

Teaching as a Profession in Zimbabwe: Are Teachers Facing a Motivation Crisis?

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ABSTRACT This study sought to investigate why Zimbabwean teachers seem demotivated in teaching as a profession and how the possible challenges could be addressed. A sample of 62 (32 male, 30 female) primary school teachers on the Bachelor of Education-in-Service programme in the Faculty of Education at a University in Zimbabwe was used in this study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The study found that both male and female teachers raised the following factors/issues and challenges: poor salaries, poor working conditions, poor accommodation, lack of respect, political harassment/victimisation, overworking, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, absence of refresher courses, teachers not trained to cater for special needs children, and incompetency in terms of technological advancement. Among other issues, these challenges have resulted in low morale, poor delivery and brain drain in the education sector. There is a need for the Zimbabwean government to restore the dignity of the teacher through respect, better salaries and improved services.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in any society in changing the lives of people the world over. In this regard, teachers play a critical role in nurturing the minds and hearts of the youth (Dike 2009). Almost every professional be it a nurse, doctor, engineer, or pilot, have passed through the hands of the teacher, and hence, his or her importance. A motivated teacher leads to motivated students, and hence, good performance (Ssendagire 2009). Teachers are the most important factor in determining the quality of education that children receive in schools (Dike 2009; Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010; International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) 2006; Ololube 2006). As such, governments have the responsibility to ensure that teachers perform to the best of their abilities in their classrooms. Similarly, the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) cited in International Development 21 (Id21) education (2009a) reports that the goals of Education for All (EFA) can

only be achieved if teacher motivation is high. Id21 education (2009a) adds that the education related Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of basic education for all by 2015 might not be achieved if teachers are not motivated.

The relevance of job satisfaction and motivation are very crucial to the long-term growth of any educational system around the world. While almost every teacher constantly agitates for job satisfaction, it is often assumed that teachers' agitations and demands for better conditions of service are beyond the resources of the government (Ololube 2006). This often leads to teachers leaving the profession for greener pastures or embarking on strike action (Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010).

A number of studies on teacher motivation and incentives have been carried out in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Towse et al. 2002; Chireshe and Mapfumo 2003; Mseyamwa 2006; Collender 2007; Mulkeen et al. 2007; Parmenter 2007; The Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) Stress Survey 2007; USAID 2007; Dike 2009; Id21 education 2009a; Ssendagire 2009). The countries covered by these studies include Ghana, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. The challenges facing education in these countries included

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underpayment of teachers, lack of safety due to war, insurgency and insecurity (for example, in Nepal and Sierra Leone), higher workloads and large classes, lack of training and familiarity with computers, low and declining teacher status, poor living and working conditions (Towse et al. 2002; Mseyamwa 2006; ASTI Stress Survey 2007; Parmenter 2007; USAID 2007; Id21 education 2009a; Ssendagire 2009). In their study, Mulkeen et al. (2007) report that in Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda, there are a variety of unattractive conditions of service for teachers that make teaching as a profession to be less attractive to school leavers. These unattractive conditions include perceived low salary, unattractive work locations, unprofessional treatment of teachers, arbitrary teacher deployment systems, lack of professional development opportunities and insufficient supportive supervision. It is some of these conditions of service that are likely to make teaching as a profession less attractive to school leavers.

Other related studies on challenges of the teaching profession have been done in the area of teacher stress in countries such as the United Kingdom (Griffith et al. 1999), Hong Kong (Hui and Chan 1996), Australia (Macdonald 1999), South Australia (McCormick 1997) and America (Pierce and Molloy 1990). In a recent interview with the Zimbabwe Minister of Education, Sport and Culture David Coltart, Anonymous (2009b) reports that Zimbabwe has lost more than 20,000 teachers to its neighbours in the last two years because of poor remuneration. In this interview, Coltart indicated that most of the teachers who taught Mathematics and English had gone to Botswana and South Africa (Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010). Similarly, Anonymous (2009c) reported that the Zimbabwean government had opened negotiations with civil servants (including teachers) demanding US\$400 for the lowest paid and an additional US\$100 allowance. For example, in these negotiations civil servants said that their current salaries were out of sync with the prevailing economic situation.

As such, civil servants (including teachers) wanted the lowest paid civil servant (B1 grade) to earn US\$402 a month. The civil servants were further demanding US\$100 housing and transport allowances (Anonymous 2009c: 1). This implies that poor salaries and working con-

ditions are the main reasons for the exodus of teachers for greener pastures thus leaving local schools unmanned. For example, in South Africa, a new entry graduate teacher earns about R8000 (currently about US\$978) and this is not commensurate with what local teachers are getting. It is clear from above that Zimbabwean teachers are poorly paid and hence the reason why some of them have left the profession for greener pastures (Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010).

In their study of factors affecting stress levels among teachers in Zimbabwe, Mapfumo et al. (2008) found that both male and female teachers were stressed by working on unnecessary tasks, taking work home after hours, unreasonable demands of work quality, and the workload. Other studies on stress among teachers show work overload as the top factor in work-related stress (Kiryacou 2001; Antonius et al. 2000) and other factors identified include poor school conditions (Sc-honfield 1991); difficult pupil behavior (Antonius et al. 2000); pace of bureaucratic change and management concerns, time and other pressures (Nhundu 1999; Chireshe and Mapfumo 2003).

Studies have been conducted on why teachers are demotivated in teaching as a profession (Ololube 2006). For example, in a survey on teacher job satisfaction and motivation in Nigeria, Ololube (2006) found that teacher related sources of job satisfaction seem to have a greater impact on teaching performance, as teachers are also dissatisfied with the educational policies and administration, pay and fringe benefits, material rewards and advancement. In their study of job satisfaction in India, Ramachandran et al. (2005) found that teachers indicated the following five reasons for job dissatisfaction: (a) High teacher-pupil ratio; (b) Infrastructure problems; (c) Erratic disbursement of salaries; (d) 'Forced' to teach children of poor communities and specific social groups who are 'dirty' (reflecting the class bias and social gap between the children and teachers); and (e) Irregular attendance of children (because of migration or work-related reasons) and illiterate parents. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) found that teacher motivation is affected by the following factors: (a) the school's general climate and the existing school norms; (b) the class sizes, the school resources and facilities; (c) the standard activity structure within the institution; (d) col-

legal relations; (e) the definition of the teacher's role by colleagues and authorities; (f) general expectations regarding student potential; (g) the school's reward contingencies and feedback system; and (h) the school's leadership and decision-making structure (p. 161).

Despite the important role played by teachers in schools, it is clear from the above studies that, teachers in Zimbabwe and worldwide face motivational challenges in their profession. This perhaps explains why some teachers are stressed and leaving the teaching profession.

To the best knowledge of the researchers, very little research has been done in the area of teacher motivation and challenges facing the Zimbabwean teacher (for example, Nhundu 1999; Chireshe and Mapfumo 2003). Given the importance of the teacher in national development and the fact that little research is available on challenges facing Zimbabwean teachers, there is need to investigate the perceptions of Zimbabwean teachers towards teaching as a profession and their challenges.

Statement of the Problem

It has been highlighted in the background that although teachers play a pivotal role in all sectors of a country's economy, they work under poor conditions. It has also been noted that little research on challenges being faced by Zimbabwean teachers is available. It is against this background that this study, therefore, sought to answer the following research questions: (a) What factors contribute to teacher 'demotivation' in Zimbabwe? and (b) How can these challenges be addressed in order to make teaching a respectable profession?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A survey design was used in this study in order to identify the perceptions of Zimbabwean teachers towards teaching as a profession and to establish how these challenges could be addressed in order to make teaching as a profession attractive. The design was chosen because it is convenient for capturing the opinions of participants on a phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod 2001).

Population: The population for the study comprised primary school teachers on the Great Zimbabwe University Bachelor of Education-

In-Service programme for the 2009 to 2010 academic year.

Sample: Sixty-two (32 male and 30 female) purposefully sampled primary school teachers enrolled by Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) for the Bachelor of Education-In-Service programme participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 24 to 50 years. All students who embark on the in-service programme are qualified teachers who hold a teaching certificate or diploma and at least two years teaching experience. The researchers purposefully selected this sample because they believed it was in a position to express Zimbabwean teachers' perceptions towards teaching as a profession (Cohen et al. 2000).

Instrument: In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire had both closed and open ended items. Questionnaires are widely used in collecting survey information (Wilson and Mclean 1994 cited in Cohen et al. 2000; Leedy and Ormrod 2000). The questionnaire was pilot tested in order to check on the relevance and usability of the items. In general, all questions were found to be clear to the participants.

Data Collection Procedure: Permission to carry out the study was sought from the university authorities. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire to ensure anonymity. In addition, participants were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and used only for purposes of this study.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The data were presented in Tables. Frequencies and percentages were used in this study.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in Tables 1 to 3.

Table 1 shows that the majority of the participants (38.7 %) were in the 38-44 years age range.

Table 2 shows that some Zimbabwean teachers were faced with various challenges in their profession. The most frequently cited challenges were poor salary, lack of resources, poor working conditions, poor accommodation, lack of respect, over-working, political harassment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic/Health related challenges.

Table 1: Demographic data (n = 62)

Age	Number of respondents
24 – 30 years	15 (24.2 %)
31 – 37 years	14 (22.6 %)
38 – 44 years	24 (38.7 %)
Over 45 years	9 (14.5 %)
Total	62 (100.0 %)

Table 2: Challenges being faced by a Zimbabwean teacher

Challenge	Number of respondents
Poor salaries	60 (96.8 %)
Lack of resources	55 (88.7 %)
Poor working conditions	50 (80.6 %)
Poor accommodation	45 (72.6 %)
Lack of respect	44 (71.0 %)
Over working	42 (67.7 %)
Political harassment/Victimization of teachers	39 (62.9 %)
HIV/AIDS pandemic/Poor health facilities	32 (51.6 %)
Lack of refresher courses	30 (48.4 %)
Lack of transport to some rural schools	25 (40.3 %)
In ability to cater for Special Needs Children	24 (38.7 %)
Information technology incompetence	22 (35.5 %)
Imposed curriculum	15 (24.2 %)

Table 3 shows that the majority of both male and female teachers did not want to choose teaching as a profession if given a second chance. They also did not see bright future prospects for the Zimbabwean teacher. This majority also felt the type of teacher training in Zimbabwe did not adequately prepare the teacher for the classroom job.

Table 3: Responses to closed questionnaire items

Item		Response		
		Yes	No	Unsure
If given a second chance to choose a profession, would you choose teaching?	M	2	28	2
	F	4	26	0
Are there any bright future prospects of the situation of the Zimbabwean teacher?	M	7	20	5
	F	8	16	6
Do you think the type of teacher training in Zimbabwe adequately prepares the teacher for the classroom?	M	8	20	4
	F	10	14	6

DISCUSSION

It emerged from this study that Zimbabwean teachers are faced with various challenges in their profession and these include low salaries, lack of resources, poor working conditions,

poor accommodation, political victimisation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and overworking. This result confirms a Herald report that Zimbabwean teachers have petitioned the Government over pay rise and working conditions (Anonymous 2009d). Amnesty International (2009) also indicated that some Zimbabwean teachers had been victims of political harassment and intimidation. The BBC News (2008) also reported that many Zimbabwean teachers had been beaten up and hospitalized in politically motivated situations. Literature has also shown that elsewhere, teachers experience similar challenges. For example, Mseyamwa (2006) reported that Namibian teachers were facing challenges of poor salaries and bad working conditions, Ssendagire (2009) lamented the overworking and poor salaries of Ugandan teachers, Dike (2009) reported that many Nigerian teachers were miserable because of poor salaries and lack of resources, Id21 education (2009a) revealed that in Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, teachers were demotivated by poor salaries, political harassment (in Nepal and Sierra Leone), higher workloads, low teacher status and poor living and working conditions, Towse et al. (2002) revealed that teachers' status in Tanzania was very low and they were lowly paid. Nilsson (2003) cited in USAIDS (2007) indicated that there was high teacher attrition in Zambia because of low salaries and poor working conditions. Mulkeen et al. (2007) found that there are a variety of unattractive conditions for teachers in Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda. It is clear from the above discussion that Zimbabwean teachers are stressed and also face a number of challenges in their quest to educate pupils in schools.

The majority of both male and female teachers indicated that the challenges the teachers were facing resulted in a demotivated teacher leading to poor academic results. Teacher commitment becomes low hence a fall in the academic standards of the education system of the country. The teachers suggested that the situation of the Zimbabwean teacher could only be improved by restoring the dignity of the teachers through increasing their remuneration, improving their working conditions, providing adequate resources and not by politically harassing them. Training teachers in handling special needs children and making every teacher

technologically literate were raised as other issues that could improve the situation of the Zimbabwean teacher. The above findings are consistent with other studies (Dörnyei 2001; IIEP 2006; Mseyamwa 2006).

The reasons given by the majority of both male and female teachers for not choosing the teaching profession if given a second chance confirm existing literature (IIEP 2006; Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010).

The reasons given by the majority of both male and female teachers for seeing no bright future prospects of the situation of the Zimbabwean teacher included: teachers have been promised better salaries and working conditions for a long time now without any change, teachers' plight is not being addressed or is not being listened to, teachers' dignity continues to deteriorate. A change in the political situation was seen as the only source of the teacher's hope. The above findings are consistent with other studies on teacher motivation (Chireshe and Mapfumo 2003; Nhundu 1999; Id21 education 2009a).

The teachers felt the training in teachers' colleges was not adequately preparing them for the classroom because their trainers, the lecturers at the teachers' colleges were demotivated by the same factors as the general teachers hence their effort was minimal. The training they received did not also emphasise on handling children with special educational needs and Information Technology. The majority of the teachers produced by the teachers' colleges did not have skills in handling children with special educational needs and they were also technologically incompetent.

It emerged from the study that the challenges being faced by the Zimbabwean teacher lead to demotivation. Because of these challenges, the majority of the teachers would not choose the teaching profession if given a second chance. This implies that the teachers felt that other professions were better catered for than teaching. The demotivation was seen as resulting in lowered standard of education (Ololube 2006; Gwaradzimba and Shumba 2010). VSO cited in Id21 education (2009a) also points out that the demotivation of teachers threatens the achievement of the Education for All goals.

It also emerged from the study that the teachers felt that the training they received from the teachers' colleges did not adequately prepare

them for the classroom situation because of lack of motivation on the part of their trainers and lack of skills to handle children with special educational needs. Being technologically incompetent was also the other reason given. The finding that the quality of teacher training in Zimbabwe is affected by demotivated lecturers confirms Chireshe's (2008) observation that lecturers in Zimbabwean teachers' colleges are not committed to their work because they are not satisfied by their current working conditions. Great Zimbabwe University's Department of Special Needs Education (2009) reports indicated that Zimbabwean teachers' colleges are producing teachers that lack knowledge in Special Needs Education. The finding on technology incompetence confirms Id21 education (2009b)'s argument that African teacher training institutions are doing very little in training teachers in information technology. The lecturers themselves may be lacking training in special needs education and information technology. The teachers' colleges may also lack resources to ensure that special needs education and information technology are integrated within their training.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Zimbabwean teachers faced a number of challenges which could be overcome by restoring the dignity of the teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations can be drawn from the findings of this study. Teachers' dignity needs to be restored. This can be done through improving on their salaries, working conditions and providing them with resources. Qualified teachers need to receive in-service training in Information Technology and how to handle special needs education children. Special needs education and Information Technology should be infused into the training of pre-service and in-service teachers. Because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the teachers need to be empowered to protect themselves from the scourge and also to live positively if one is infected. Since this study was only carried out with primary school teachers at Great Zimbabwe University, there is need for a large scale re-

search which also involves secondary school teachers to establish the extent of teacher motivation crisis in Zimbabwe.

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