of the entire staff in doing my work.	73	27	100
20. My job as a teacher requires too much of my time after the close of the regular school day.	76	24	100
21. Positive aspects about teaching outweigh the negative aspects.	73	27	100
22. My student load is reasonable.	44	56	100
23. I think teachers should be paid on experience.	87	13	100
24. My salary is reasonable for the amount of work I do.	3	97	100
25. I am satisfied with my salary.	3	97	100
26. I am satisfied with the incentives I get from the School Development Committee	8	92	100

Teachers were asked to give their views on the work environment and conditions of service in order to find out the extent to which these factors influenced motivation status of teachers. Table 2 above shows that teachers were generally not happy with their conditions of service. Many of the teachers (97%) were not satisfied with their salaries. They felt that the amount of pay was unreasonably low for the work that they were doing. On the same basis, many of the teachers (92%) were not satisfied with the low incentives they received from the school development committees. Although, many of the teachers (73%) had positive experiences with school policies, 75% felt their job required too much of their time after the close of the regular school day. And, some felt that their work environment was not conducive for them to perform their job effectively.

The data that were analysed seem to reveal that, although teachers were content with the general work environment that included the school policies and professional relationships with their peers, they were not satisfied with the salaries they were getting, as well as the incentives they received from the school development committees. However, despite the low salaries that teachers were receiving, they had a positive work engagement. This finding is in sharp contrast with literature in that although extrinsic motivational factors such as pay (Fieldman, 1996) had a significant influence on worker engagement on task (Brown, 1999), teachers in this study did not seem to be negatively affected by their low pay levels. They continued to do their work with a focus to make their classes learn effectively.

### Conclusion

This study concluded that:

- Teachers were intrinsically motivated by their engagement in teaching children and seeing them learn.
- Schools were paying cash incentives as a way of motivating teachers, but the extent of motivation was low because teachers expected more for the nature of their job.

- Teacher incentives had less effect on teacher motivation than the engagement in teaching activity

### Recommendation

- Responsible authorities should consider improving the salary levels of teachers
- School leaders need to ensure that teaching and learning environments are conducive so as to maximize on teachers' intrinsic motivation to see their children learning
- Parents may also consider providing non monetary incentives for their teachers
- The Ministry of education could introduce the PLAP programme basing on the teachers' intrinsic motivation.

### References

Babbie, E. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont. Wadsworth.

Benabou, R. and Tirole, J. (2003) Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation. *The Review of Economic Studies*. 70 (3) 385-407

Brown, H. (1990) M and Ms for language Classrooms: Another look at Motivation in J. E. Alatis (ed.) *Georgetown University round table on language and linguistics: 383-393*

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), London. Sage Publications.

Fieldman, L. (1996). The Nature, Antecedents and Consequences of Under employment. *Journal of Management* 22 (3) 385-407

Frase, L. E. (1989). The Effect of Teaching Rewards on Recognition and Job Enrichment. *Journal of Educational Research*. 83 (1) 53-57.

Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Essex. Longman Press.