

## Factors That Militate Against the Provision of Quality Education at Grade Seven Level in Gokwe South Central Cluster of Zimbabwe

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**ABSTRACT** The study sought to investigate the factors that militate against the provision of quality education at Grade Seven level in Gokwe South Central Cluster of Zimbabwe. The study adopted a qualitative interpretive research methodology. A purposive convenient sample of twenty school teachers and five school heads from Gokwe South Central Cluster formed the study. Data was collected through questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The study began the process of data analysis by transcribing verbatim audio-taped interviews. The results were cross-checked with the participants. The study revealed that quality education was being affected by shortage of resources in schools, teacher-pupil ratio, low morale due to poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration, brain drain, a packed curriculum and poor incentives. Supervision by District Education Officers was not consistent due to economic challenges and shortage of transport resulting in not following the progress done in schools. The study recommends that there be an improvement in the provision of teaching and learning resources in schools. Fair remuneration and incentives should be given to teachers as retention packages to curb brain drain of skilled personnel to greener pastures.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the Study

In Zimbabwe, the policy of education for all introduced in 1980 to correct the colonial imbalances in education is said to have been sacrificed for quality (Bishop 1985). The limited resources available have been thinly spread to cater for more-than-the-required number of pupils. This situation of scarcity of resources, lack of motivation, teacher pupil ratio, lack of supervision in service delivery, deteriorating infrastructural facilities in schools and the migration of skilled personnel, led to poor service delivery in schools. A school's external efficiency and internal efficiency can be evaluated by the way stakeholders perceive the results and developmental goals of the institution. Schools that produce quality results at Grade Seven level demonstrate their efficiency in meeting and fulfilling their targeted objectives.

Mumbengegwi (1993) states that, external efficiency refers to the relationship between the learning institution and its environment of work. In the same vein, Mokoena (2003) explains internal efficiency as the progression of pupils from one grade to another and the quality of good results. At primary level students under-

take a seven year course from Grade 1 – 7. In the seventh year the pupils are examined by the Zimbabwe Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) in the following subjects: Shona, English, General Paper, Mathematics and Ndebele.

#### The grading of results is as follows:

##### Key to Grading

Grade	Mark Range
1	90-100
2	80- 88
3	70- 78
4	60- 68
5	50- 59
6	40- 49
7	30- 39
8	20- 28
9	0- 18

Source: Zimbabwe School Examination Council Training Manual

The recognized national pass grades are 1 – 6 units per all the four subjects. The common trend as per most boarding schools as per advertisements, the first preference is given to pupils who have excelled in their performance basing on grade seven results. Their premise is on quality education hence this study sought to carry out an investigation into factors that militate against the provision of quality education at Grade 7 level in Gokwe South, Central Cluster. Previous studies conducted in the same field

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identified the following issues as some of the factors that militate against the provision of quality education in schools: Supervision of teachers, availability of resources, economic factors and brain drain, implementation of policy and financial management.

### *Supervision of Teachers*

Harris (1995) defines supervision as what school personnel do with adults and things for the purpose of maintaining or changing the operation of a school in order to directly influence pupil attainment or the major goal of a school. The head is expected to work with the teacher in lesson planning, preparation, presentation and evaluation. The emphasis in supervision is to discover the strengths and build on them, and if there are weaknesses the head will help the teacher to overcome them. Whatever improvements take place in the teacher, they are for the benefit of the pupils. The head can carry out supervision as a way of staff development to identify areas of concern at school level so as to plan for remedial work.

### *Shortage of Resources*

At independence the Zimbabwean Government had many challenges, among them the need to bring about national development, freedom and the correction of imbalances in resources allocation and race relations. Educational policy was formulated so as to be accessible to all the people of Zimbabwe regardless of race, tribe, religion, sex and origin. To achieve all these goals and aspirations, a lot of material resources were needed. Mumbengegwi (1995) stresses that the educational policies adopted by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government in 1980 and the planning machinery it created led to the phenomenal growth of the educational system at all levels. The sharp rise in enrolment at schools resulted in shortage of resources. Shortage of resources like textbooks, equipment, furniture, classrooms and supportive materials affected the provision of quality education.

### *Teacher Shortage*

To alleviate the shortage of human resources and manpower to carry out the implementation

of the government policies on the provision of quality education, stop gap measures militated against the provision of quality education from primary, secondary and even at university level. According to Zvobgo (1997), the hiring of expatriate personnel in education was a noble development, however major factors such as cultural, ideological background of expatriate teachers were a stumbling block towards the provision of quality education.

### *Economic Factors*

The colonial government used bottle neck type of segregation in education. Most schools were capitalist, the education system was classified into group A, B and C based on economic classes founded on race. In 1980 when Zimbabwe attained independence, socialist ideas like the expansionist policies were adopted. A shift from capitalistic to socialist agendas met some resistance from the donors and those in control of the economy. Funding of some education policies was half done or with a lot of conditions attached. Conflict in policy support and funding of mass education militated against the provision of quality education.

### *The Brain Drain*

Todaro (1985) defines brain drain as the migration of skilled people from their countries of origin. Another authority, Samah (1991) sees brain drain as referring to the migration of the educated from one country to another, apart from that, migration of the educated from the rural to the urban areas. In Zimbabwe, skilled teachers have migrated to South Africa, Botswana and other Western countries seeking greener pastures, leaving the education system with a critical shortage of teaching staff.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive research methodology. The study concentrated on the qualitative form since this research aimed at elucidating what the participants had to say with regard to decision-making in their natural settings. In this regard, it was imperative that a methodological perspective be adopted to allow the findings to develop "from the data itself rather than from preconceived, rigidly struc-

ured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed” (Creswell 2002). The problem identified in this study demanded that the participants themselves be allowed to freely express their feelings, views and opinions. To this end Ely (1991:4) provides the following definition “...qualitative implies a direct concern with feelings, experiences and views as lived or felt or undergone...” This study adopted a case-study research design. A case study is described as a form of descriptor research that gathers a large amount of information about one or a few participants and thus investigates a few cases in considerable depth (Thomas and Nelson 2001). Questionnaires were administered to twenty randomly selected teachers and five school heads in Gokwe South Central Cluster. Interviews were also conducted in order to validate data from questionnaires.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Background Information of Teachers (Respondents)**

Table 1 suggests that most teachers in Gokwe South District Central Cluster are gender balanced and aged between 31 and 40 years. The teachers were drawn from five schools. Ten males and ten females formed the sample of the study.

**Table 1: Distribution of teachers by sex and age**

Age range	Frequencies		Frequencies	
	Male	%	Female	%
Below 25	0	0	0	0
26 – 30 years	1	10	1	10
31 – 40 years	5	50	6	60
41 – 50 years	4	40	3	30
Total	10	100	10	100

It appears from Table 2 that most teachers 55% in the cluster have less than 10 years teaching experience. Only 45% have 10 or more years of teaching experience. The cluster has teachers who are young and energetic.

It appears from Table 3 that 70% of the teachers in the study hold ‘O’ Level certificates as their highest academic qualifications and 30%

**Table 2: Distribution of teachers by teaching experience**

Experience	Respondents	Percentage
Below 10 years	11	55
Above 10 years	9	45
Total	20	100

hold ‘A’ Level certificates. This could perhaps partly explain why 55% are below 10 years of teaching experience, those with ‘A’ Level and better passes sought greener pastures to escape the economic challenges.

**Table 3: Distribution of teachers by academic qualification for teachers**

Academic qualification	Response	Percentage
‘O’ Level / Grade 11	14	70
A’ Level	6	30
Total	20	100

Most of the teachers in the study 70% as shown on Table 4 hold a Diploma in Education (Primary) as the highest professional qualifications. In the study one teacher is a holder of Master of Education (Philosophy) 5%. Indicators show that most teachers have attained professional qualifications in the teaching service. Brain drain affected the quality of education.

**Table 4: Distribution of teachers by professional qualification for teachers**

Professional qualification	Respondents	Percentage
T T f	0	0
CE	0	0
Diploma In Education	14	70
B Ed	5	25
Grad. CE	0	0
Med	1	5
Other	0	0
Total	20	100

The highest range of enrolment in schools under study is 55%. Most schools had an enrolment of 701 – 800. This could perhaps partly indicate that if enrolment is high teacher pupil ratio is likely to be high as well. High enrolment places a negative impact on the resources like books, stationery and infrastructure. This concurs with earlier findings by Zvobgo (1997) who said the expansionist programme affected the provision of quality education (Table 5).

**Table 5: Distribution of schools by enrolment**

<i>Enrolment</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 200 pupils	0	0
201 – 300	0	0
301 – 400	0	0
401 – 500	1	5
501 – 600	1	5
601 – 700	7	35
701 – 800	11	55
Above 800 +		
Total	20	100

### Background Information of Heads

From Table 6 it appears most heads in the study were males of the age range 41 – 50 years. The women heads were of the age range 31 – 40, 20% and 41 – 50, 20% respectively. This concurs with Nyagura and Reece (1988) who found that 77.8% of primary school heads were below 50 years.

**Table 6: Distribution of heads by sex and age**

<i>Age range</i>	<i>Frequencies</i>		<i>Frequencies</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>%</i>
Below 25	0	0	0	0
26 – 30 years	0	0	0	0
31 – 40 years	0	0	1	20
41 – 50 years	3	60	1	20
Total	3	60	2	40

It appears from Table 7 that 80% of the heads had a teaching experience of 11 – 20 years respectively. One head had a teaching experience of 20 years and above. This could imply that most heads in the cluster have adequate experience in administration issues.

**Table 7: Distribution of heads by teaching experience**

<i>Range</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 10 years	0	0
11 – 15 years	2	40
16 – 20 years	2	40
20+	1	20
Total	5	100

This contradicts findings by Nyagura and Reece (1988) who had noted that most of the school heads in their study lacked extensive experience. This outcome could have been because it was still soon after independence (8 years) when the shortage of experienced and

qualified teachers in many school was prevalent. Those who completed teacher training by then (1988) are teachers of long experience to date. Most experienced teachers left have left the teaching service for greener pastures.

Heads who participated in the study have academic qualifications of 'O' Level, 100%. None of the heads had 'A' Level. This concurs with the (1998) research results by Nyagura and Reece where 86.5% of the heads in their study had 'O' Level as their highest academic qualification. The situation at hand shows that these heads did not improve one their academic qualification. There is need for them to be progressive (Table 8).

**Table 8: Distribution of heads by academic qualifications**

<i>Highest qualification</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
'O' Level / Grade 11	5	100
'A' Level	0	0
Degree (General)	0	0
Total	5	100

Table 9 shows that 80% heads in the study had a Bachelor of Education degree as their highest professional qualification. Diploma holders constituted 20%, with one head being a holder of a Diploma in Education. None had a Graduate Certificate in Education or Master's Degree. The previous research by Nyagura and Reece (1988) indicated that most school heads lacked professional qualifications is contradicted. Perhaps the situation is being reversed. The explanation for this could be that many teachers have been given a chance or that they are wider chances of teachers to obtain a Bachelor of education degrees from universities such as the Zimbabwe Open University among others.

**Table 9: Distribution of heads by professional qualification**

<i>Professional qualification</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
T T f	0	0
CE	0	0
Diploma in Education	1	20
B Ed	4	80
Grad. CE	0	0
Med	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	5	100

The responses to question 1 which reads, does the supervisory role and duties of the school head

affect the provision of quality education? The following responses in all the four rating keys were given. The majority 55% with eleven responses indicated that lack of supervision against the provision militates against the provision of quality education. This is in contrast with Musaazi (1982) who advises that supervision improves quality education. The second category of responses 35% partially agreed. They showed mixed reactions to the question. The two extreme ends 5% rarely indicated a degree of variance of their opinion. That 5% always supervise is in divergence with what Sergiovanni (1979) pointed out. This author sees supervision as an effective tool for quality education (Table 10).

**Table 10: Analysis of responses by teachers**

Question 1	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Supervision	Always	1	5
	Often	7	35
	Sometimes	11	55
	Rarely	1	5
Total		5	100

Seventy – five percent of the respondents agreed that brain does affect the provision of quality education. Teachers leave work for greener pastures elsewhere thus creating a deficit in school. Twenty – five percent of the respondents spelt out that brain drain do not affect the provision of quality education. However, Ozigi (1987) pointed out that experienced teachers played major role in the provision of quality education (Table 11).

**Table 11: Responses of teachers to brain drain**

Question 2	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Brain Drain	Yes	15	75
	No	5	25
Total		20	100

All the respondents indicated that the shortage of resources in schools militates against the provision of quality education. Lack of resources such as books, stationery textbooks and collapsing infrastructure was evidenced during the study. This is in keeping with Todaro (1985) who states that poor economic performance and shortage of resources affects service delivery (Table 12).

**Table 12: Responses to shortage of resources**

Question 3	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Shortage of Resources	Yes	20	100
	No	0	0
Total		20	100

Out of a total number of twenty respondents, 85 % indicated that the Grade Seven education course of a seven year programme is favourable. The other category 15% indicated that the period of a seven year course is too long (Table 13).

**Table 13: Teachers' responses to curriculum policy**

Question 4	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Seven Year Course	Yes	17	85
	No	3	15
Total		20	100

Question 5 read, does your school operate with adequate resources at Grade Seven Level? The responses generated indicated that 50% operate with very limited resources in schools. Thirty – five percent have fewer resources. An interesting point to note is that 15% indicated that they have enough resources. Perhaps this could be due to the fact that one school in the sample is a privately-owned Christian school. A point to note is that the shortage of resources is a cause of concern in schools especially those in rural areas and this is agreement with Mumbengegwi (1995) who noted that sharp rise in enrolment in 1980 resulted in shortage of resources like textbooks, equipment and furniture (Table 14).

**Table 14: Teachers' responses to adequacy of resources**

Question 5	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Resources	Enough resources	3	15
	Less resources	7	35
	Very limited	10	50
	No resources	0	0
Total		20	100

Staff turnover was found to be in the range of 20 to 45%. Staff turnover indicated that 45% was high turnover, 20% low turnover and 35% moderate rate of turnover in schools. The obtaining situation on the ground indicates that staff turnover is gradually skewing to a moder-

ate rate. Stability in the rate of turnover is forecasted, perhaps due to the introduction of hard currencies in the fiscal policy. Quality education is possible in a stable environment as put forward by Zvobgo (1997) who recommended for more allocation of resources to education from the national fiscal policy (Table 15).

**Table 15: Responses to staff turnover**

Question 5	Rating	Responses	Percentage
Staff turnover	High staff turnover	9	45
	Low staff turnover	4	20
	Moderate	7	35
Total		20	100

As seen in Table 16, the heads rated supervision of teachers as important, 80% in the provision of education and 20% saw it as not important. This is in keeping with Musaazi (1982) who pointed out that supervision is a quality control mechanism. On the second question that addressed the effect of brain in relation to the provision of quality education, 20% saw brain drain as high. The second category 40% saw it as low in agreement to those who saw it as moderate 40%. Evidence on the ground seems to point that brain drain is becoming stable perhaps due to the introduction of hard currencies in the fiscal policy.

The third sub- question addressed the financial capacity of a school in the provision of quality education. All the heads 100% rated financial capacity of a school as a major contributory factor in the provision of quality education hence schools need to be fully resourced and capacitated through self- sustainable viable projects. The heads rated education policy of a seven year course 40%, felt the policy needs to be revised while 60% saw it as favourable. On resources, 80% indicated that, there are operating with very limited resources in schools hence a negative impact in the provision of quality education. The other category 20% indicated that there are also operating with fewer resources.

Shortages of resources in the form of money, human resources, time and learning materials need immediate attention, as 80% indicated a deficit in resources thus crippling service provision and quality education. This concurs with cited literature by Zvobgo (1997). On teacher morale, 20% rated teacher morale as very high, perhaps it could be partly due to the incentives

**Table 16: Analysis of responses from school heads**

Item variable	Responses	No.	Percentage
1. Supervision	Yes	4	80
	No	1	20
	Total	5	100
2. Brain Drain	High	1	20
	Low	2	40
	Moderate	2	40
	Total	5	100
3. Financial Capacity	Yes	5	100
	No	0	0
	Total	5	100
4. Seven Year Course	To a great extent	2	40
	To lesser extent	3	60
	Total	5	100
5. Resources	Enough resources	0	0
	Less resources	1	20
	Very limited	4	80
	No resources	0	0
	Total	5	100
6. Teacher Morale	Very high	1	20
	Low	4	80
	Very low	0	0
	Total	5	100
7. Causes of Low Morale	Poor salaries	34	80
	Working conditions	71	20
	Total	5	100

being given to some schools by their responsible authorities. The heads (80%) indicated that teacher morale was low in schools. The major indicators of low morale (80%) poor remuneration by the government and (20%) poor working conditions like too long working hours, poor shelter in schools, poor sanitation, economic challenges and lack of moral support from stakeholders. All in all major indicators seem to point out that there are so many multi – faceted factors that militate against the provision of quality education at Grade seven Level. Among the major indicators are shortage of resources (80%) lack of supervision (80%) effects of brain drain (40%) financial capacity of schools (100%) education policy of a grade seven year course (60%), low teacher morale (80%), poor salaries (80%) among others.

## CONCLUSION

The study established that school heads do not have ample time to conduct regular supervisory duties due to high demanding administrative chores at school. The education sector experienced great brain drain of experienced teaching personnel to neighbouring countries. The situation is improving from high turnover

to moderate rate of staff turnover in schools under study perhaps due to the introduction of hard currencies in the fiscus policy. It was also brought to the fore that the financial capacity of a school determines the achievement of educational objectives to a full extent hence there is need for a fair, equitable allocation of resources to all schools in the country from the fiscal budget. The study also established that there is dire shortage of textbooks, stationery, media and infrastructural collapse of old buildings posing a hazard and a threat to humanity in schools. Most schools have been observed to be operating with fewer resources

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations:

- Administrative routines of heads such as meetings should be reduced or shared to allow heads ample time for regular supervision in schools.
- District Education Officers to be provided with cars and fuel for mobility to enhance effective supervision in schools.

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