

Incentives in Zimbabwe's education system: Cure or curse?

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ABSTRACT: During the years 2005 to 2008, Zimbabwe plunged into an economic depression. Many social and economic systems were severely shaken, while others crumpled. The education sector was not spared. Many schools closed as teachers left their jobs for the informal sector while others crossed the borders in search of greener pastures. It was against this background that some parents mooted the idea of incentivising teachers as a way of retaining and motivating them. Many teachers were given financial incentives, while in a few cases, incentives were paid in kind. With incentives, some semblance of sanity returned to the education sector. Unfortunately, a few years down the line, the issue of incentives courted so much controversy, poisoning relations amongst stakeholders, especially between parents and teachers. This study assessed how incentives were administered and why they spoiled relations amongst stakeholders. This qualitative study made use of the survey research design where data were collected through questionnaires and interviews from teachers and parents in Chipinge district of Zimbabwe. The study recommended that incentives should be upheld, but the incentive scheme needed to be revisited in order to benefit all stakeholders in the education system.

KEYWORDS: Incentive schemes, teachers' incentives, teacher motivation, parents- teachers' relations, Zimbabwean education system.

1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Zimbabwe witnessed a severe economic depression between 2005 and 2008. The education sector was severely shaken. A number of schools closed as teachers left either for greener pastures in neighbouring countries or to undertake self-jobs which were rather more rewarding. According to Chagonda (2010), a number of teachers migrated to other countries notably South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Britain, Australia and America. It was estimated that between 2000 and 2008, around 45000 teachers had left Zimbabwe (Chagonda, 2010).

According to *The Educated Horizon* (2013), between 2004 and 2008 teachers' strikes increased, as teachers were clamouring for better salaries and improved working conditions, which the government failed to provide. Work stoppages and teacher-flights into the diaspora resulted in closure of some schools where over 90 percent of students in Zimbabwe were not attending school by October 2008 (*The Educated Horizon*, 2013). Teachers who remained behind were busy engaging in informal activities to earn a living since their salaries had been reduced to rubble (Share, October 2011). As a result, there was no meaningful teaching and learning taking place.

In order to arrest the situation, some parents mooted the idea of giving their children's teachers incentive allowances. According to Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011), the provision of financial incentives to teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa is not uncommon. However, the Zimbabwean scenario was peculiar in that the incentives were paid by parents and guardians of the school children and not by the government. The incentives were either in cash (Rands, Meticals, US Dollars or the British Pound Sterling) or in kind (mealie-meal, maize, chicken, goats, cooking oil or bars of soap). The Ministry of Education, Sport,

Art and Culture also bought the idea. Through Circular Minute 10/2009, the Ministry of Education proposed that 10 percent of school levies could be appropriated as teachers' incentives, and 5 percent as incentives for non-teaching staff. However, this was to be done with the blessing and approval of the School Development Committee in the case of council and mission schools, and the School Development Association, in the case of government schools. This was the basis upon which the incentive scheme was premised.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Incentive schemes came as a blessing to the waning fortunes of the education system in Zimbabwe. Teachers returned to work and meaningful teaching-learning resumed. Regardless of this, a number of stakeholders raised their voices against the system. Parents cried foul, claiming incentivising teachers was the responsibility of the Civil Service Commission, the body that employs teachers and other government workers. Teachers clashed with school heads and the School Development Association/ Committee (SDA or SDC) as well as with non-teaching staff over the local incentive scheme. The study sought to find out how incentives were administered and why they poisoned relations amongst stakeholders, despite their turning around the waned fortunes of the education system in Zimbabwe.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To establish the nature of local incentive schemes in schools.
- To assess how the incentive scheme was administered.
- To analyse parents' perceptions of the teachers' incentive schemes.
- To assess why the incentive scheme poisoned relations amongst stakeholders in the education system.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to Chireshe and Shumba (2011), very little research, notably by Nhundu (1999), and Chireshe and Mapfumo (2003), has been done in the area of teachers' motivation in Zimbabwe. This study is thus important as it seeks to plug a glaring gap in the area of motivation in general, and teachers' motivation in particular. Since the area of study is almost virgin, the research will contribute immensely to the body of knowledge in educational management, thus laying the basis for future and further research on incentive schemes and their place in motivation of workers. The study will be an eye-opener to a number of organizations, particularly on planning, implementation, control and evaluation of incentive schemes. Organizations which are set to benefit from such a study include schools that are currently engaging in incentive schemes, schools which are planning to introduce such schemes as well as other public and private organisations.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was carried out on secondary schools in Chipinge, a district in Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. Stakeholders in this study refer to teachers, school heads, members of the SDC or SDA, and parents. The study covered the period 2009 to 2013. Incentives in this study refer to monetary and/ or non-monetary incentives introduced in schools in Zimbabwe following the economic slump of 2008.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INCENTIVES AND MOTIVATION

According to Chireshe and Shumba (2011), incentives are external measures that are designed and established to influence motivation and behaviour of individuals, groups or organizations. The incentive theory of motivation emerged in the 1940s and 1950s (Franzoi, 2011). It advances the fact that people are pulled towards certain behaviours as a result of the incentives they would get in return for their efforts (Bernstein, 2011 and Cherry, 2012). They further argue that a person's behavior is motivated by the pull of external goals like recognition, rewards and money. Hockenburb and Hockenburb (2003) view money as an excellent example of external rewards. Another proponent of the incentive theory of motivation is Franzoi (2011) who holds that the value of incentives depends on the worker's circumstances and that the value of incentives changes over time.

2.2 THE RISE OF TEACHER INCENTIVES IN ZIMBABWE

Between 2005 and 2008, a number of teachers left their jobs and either skipped the border or joined the informal sector to make ends meet (Chagonda, 2010). It is estimated that between 2000 and 2008 around 45000 teachers had left the country for greener pastures (Chagonda, 2010). According to Chireshe and Shumba (2011), David Coltart, the then Minister of Education, admitted that Zimbabwe lost more than 20 000 teachers to its neighbours between 2007 and 2008 alone, due to poor remuneration in addition to unattractive work locations, unprofessional treatment of teachers, arbitrary teacher deployment systems, lack of professional development opportunities, political harassment and political victimisation.

According to *The Educated Horizon* (2013), while teachers earned Z\$30 billion (about US\$15 in October 2008), teachers across the Limpopo river (South Africa) earned R8000 (about US\$800). As a result of this development, a number of teachers left the country to ply their trade in countries like South Africa. A number of schools thus closed. *The Educated Horizon* (2013) holds that by October 2008, over 90 percent of students in Zimbabwe were not attending school as many schools had closed. According to Share (October, 2011) teachers who remained behind were busy engaging in informal activities to earn a living since their salaries had been reduced to rubble. As a result, there was no meaningful teaching and learning to talk about.

To support the point above, one notes that there was a fall in Ordinary level pass rates for the years 2005 to 2008. According to *The Educated Horizon* (2013), in 2005 the pass rate was 12 percent, 14, 2 percent in 2006; then 9,85 percent in 2007; 14,44 percent in 2008, and then rose to 19,33 percent in 2009 when sanity in the education system was slowly creeping back. The sudden rise in pass rate between 2008 and 2009 coincided with the introduction of incentives, making many stakeholders believe that there was a strong correlation between the introduction of incentives and improved pass rates.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER INCENTIVES

According to McKim and Hughart (2005) incentive schemes are motivational programmes designed to encourage commitment to increasing productivity. Share (November, 2013) holds that parents and guardians have been paying incentives to motivate teachers in Zimbabwe. Share further argues that for parents, incentives were not an end in themselves, but they are a tool to curb laziness, absenteeism and the brain-drain and at the same time to increase productivity. Ssendagire, as quoted by Chireshe and Shumba (2011) holds that a motivated teacher leads to motivated students, and hence, good performance.

Teacher incentives are linked to teacher retention. In Zimbabwe like in most parts of the world, there is a shortage of teachers, since many teachers leave the profession for greener pastures. According to Share (October 2011), over 300 rural and satellite schools in Zimbabwe's 10 provinces were in 2012 manned by unqualified teachers. Although teachers' training colleges were churning out graduates year after year, it was discovered that trained teachers were shunning filling vacant posts because of poor conditions of service, with some preferring to venture into the informal sector as entrepreneurs or skipping the borders to try their luck in foreign lands. In 2012, there were 13 000 vacant teaching posts in Zimbabwe (Share, November 2013). The situation was worse in the Midlands, Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North. This made teacher- retention programmes like incentive schemes a very noble cause.

2.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF INCENTIVES IN SCHOOLS

According to Circular Minute No. 10 of 2009 and Share (November, 2013), incentives were a creation by the government, where the Ministry of Education, Sport Art and Culture proposed that, with approval of parents through the SDC or SDA, 10 percent of school levies could be offered as teachers' incentives, while 5 percent would be given to non-teaching staff. As noted by Nyawo, in many cases, there was no formula used in distributing incentives, as it was arbitrarily set by school heads and the school governing bodies (Share, November, 2013). This led to chaos in the administration of the scheme among stakeholders. Thus, this study sought to assess administration of the incentive scheme and how it poisoned relations amongst stakeholders.

3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study, simple random sampling was used to select 10 secondary schools from the 33 secondary schools in Chipinge district, making a sample size of 30.3 % percent. Thirty teachers (3 from each of the 10 schools) were selected using simple random sampling and were asked to fill questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees who included 10

school heads (one from each of the 10 selected schools), 10 members of the SDC/ SDA (one from each of the 10 schools). Purposive sampling was also used to select 20 parents who responded to questionnaires. This sampling technique was chosen because it helped the researcher to select only those informants adjudged to be knowledgeable about the data sought (Kumar, 2010). Data were coded and categorised into themes and sub-themes. Thereafter data were analysed through thematic content analysis. Descriptive statistics, namely numbers, frequencies and percentages were also used in analysing data.

4 RESULTS

4.1 THE NATURE OF TEACHER INCENTIVE SCHEMES

Teacher incentive schemes in Chipinge district differed from school to school in terms of type (monetary or non-monetary), amounts paid to teachers and frequency of payment. Table 1 below shows this data more succinctly.

Table 1: Incentive figures and frequency of payment

School	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Amount (US\$)	160	150	165	200	150	10	100	50	10
Frequency of payment	Termly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Termly	Monthly	Termly	Termly	Termly
Average per month (US\$)	40	150	165	200	37.50	10	25	12.50	2.50

Most schools (90 percent) had monetary incentives, which were paid in United States dollars. Only one school (10 percent) used non-monetary incentives, which comprised of 10 kilogrammes of mealie-meal per teacher per term. While 4 schools paid teachers monthly incentives, 5 paid them at the end of the school term. The monetary incentives differed remarkably amongst schools as it ranged from a minimum of US\$2.50 to a maximum of US\$200 per month.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHER INCENTIVE SCHEMES

Many schools adopted the scheme since they saw it as a panacea to problems that were bedeviling their schools. For school heads, incentive schemes were as a result of the government circular that authorised such provisions. For the majority of parents (80 percent), incentives were meant to motivate teachers so as to improve school pass rates. As a result, 80 percent of secondary schools in Chipinge district introduced incentive schemes between 2009 and 2010. Only 2 schools introduced them afterwards, that was, in 2011 and 2012.

It was the implementation phase of the incentive scheme that torched some storm. According to the government incentives' circular, parents could give 10 percent of school levies to teachers as incentives. However, this rule of thumb was not respected, either deliberately or unwillingly. According to 60 percent of school heads, schools many times failed to raise enough money to run the schools as well as to raise money for incentives. This was especially caused by parents who at times failed to pay fees on time or totally failed to do so.

Heads of schools expressed that they faced challenges as outlined in Table 2 in implementing incentive schemes.

Table 2: Problems facing school heads in implementing the incentive scheme

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Meeting incentive payment deadlines	2	20
False and unfounded accusations of embezzlement of funds	3	30
Parents demanding the immediate scrapping of incentives	1	10
Lack of adequate financial resources	3	30
No problems in implementing the incentive scheme	1	10
Total	10	100

Meeting the incentive payment deadline was a thorn in the flesh for two school heads. They expressed that under normal circumstances, incentives were payable on the last working day of the month or the last working day of the term. Unfortunately, some parents failed to pay fees on time, resulting in schools failing to deliver their promise to teachers. When this happened, teachers complained and in some cases downed tools. When the same defaulting parents realised this, they accused the school heads of embezzling school funds.

In extreme cases, some parents completely failed to pay school fees. One school head revealed that parents owed the school about US\$32 000 in fees arrears. The situation was compounded by the Basic Education Assistance Module, a programme whereby government paid the fees for poor and disadvantaged students. In many cases, government failed to own up. To make matters worse, the government instructed school heads against expelling fee-defaulting students. The government allowed such students even to write public examinations. Thus, in many cases, rural day secondary schools failed to make ends meet, let alone deliver on their incentive obligations to teachers.

The implementation phase was also complicated by some parents who unprocedurally called for the scrapping of incentives. All school heads interviewed revealed that incentives were adopted when parents and the SDC voted for them. They argued that at first, parents voted for the adoption of incentives at a Parents Assembly meeting. Thereafter, parents' representatives, the SDC voted annually on whether to continue or discontinue the scheme. All school heads claimed that members of the SDC annually approved the continuation of the scheme. Unfortunately, a small group of parents, some of them socially and politically-influential, mobilised other parents and viciously attacked school heads for holding on to incentives, despite the fact that the SDC approved the scheme.

Incentive money was normally paid to teachers by the school bursar in small khaki envelopes. However, at one boarding school, the money was paid to teachers through respective teachers' bank accounts. The head of the school claimed that they had since shifted incentive pay day from the last day of the month and made it coincide with teachers' government pay days. The school head claimed that they had adopted that system for security reasons, as well as for teachers' convenience.

In implementing payment of incentives, it was noted that at some schools, heads deducted some money from teachers' incentives for absenteeism and bunking of lessons. Twenty percent of school heads supported this move claiming that it made teachers more responsible, and at the same time it made schools meet parents' expectations, that of increased pass rates for their children. This contributed to sour relations between teachers and their school heads.

4.3 PARENTS AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT INCENTIVE SCHEMES

Parents had conflicting views as regards their perception of incentives. While 35 percent of parents saw incentives as motivational tools, 45 percent of them saw them as the gateway to good pass rates while 20 percent of parents perceived them as bad. Probably, parents' stance for adjudging incentives as bad emanated from their belief that remuneration of teachers was not their responsibility. Ninety percent of parents claimed that it was not their responsibility to assist teachers' employer, the government, to improve teachers' working conditions. It was not surprising that the same number of parents clamoured for the scrapping of incentives.

Some 40 percent of parents felt that it was government duty to pay teachers as well as to cater for their welfare. Thus, they felt short-changed by the issue of incentive schemes. Twenty percent of parents claimed that incentives were supposed to be removed because school heads were embezzling school funds. Another 20 percent of parents felt that teachers were being pampered as if they were the only government workers. Parents felt that there was no need to do more for teachers while the rest of civil servants did not have incentives. Fifteen percent of parents argued that incentives were supposed to be scrapped because parents were generally poor. It should be noted that some 20 percent of parents who participated in this study were unemployed, while 5 percent were pensioners. This implied that some parents were generally ill-equipped to pay teachers' incentives.

Five percent of parents held that incentives were supposed to be removed because parents' ambassadors, the SDC, neglected representing parents' interests in school matters. Instead, the SDC now sided with teachers as they also benefitted from incentive schemes either directly through sitting allowances or through some uncouth means.

The issue that incentives were fairly low was also expressed by teachers. Only six out of 30 teachers claimed that the incentives that they were getting were adequate. This stemmed from the fact that some schools were giving teachers incentives of US\$10 per term or a bucket of maize, worth US\$10 per term.

Although 75 percent of SDC members agreed that the financial position of most parents was not impressive, they argued that the amount charged for incentives was reasonably low and that it was set with the financial status of parents in mind. As

one SDC member argued, the figure was low for rural day secondary schools while it was higher for boarding and urban schools where children of affluent parents enrolled.

Some parents held that incentives made a lot of sense around 2009 to 2010 when teachers' salaries were very low. During that period, teachers' salaries ranged between US\$100 and US\$250. Now that salaries were around US\$400, 10 percent of parents claimed that such salaries no longer warranted supplementation. However, a number of school heads disagreed with parents here. Seven school heads (70 percent) held that although salaries had significantly improved, incentives were supposed to continue until such a time that salaries were above the Poverty Datum Line, which according to one school head, was in early 2014 pegged at US\$502 per month. The school heads' argument was that removing incentives at this juncture was akin to winding the clock back to the pre-2009 era.

It was surprising to note that all members of the SDC claimed that incentives were administered in a transparent manner. However, 40 percent of teachers also took a swipe against school heads and members of the SDC, accusing them of short-changing teachers and at times administering the scheme in an untransparent manner. Two reasons were advanced to explain such shoddy deals and these were dispensing different incentive figures to different teachers at the same school as well as deducting some money for alleged absenteeism. They claimed the money deducted from errant teachers only found its way into administrators' pockets.

While parents largely disapproved incentives, teachers, school heads and members of the SDC vehemently supported the scheme as well as its continuation. Twenty-four teachers (80 percent) held that incentives made them work harder. They saw incentives as motivating, thus the link between incentives and increased productivity. Thus, for such teachers, incentives were good, a claim made by 80 percent of teachers versus 25 percent of parents, 70 percent of SDC members and 70 percent of school heads. The 7 school heads who also claimed that incentives were motivational pointed out to a marked decrease in teacher transfers and absenteeism. Two school heads also pointed out that out of 15 teachers at their schools who were due to go for vacation leave, only one went on leave during the past three years. Senior teachers who were eligible for promotion as deputy school heads and education officers were also shunning the offer, implying that they were a lot happier at their schools.

4.4 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Relations between parents and teachers were largely bad and so were relations between teachers and school heads as well as members of the SDC. Fifty percent of teachers claimed that their relations with parents were bad, 40 percent claimed that their relations with parents were good and 10 percent were undecided. This contrasted with 55 percent of parents who held the view that incentives made relations between stakeholders bad. This showed that parents felt more hard-pressed by incentives than teachers who seemed to have down-played the impact on stakeholder relations because they were beneficiaries of the scheme.

Parents were not happy about the scheme for a number of reasons. Table 3 below shows their main bone of contention, which resulted in strained relations.

Table 3: Parents' reasons for bad relations with teachers

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Heads and teachers were now very arrogant	8	40
Pass rates did not improve significantly	4	20
Children chased from school for failing to raise money for incentives despite paying tuition fees	5	25
Teachers were milking the poor and helpless parents	3	15
Total	20	100

Forty percent of parents claimed that their relations with teachers were bad because teachers and school heads were now very arrogant. This arrogance, parents alleged, emanated from the fact that teachers were now treated as a special breed of humanity, unlike what the case was with other professionals. Teachers who received about US\$200 as incentives ended up richer than the average man on the street, and therefore were easily seen as arrogant. This resulted in them becoming unique; buying fancy cars, building houses and generally becoming socially untouchables, as one parent claimed.

It seemed parents brought the issue of arrogance as an excuse. The fact that teachers bought houses and cars cannot be sufficient condition for arrogance. Teachers, like any other professionals, should be able to live decent lives, which include buying or owning houses and cars, among other niceties.

Another bone of contention was the fact that teachers chased away children for parents' failure to pay money for incentives, despite paying tuition fees in full. Parents saw this as extortion and felt such treatment was unfair.

Chasing away students for parents' failure to pay school fees coupled with some teachers resorting to excessive beer-drinking because they had more disposable income, resulted in low pass rates. Some 20 percent of parents argued that since the introduction of incentives, pass rates at some schools had not improved.

Three parents (15 percent) claimed that they now did not see eye to eye with teachers because teachers were undeservingly milking them. It should be noted that some parents who took part in this study were unemployed and others were pensioners. It thus did not augur well for such parents to understand why they had to subsidise a government-employed and government-earning teacher. Teachers also had a bone to chew with their school heads, as well as with chairpersons of the SDCs. Fifty percent of teachers expressed that they were not happy with the manner incentives were administered at their schools.

In small rural day secondary schools, evidence showed that although incentives were supposed to be paid at the end of every month or term, their payment was dependent on the availability of money. If no such money was available, incentives would not be paid. There were no arrear payments. For 5 percent of teachers, this was a bone of contention with their school heads. In some schools, late payment of incentive money was an issue. Fifteen percent of teachers argued that school heads deliberately paid them later than scheduled just to frustrate them. One teacher gave the example of the November 2013 incentives which were paid in February 2014, when the incentives could have made much difference had they been paid during the festive season.

Interviews with two school heads revealed that monetary deductions were effected for absenteeism and bunking of lessons. However, 25 percent of teachers did not take this lightly as they claimed that sometimes deductions were unwarranted and that at times, no clear deduction formula was used or that some teachers' money was never deducted because of their close links to administrators. This reason shared a lot in common with allegations by 3 teachers (15 percent) that while all teachers were said to be equal, some teachers were more equal than others. This stemmed from the issue that some teachers got more money than others.

Teachers who were paid as little as US\$10 per month or per term as incentives claimed that they had for long unsuccessfully bargained for an incentive increment. However, they claimed that their school heads, who had numerous other benefits, as well as their over-stayed SDCs denied them of such. Thus, 15 percent of teachers did not agree with their school heads and SDC members because they did not want to raise the incentive figure to the same levels as those of fellow teachers in neighbouring schools. Such teachers allegedly ended up claiming that school heads and SDC members had formed cartels to sideline teachers as well as to milk parents.

This brought into spotlight the role of the SDC in the school system. As discovered in this research, the SDC seems to be distant from the parents that they purportedly represent, and were more inclined towards teachers, or school heads to be more precise. This study revealed that members of the SDC largely saw incentives as good, incentive figures as reasonable and even approved the continuation of incentives year in and year out. All this seemed to contradict the views and wishes of parents, who elected members of the SDC.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 THE NATURE OF INCENTIVE SCHEMES

Incentives differed from school to school. While most schools paid monetary incentives, some few schools paid them in kind using basic food stuffs and goods. The use of basic items like sugar, mealie-meal, soap and cooking oil was common during the pre-2009 era when basic items were scarce in Zimbabwe. During that period, barter trade was common as the Zimbabwe dollar had been eroded by inflation. According to Chagonda (2010), inflation peaked at 231 million percent in 2008. During that period, even rentals were paid using basic goods. When dollarisation was adopted, most schools preferred to use the United States dollar. The only school that chose to pay non-monetary incentives, using mealie-meal or maize, was a rural-based and poor school. According to the SDC member of the school, most parents there were farmers and their major source of livelihood was agriculturally-based.

The amount of money paid to teachers as incentives was guided by the government circular which stated that up to 10 percent of school levies could be given to teachers as incentives. In actual fact, the incentive figure differed in line with the financial capability of parents or guardians of individual schools. This confirmed Nyawo's claim that there was no clear formula in the way schools distributed incentives (Share, November 2013). In boarding, mission and urban schools, the incentive figure was higher than that of teachers at rural council day schools. As a result, it was discovered that teacher incentives in the same district ranged from as little as \$2.50 per month and as much as \$200 per month.

5.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF INCENTIVES

Various scholars stated different reasons for undertaking incentive schemes. For McKinney (2000) incentives were for staff retention, while for McKim and Hughart (2005) incentives were meant to increase productivity and for Share (November 2013) they were meant to curb laziness and absenteeism among teachers. In Zimbabwean scenario, all factors stated above applied since the country was smarting out of the economic depression, when staff mobility and attrition rates were high and when teacher motivation was on its lowest ebb due to low salaries and deplorable working conditions. Thus, the introduction of incentives spread like veld fire, beginning in 2009. With the introduction of dollarisation in February 2009 (Chagonda, 2010), teachers (like the rest of the civil servants) were paid a flat US\$100. Schools that introduced incentives got the best teachers. Failure to put in place retention measures like the incentive schemes resulted in some schools going for long periods without qualified teachers. As noted by Share (2013), over 300 rural and satellite schools in Zimbabwe's 10 provinces were manned by unqualified teachers in 2012. Nevertheless, some schools never introduced incentives, confirming Dokora's (Minister of Primary and Secondary Education) assertion that only about 38 percent of schools in the country had introduced incentive schemes by 2013 (Share, October 2013).

5.3 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Although parents initially supported the issue of teacher incentives, they vehemently campaigned against it starting around 2012. Many parents claimed that they were poor and could not continue propping the government in motivating their workers. Ndlovu of the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association argued that sometimes parents faced difficulties in raising fees to the point of selling fruits to raise the money (Wedzel, 2011). Although parents struggled to pay the incentives, they did so grudgingly. According to Wedzel (2011), parents paid incentive money so that their children would not be victimised, but regarded incentives as a form of extortion. This poisoned relations between teachers and parents.

Failure by parents to pay school fees from where incentives were obtained had a chain reaction. When parents failed to pay school fees, teachers accused school heads of embezzling school funds. While teachers' accusations were at times uncalled for, the fact that some school heads misappropriated school funds, with or without conniving with the SDC, remained true. Nyawo of Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe said school heads as well as the SDC's had become corrupt and connived to steal levies, thus, shortchanging teachers in the process (Share, November 2013). Share (2012) reported that the head of one former Group A school in Masvingo was assaulted by parents and pupils over a misunderstanding about incentives. In another incident, the head of a secondary school near Chaka Business Centre in the Midlands Province committed suicide after quarrelling with parents over the alleged abuse of money meant for teachers' incentives (The Herald: 31 October 2013). Parents claimed that they paid \$10 monthly towards teachers' incentives, but teachers never received the money as the school head allegedly converted it to his own use. The fact that some school heads were clandestinely benefitting from the incentive schemes was highlighted by Nyawo, the president of the Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe, who claimed that a number of school heads refused taking up promotional posts because they were getting attractive incentive perks at their respective schools (Share, October 2011).

Relations between teachers and school heads were also bad because some school heads treated their teachers differently. Share (November 2013) argued that some teachers got incentives during school holidays while others did not and at the same time some teachers had their incentives deducted for alleged lateness or absenteeism.

Matters were worsened by the rather ambivalent character of the SDCs. It was not clear whether they still represented other parents or they had other interests to serve. Share (November 2013) noted that a number of SDC chairpersons had very close relations with school heads and they also had overstayed in their positions. In this study, SDC members had served on average 5 years, although they agreed the norm was two years. This raised eyebrows giving the impression that SDC members were clandestinely benefitting from the incentive schemes.

6 CONCLUSION

The issue of incentives is hotly-contested. While it is not new in education or in industry and commerce, it has been peculiar in Zimbabwe as it were parents, and not the government, who paid them. Incentives proved to be the magic wand for with their adoption, normalcy once again dawned in the education sector. As advanced by *The Educated Horizon* (2013), over 90 percent of school-going children were out of school by October 2008. Due to the introduction of incentives, schools which had closed re-opened, teachers who had absconded, returned to their schools and pass rates began to go up. Unfortunately, the issue of incentives made relations amongst stakeholders bad. It pitted teachers against parents, teachers against school heads, teachers against SDC members, leaving one wondering whether or not the incentive scheme was a cure to Zimbabwe's education system or it was a curse which sought to destroy the system from within.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INCENTIVES SHOULD BE UPHELD

Evidence obtained in the research suggested that incentives motivated teachers. Once teachers were motivated, they were bound to work more industriously and diligently and thus benefit students and parents in the process. In this regard, incentives should be upheld until such a time that the government could afford to motivate its workers on its own.

7.2 INCENTIVE FIGURES SHOULD BE WITHIN THE REACH OF THE AVERAGE PARENT

Schools and SDC's should genuinely review downwards incentives which parents felt were exorbitant. Attention should be focused on the average parents' financial capability. Setting incentive figures based on the capability of a few but very rich parents, place untold suffering on the majority of parents who are not well-off.

7.3 TEACHERS SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE

Teachers needed to play their part. As argued in this study, parents initially recommended the payment of incentives to teachers so that their children would truly benefit academically. However, some parents pointed out in the discussion that at some schools, pass rates had remained low and that some teachers had become drunkards as they have more money to spend. As the saying goes, a good turn deserves another, teachers need to really work hard and make sure that pass rates go up in order to justify the incentives they got.

7.4 THERE IS NEED TO RE-VISIT AND RE-DEFINE THE ROLE OF THE SDC

There is need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to assist parents by educating the SDCs about their role in the school system. Workshops should be held where members of the SDC are taught their responsibilities and terms of references. This will enable members of the SDC to execute their duties in a more responsible manner and from a more informed position.

7.5 TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY SHOULD BE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN PAYING INCENTIVES

Once SDC's are put under check, issues of accountability and transparency are naturally catered for. SDC's which are seen as closer to parents are more likely to be viewed as transparent and devoid of corruption. In a similar vein, there is need to improve financial accountability and financial reporting system within schools. Bursars, heads and SDC's should have clean hands and should desist from concealing financial transactions, whether good or bad, from teachers. Once teachers know the true financial position of the school, they are more likely to bear with the school head during times that the school's finances are in the red.

7.6 THE EMPLOYER SHOULD PLAY HIS PART

The government should not sit back and relax and leave everything in the hands of parents. Incentives were introduced in 2009 when the government was heavily weighed down with a plethora of economic challenges. Five years down the line, the government should take a more proactive role in improving the working conditions of its workers. Thus, parents may have to be excused from paying incentives, if and only if teachers' salary and working conditions are improved. This includes the payment of a Poverty Datum Line-related salary and decent transport and housing allowances.

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